



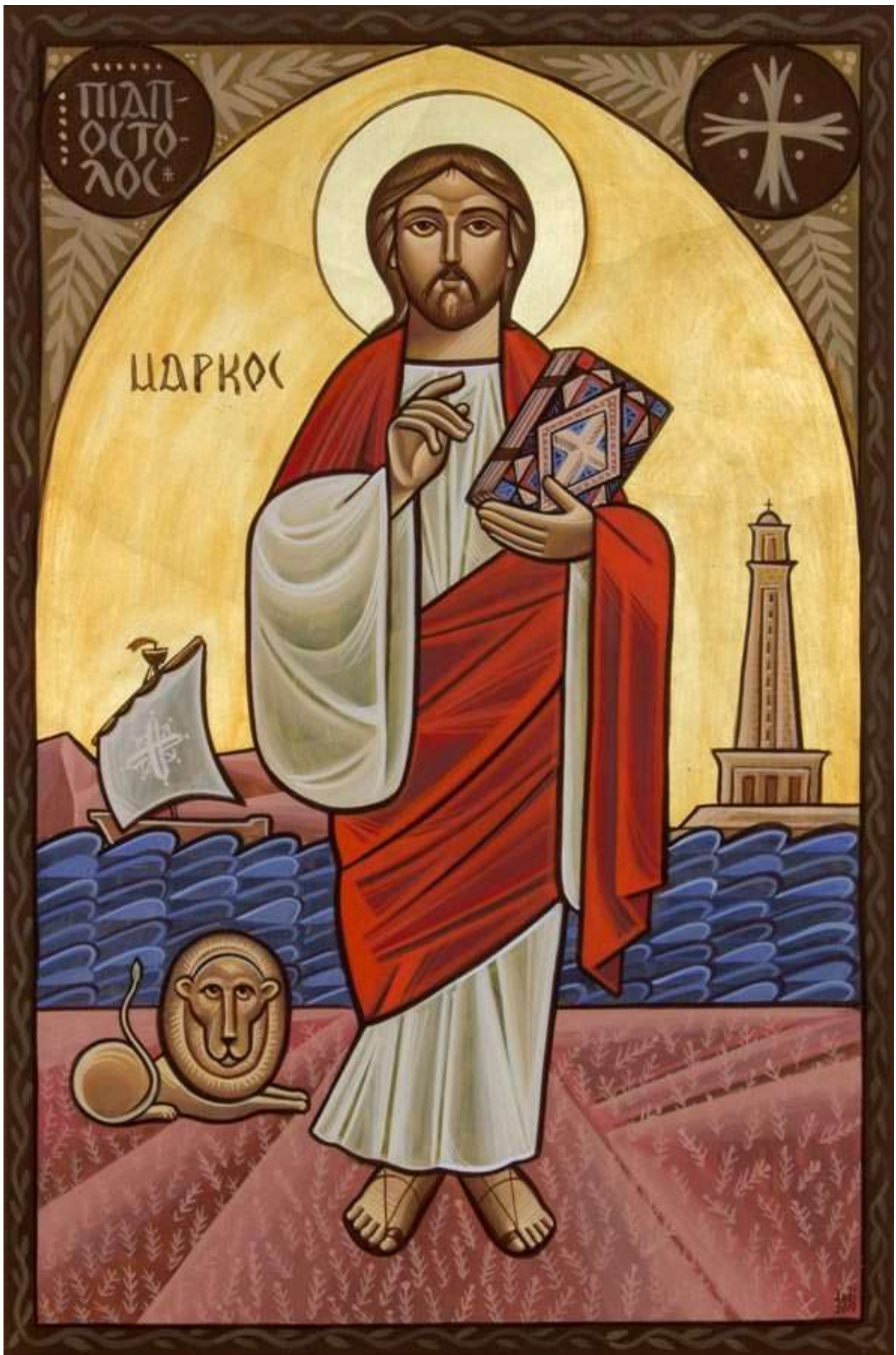
THE COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
ST. GEORGE AND ST. RUEISS CHURCH
SERVANTS PREPARATION CURRICULUM



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In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, One God Amen.

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“Thus far the LORD has helped us”. (1 Samuel 7:12)

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This is a *preliminary* edition which we present to our Coptic Orthodox Community. In anticipation of all the comments and suggestions that we will receive, we thank you. God bless everyone.

Fr. Rueiss Awad



SERVANTS PREPARATION CURRICULUM

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INTRODUCTION

With access to vast amounts of information and teachings of other Christian denominations and opinions, it can be challenging to identify the teachings of the Coptic Orthodox faith. Eph. 2:20 "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone"

Therefore, this curriculum was created as a tool to help maintain our Orthodox faith. 2 Tim 3:10 "but you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering love, perseverance, persecutions . . ."

Several pertinent topics have been included in this curriculum. One subject under development is Apologetic Christianity / Theology.

The key reference for all the subjects is the Coptic Orthodox curriculum taught in the Coptic seminary in Egypt which I have had to study thoroughly. There are also Coptic orthodox links that I have had to review thoroughly before recommending them. A recent book of 75 contemporary issues is also included in this curriculum.

Four books by the late HH Pope Shenouda III with frequently asked questions and their answers are also included.

Please do not hesitate to give your feedback on this curriculum for the sake of improvement.

Remember, the most important aspect is that the curriculum is not merely a collection of information, but rather, each lesson *emphasizes* the need for continuous spiritual growth for the individual.

Fr. Rueiss Awad

IMPORTANT RULES FOR TEACHING THE YOUTH IN THE LAND OF IMMIGRATION

Our youth, in the land of immigration, are influenced by the society and the culture they live in. This is considered perfectly normal and inevitable.

Despite the similarities in the content of the Sunday school curriculum and the youth meeting topics across all the churches in the world, the difference lies in the presentation of the topic and the ability to tailor the content to fit the audience's background, culture and spiritual needs. This would greatly increase the topic's comprehension and its receptiveness.

In Saint Paul's sermon to the Jews (Acts 13: 16-41) he spoke to them regarding Moses the arch-prophet and gave an account of their experiences with our Lord throughout their history. Moreover, in another instance, he spoke to the Greek philosophers (Acts 17: 18-33) in a manner that suited their cultural background. In both cases the content is comparable: both sermons aim to convey the message of salvation that our Lord Jesus Christ granted us on the cross.

Therefore, whether the Sunday school / youth servants are first generation immigrants or are born in the land of immigration, it is important to observe the following guidelines when conveying the topic:

1. Correctness of the language and its clarity...the servant must prepare the topic in an accurate, clear and coherent language. This language should be the audience's preferred first language.
2. Organization...Our children live in a society where organization and punctuality are governing characteristics. Hence, it is imperative to adopt those characteristics in order to portray to our children that our services and our churches are adhering to the norms of the society.
3. Respect...mutual respect is the prevailing trait in the western societies. As a result, respect ought to be maintained at all times between the servant and those being served. This is manifest in good communication skills such as listening without interjecting and using appropriate words depicting respect.
4. Dialogue...constructive discussions and valuing each other's opinions are fundamental in western societies. Dialogue often leads to persuasion and mutual love as opposed to merely giving orders.
5. Give pertinent examples from the children's day to day life...during the topic we must reference examples that are suitable and related for emphasis and clarification.
6. Questioning everything said or heard...Due to all the strong intellectual movements in the society, we as servants must be cognizant of any new infiltrating thoughts., This is

achieved through research and analysis to be in a position to answer our youth's questions in a convincing and intellectual/well-informed manner.

7. Love between the servant and the children...our children often yearn for compassion and love in our fast pace materialistic society. Thus, it is extremely important that the servant uses expressions of love, affection and harmony.
8. Establish and maintain the bond between the children and the mother church...this is essential to our unity and there ought not to be any division or separation of any sort from the mother church nor its beliefs, holiness, saints, organization or any other matter.
9. We ask all Sunday school / youth servants to abide by the orthodox faith and dogma in all the topics and to use the ample biblical examples and references.
10. We ask all Sunday school / youth servants to establish a good spiritual relationship with all those being served.

PRINCIPLES IN SERVING THE LORD

1 INTRODUCTION:

- A) A seventeen year old youth asked the priest to permit him to start teaching in Sunday school classes. The priest asked him which level he would want to teach. His answer was that he was ready for any level. This request showed good intentions to serve the Lord and the church, but on the other hand, it reflects insufficient understanding of the service of the Lord and the necessary preparations which accompany it.
- B) A sixteen years old youth told the priest that he wants to join the priesthood in a few years and that he is longing for this to happen. The priest asked him the reason for this demand. The youth said he loves the church hymns, the service of the Holy Mass and all other services in the church. Again this request showed good intentions, far better than youth's longing for bad relationships and misbehaviour, but on the other hand, it lacked the knowledge that priesthood is not the service inside the church with the congregation or the other church services. In fact it is taking the responsibility of these souls in front of God and this is not an easy matter.
- C) One of the servants in the church told the priest that he wants to extend his service in church. Instead of being deacon, he wants to be an arch-deacon and instead of being a teacher he wants to be the administrator of Sunday School Service.

These big responsibilities in the church are the centre of his demands in life. As to his personal eternity and the necessities of his family and their eternity, that was not an important issue. What can I say?

The service of the Lord is not about positions but about taking the last place. It is similar, to the Lord's service when he washed the Disciples' feet. It is because of these examples which come across many priests in their service, and because I know of many who have such thoughts, that I present to you some of the principles in the service, praying to the Lord that it becomes a source of blessing to many and to me also.

2. WHO IS THE TRUE SERVANT?

This is a specific question. Let us answer it specifically first and then we will elaborate.

The true servant of the Lord is the person who:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| First | Tasted the life with Christ and loved it. |
| Second | His service is generated from his love to Christ, to his brethren, to his family and his heavenly reward. |
| Third | His aim is to attract souls to Christ for their salvation without ignoring the daily life that these souls live. |

Let us elaborate, with the blessing of the Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, on these 3 points.

First: The true servant is the person who tasted the life with Christ and loved it. He who lacks something cannot give it. If a person tried to speak about Christ without having experienced life with Him, he will sound theoretical and will not be fruitful. But if he experienced being in contact with Christ and tasted the beauty of living with Him and formed a practical knowledge, then the simplest words coming from his heart will have the power and effect to reach other hearts.

- a. St. Peter the Apostle was able to convert 3000 souls in one sermon after completing his faith, receiving the power of the Holy Spirit and experiencing the true life with Jesus Christ (Acts2).
- b. St. Paul the Apostle, after experiencing life with Christ, said “But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ.”(Philippians 3:8).

Nothing on earth was comparable to his love of Christ. St. Paul’s service was very fruitful as this is illustrated in the book of Acts and his Epistles.

- c. Andrew the Apostle called upon his brother Simon Peter after his true experience of Christ. Philip called Nathanael also. “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples, and looking at Jesus as he walked, he said, “behold the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher) “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see”. They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, The Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “you are Simon the son of Jonah, you shall be called Cephas.” (Which is translated a Stone). The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me”. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “we have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.” And Nathanael said to him, “can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom no guile”. Nathanael said to Him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, “I saw you under the fig tree’ do you believe?

You will see greater things than these.” And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” John 1:35-51.

Notice the similarity between both calls. Andrew told Peter, “we have found a Messiah, (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus” John 1:41-42.

Philip told Nathanael “we have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph Come and see.”

Therefore, the servant needs first to have a true relationship with Christ. Then he presents the soul that he wants to serve to Jesus. At this point the soul is joined with its creator, who provides for everything and will give salvation and eternal life.

Second: The true servant is he whose service generates from his love to Christ, his brethren, his family and his heavenly reward

The basis of the service of the Lord is the internal love in the heart. Love is light and the servant’s heart must be lit with love. “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, I am nothing.” I Corinthians 13:3.

The servant loves the Lord Jesus Christ and feels that He has given him a special commandment to take care of his brethren. This is clear when the Lord said to Simon Peter “Simon...do you love Me? Tend My Sheep.” Therefore the servant looks at every person who needs service as being recommended by the Lord personally. The servant of the Lord, looks at the poor, the bare, the miserable and he who lives in sin, as a valuable soul and the Lord asked him to care for him. “Everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him”. 1John 5:1.

Our lord Jesus Christ, who is our true example, demonstrated a service full of love and comparison.

+ “and for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.” John 17:19

Here, the meaning of sanctify is “designate” and this is an admirable love from Our Lord Jesus, Who designates Himself for our salvation. “You did not trust anyone for our salvation, neither an angel, nor an archangel, nor a prophet but You, without change, have been incarnated and took our human form” The Georgian Liturgy.

+ Our Lord served with love and compassion “But when He saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary...” Matthew 9:36

- + Moses the prophet has the identical type of service full of love and compassion of those he served. When God said to him, “Let Me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation,” Moses said to God, “If You will forgive their sin – but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which you have written.”
- + St. Paul the Apostle also had a service full of love and compassion, when he said, “I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to flesh.” Romans 9:3. And in his Epistle to the Philippians, he says: “Therefore, my beloved and longed for brethren...”
- + St. John said in affection, “The elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth.” 2 John :1.
- + As to the love of the poor, we find Abba Abra’am Bishop of Fayoum. In the love of congregation we have Abba Boutros the last martyrs who died in place of his congregation and asked the soldier to kill him behind the prison so that his children do not see him.
- + Other examples from this century are the deceased the Arch priest Bishoy Kamel who is a true example of the love of every soul and of building churches for the salvation of people. The blessed Arch priest Michael Ibrahim who was an example of loving the believers, carrying their burdens and leading them to Paradise.

The blessed Pope Cyril the sixth was an example of leading people’s hearts towards the heavens through his daily masses, his many prayers and the sweet smell of incense.

You will find Pope Shenouda III, may the Lord give him plentiful years, who is working day and night, teaching his children with unlimited sermons, and books ; building churches and ordaining priests and bishops ; building monasteries. All this for the sake of the salvation of every soul inside and outside of Egypt.

There are many other examples in this century, which I do not know of, of people who deeply loved the Lord and extended that love to all those they served, who were recommended by Christ and whose love was extended to the heavens and the heavenly reward.

All those who served the Lord, through the ages, know well that the worker deserves his pay. They know that he who gives a cup of cold water will not lose his reward. They know that the Lord said, “Where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.” John 12:26.

The Lord also said “Come, you blessed of My Father inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me;

I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer Him saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and fed you, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You? And the King will answer and say to them. “ Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” Matthew 25:34-40.

All these servants had their hearts longing to heaven and they served for the sake of building the heavenly kingdom for the others as well as for themselves.

Third: The true servant is he whose aim is to attract souls to Christ for their salvation without ignoring their daily life.

What is the aim of the Church? The aim of the church is to attract the hearts of the people of Christ, to heaven, then the spirit of life will run in it. David the prophet says, “You who seek God, your hearts shall live”. The human being extends the eternal life from Christ, as the Lord said in his concluding prayer, “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify you, as you have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as you have given Him and this is eternal life, that they may know. You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” John 17:1-3.

Therefore, the aim of the service of the church is for the person to have life in Him. “You who seek God, Your heart shall live” and your soul will be attracted to heaven. As to the soul that is living in sin, it is dead and does not have any spirit or life. It is not attracted to Heaven but all her concerns are earthly, as was said about the Prodigal Son, “For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” Like 15:24. The church and all its servants are parts of the sacred body of Christ who have one aim which is serving the souls and their salvation. Every soul with its own position.

Serving the children is different from serving the Youth. Serving the elderly is different from serving the sick and needy. The servant’s aim is to attract the soul to heaven without overlooking its position and its daily life. St. Paul says, “For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,” 2 Corinthians 11:2. He also says “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

St. John the Baptist diverted the people and drew them towards Christ not himself. He said that one should grow and I should decrease. A true example of faithful servant is in drawing the souls towards Christ. The Lord said about him, “Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.” Matthew 11:11. He prepared the way before the Lord with the light of his life although he did not do any miracles. The ego disappears in the ministry of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and He drew our hearts to the Heavenly Father, although He was in the Father the Father in Him. (The ego disappeared in the ministry of St. John the Baptist and he drew our hearts towards the Lord Jesus Christ.) The ego disappeared in the ministry of St. Paul and he drew the hearts towards the Lord Jesus, and said, “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God”. I Corinthians 15:9.

3. THE SERVANT'S WEAPON IS THE POWER FROM THE TRUE LIGHT AND THE PRAYER FOR THOSE HE SERVES.

The service of the first church was very strong because it was fortified with the power of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the Apostles. The church was so strong that it is said in the book of Acts: "The Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved."

+ Our Lord Jesus the incarnated God and the source of all power and blessings, the Bible said of Him, "So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Luke 4:22. He also said about Himself, "the spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." Luke 4:18. In His service He said in an admirable humility, "For I have given to them the words which you have given Me." John 17:8.

+ Moses started his ministry with human weaknesses and thought that with his physical power he could serve the Israelites. He killed an Egyptian man who was beating one of the Hebrews. Then he ran away and lived in the Land of Medean as a shepherd until the Lord called on him to lead the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. The Lord told Moses, "Now, therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what to say." Exodus 4:12. The powerful ministry of Moses started here after being fortified with the Lord's support.

+ In the ministry of the Apostles, the Lord told them, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with the power from on High." "And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Luke 24:49-50.

The Book of Acts says, "And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying; Peter, James, John and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brother," Acts 1:13-14. "Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place... And they were filled with the Holy Spirit". Acts 2:1-4.

Since that time the ministry of the Apostles was fortified with the power of the Holy Spirit. Some even call the Book of Acts, the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled." Acts 4:13. When they released Peter and John, they came to their friends, "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken." Acts 4:31

When Peter was imprisoned the church used to pray fervently to God for his sake. The Lord sent His angel and got him out of the prison. "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in

the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Acts 9:31.

The servants of the Lord were supported by the power of the Holy Spirit and their lives were prolonged prayers, therefore, the ministry was very successful. The Lord used to support their ministry by performing miracles, “And these signs will follow those who believe; In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.” Mark 16:17-18. This had happened and still happening in the church to all who serve the Lord in spirit and in truth.

4. **THE PRIORITIES IN THE MINISTRY: “YOU SHALL BE WITNESSES TO ME IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA, AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE END OF THE EARTH.” Acts 1:8.**

With this organization, the Lord decided on the priorities of the ministry so that they were not hindered or become fruitless: Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and the end of the earth.

+ Jerusalem

Being the city of the Great King that has the altar, it suggests that the heart and the spiritual life of the person, is the altar of the Lord. It means that I should take care of my spiritual life and my eternity first, as St. Paul told his disciple Timothy: “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” I Timothy 4:16. So the person continues his service with constant repentance, confession and receiving of the Holy Communion for the salvation of his soul.

+ Judea

The Jews are the nation to whom Christ came, but they rejected him. The testimony in Judea is the ministry of the servant in his own house, with his family and the small community he lives in. “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” I Timothy 5:8. “For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the children of God?” I Timothy 3:4-5.

+ Samaria

Samaria was a mixture of Jews and atheists. The testimony in Samaria represents the ministry of the servant amidst the diligent believers and the weaker souls.

+ The end of the earth

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things: Romans 10:15.

It is preaching among the other religions and those who have no religion.

Specific steps in preparing the Youth for the Service:

- 1) The youth must experience the relationship with Christ in their personal life through their continual confession, repentance, receiving of the Holy Communion, spiritual readings, and attending church regularly.
- 2) The youth have to start their service by simple jobs and not to hasten to taking teaching or controlling positions in the church. A youth may serve in the social activities, the library, taking care of the church building and the sacred vessels. If he was blessed by being a deacon, he should enjoy the beauty of the hymns and the service in self-denial.
- 3) A youth should always be careful of his salvation and should behave properly among his family and friends at school or work.
- 4) Then the youth will evolve in love, disregarding the ego and love of self, and start serving the sick and the disabled and needy.
- 5) A youth will gradually start, according to the Lord's gift for him, teaching a small class of Sunday school. Then to a larger class if God permits and lastly, the youth service or any other services.

Therefore, the movement from one stage of the service to the other should be very gradual. The servant has to feel unworthy and should totally submit to the will of God. Remember my dear that a true Christian has to be a servant.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: THE SPIRIT OF SERVING **by Pope Shenouda III**

1. THE WARMTH OF THE SERVICE:

How nice is the saying of the Apostle Paul in this respect “who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation.” (2 Cor. 11:29). Also, his saying, “I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. 9:19-22). His zeal, in flaming love, encompassed all.

2. VISITS OF SERVICE:

Our Fathers, the Apostles, did not neglect the service they began but used all means to follow it up: by sending epistles, or disciples—as Paul used to send Titus or Timothy. Frequently, they used to make special visits, as expressed by St. Paul in his saying, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are going.. ” (Acts 15:36).

3. SERVICE FILLED WITH SPIRIT AND POWER:

The Apostles did not serve except after they received the Holy Spirit, as the Lord said to them, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me. ” (Acts 1:8).

How beautiful are the words of the Bible in this respect “And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4 : 33).

Beautiful also is that which was said about St. Stephen that he was, “Full of faith and power.” (Acts 6 : 8). He stood against synagogues, “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.” (Acts 6 : 10). The nature of the spiritual service is powerful as it is from the Spirit, “for the word of God is living and powerful.” (Heb. 4:12).

4. SERVICE FILLED WITH LOVE:

The Lord Jesus “Loved His own... to the end.” (John 13:1), and with the same love He served the Apostles. It was not a mere official service.

ALWAYS REMEMBER

1. Remember your weakness, then you will be more cautious and you will not submit to the thoughts of pride and false glory which may attack you.
2. Remember the loving kindness of the Lord bestowed on you, and you will always lead a life of thanksgiving. Faith will grow in your heart as well as the trust in God's love and work. Your past experiences with God would encourage you in the life of faith.
3. Remember people's love and their good past with you. Should you doubt their sincerity or find out they have done something wrong to you, their old love will make intercession for them and your anger will fade away.
4. Remember death, so all worldly temptations will disappear and you feel that, "all is vanity and grasping for the wind." (Eccl. 1:14).
5. Remember that you are standing before God and He is looking at you, then you cannot sin because you see Him.
6. Remember God's promises, and you will be comforted in all your troubles. But, if you forget them, say with David the Prophet, "Remember Your word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction. For Your word has given me life." (Ps. 119:49-50).
7. Remember the Blood of Jesus which was shed for your sake and you will definitely know the value of your life; it becomes dear in your eyes, so you will not waste it with prodigal living, "for you were bought at a price." (1 Cor. 6:20).
8. Remember the vows you made to God at the Baptistery which your parents undertook on your behalf: to renounce the devil, all his evil deeds, all his thoughts and wiles, all his forces and power.
9. Remember always that you are a stranger on the earth and that you will return to your heavenly home: then you will not put all your hopes in this world and its comforts.
10. Remember that the narrow gate leads to the kingdom of heaven. If you see the wide gate open before you, escape and keep away from it, as all those who went in by it, they all perished.
11. Remember your eternity and work for it at all times.
12. Remember that you are a child of God, and ought to have His image. You walk as fits the Children of God, for they are apparent.
13. Remember that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in you. Be always a holy temple.
14. Remember all that I said to you on this page and if you have already forgotten, please read it over again.

SEEK FAITH

St. Paul the Apostle says, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves”. (2 Cor. 13:5).

The faith here is not that of the mind or just the name; it is the real faith, a life-style that one lives in God and shows in all his deeds and all his feelings.

The life of faith means complete submission to God an extreme trust in His work within you and within the Church.

Faith cuts a road in the sea and lets water flow from the rock. It is enough to see that the Bible says, “With God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26). Do you have the practical faith by which you can do everything in Christ? Or is your faith weak and cannot stand tribulations?

If it is so, what should you do? The Lord says, “According to your faith, let it be to you.” (Matt. 9:29). The only solution is to pour yourself before God and openly say to Him: Lord I believe, but my faith has not reached the practical level yet. My faith is like the bruised reed that You, due to Your love, wouldn't break; and like the smoking flax that, due to Your compassion, You would not quench. Accept me, O Lord, with my weaknesses.

Grant me this faith, a gift from You. Do not say, “I will give you according to your faith” and do not make faith a condition for the gift. Let faith be the gift itself.

Grant me to believe in You, submit my life to You and trust in Your dispensation. It is sufficient for me to believe that You will grant me faith. Isn't it also “a gift from above,” from You, and nobody can believe without Your grace?

You say, “Only believe”. Even this faith I want from You so I would not think that my humanity has done anything without You...

I am still waiting for this faith by which I could do everything through Your grace.

I believe that You'll give me, and I wish, after being in Your presence, to say, “I believe that You have given me.”

My faith will then change from a desire and a request to a reality and a life.

VISITS IN MINISTRY

Visiting is a kind of pastoral care. St. Paul said about it, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city, where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” (Acts 15 :36).

Visiting a person or caring for him is essential for whoever is in a position of responsibility.

The Bishop and the Priest visit the flock, the servant visits and asks about his children and the father looks after his children. Even an ordinary believer should sit to himself and review his life, to see where he is going...

Visiting others means being concerned about them and wishing to make sure they are all right.

Therefore, visits create a deep feeling of mutual love. You visit or ask about the one you love, and the one whom you visit or ask about will love you for being concerned about him...

The opposite is also true; lack of care creates a feeling of loneliness and depression. How easy it is for one to say, “There is nobody to ask about me, not even the Church and the Priests!”

Many of our brothers were lost because nobody visited or cared for them, or when this took place it was too late: either because matters, by that time, had become complicated, or their hearts became void of responsive feelings, love of goodness and love of the one asking about them...

For this reason, the quick action, whether visits or care, solves problems before they become serious.

This applies especially to those who are young, weak, new in faith or those who are facing tribulations or temptations or suffering certain pressures and are unable to save themselves or find a solution...

There is a big difference between such a visit full of care and concern and a mere social visit...

You might visit a person but without being concerned about him!

You might visit him and talk about many things without referring to God and the extent of this person's relationship with Him. A pastoral visit means getting into one's life, finding out his problems and helping in solving them..., creating a deep relationship between him and God...

Pastoral care means to visit others, bringing God with you... And when you leave, you must have left God in their homes and in their hearts.

I wish in conclusion that you would ask yourself: who needs your visit or care? Whom have you visited but not actually cared for?!

FIRMNESS

How easy it is for one to start a spiritual life and live with God for days or weeks then relapses and regresses backward losing everything...!

It is important then for the one who starts, to continue, settle and become firm.

Therefore, the Lord said, "Abide in Me, and I in you." (John 15:4).

He explained to us the importance of the branch's firmness in the vine in order to bear fruit. He praised His saintly disciples not only because they stood by His side during trials ; but as He said, "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. " (Luke 22:28). So He praised their firmness.

In the parable of the sower the Lord tells us about those who were not firm, "...and because they had no root, they withered away... and the thorns sprang up and choked them." (Matt. 13:6).

Therefore, St. Paul the apostle does not talk only about the importance of faith but more about being firm in faith.

He says, "...on those who fell, severity; but towards you goodness if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off." (Rom. 11:22).

He also says to the Colossians, "...to present you holy... if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast." (Col. 1:22-23). And he blames the Galatians who, "having begun in the spirit", but did not continue and, "...are now being made perfect by the flesh." (Gal. 3:3).

Many are those whom the Apostle tearfully mentioned, because they did not continue in firmness.

Some started serving actively, but did not continue...!

Others loved the idea of consecration, but did not abide!

And others started by loving God, then left their first love!

How grim it is for one to live the life of the tabernacle and altar with Abraham, then ends up in Sodom.

Or starts as one of the twelve, and then betrays Jesus.

Or starts his life as a mighty victorious and a Nazirite to God and the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him then ends up shaving his hair and pulling the grinder...!

Abiding in the spirit is a test for our will in the midst of tribulations. Therefore, the Bible says, "Remember those... whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct." (Heb. 13:7). They were steadfast and were made perfect in faith.

YOU YOURSELF BE GOOD NEWS

People need one who makes them happy and alleviates their troubles. With the hope that he has, he can let in light to shine amidst their tribulations making them disappear and giving a new hope...

You too, be like that. If you have a joyful word, give it to people. If you have inconvenient word, postpone uttering it in order not to cause trouble to others.

Blessed are the words of the Bible, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things." (Rom. 10:15).

Be cheerful with everyone and do your utmost to spread happiness among people.

Meet people with a gentle smile and a sweet word, for people do not like frowning or angry looks that make them lose the peace of heart and quietness.

Make people happy to meet you, make them feel that you bring them joy and that your arrival is good news to them.

Look how people draw a good omen and rejoice in a happy word that they read in the horoscope or fortune-book. It could fill their heart with joy and boost their morale although nobody knows the future except God. What made them happy was nothing but a word...

Can't you see that the word Gospel means Good News?! Preaching the Gospel was the announcing of the Good News which the Angel gave to the shepherds, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people." (Luke 2:10).

Look how the Lord Jesus Christ said to the people, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28).

So, if you are unable to carry people's burdens, at least do not cause them troubles.

Look how the photographers ask people to smile before they take their photo. They want the picture to be a happy one. You too should be smiling so that your face might be a source of joy for people...

Some wrongly think that religion means a gloomy face and that gloominess indicates seriousness! Religion is in fact joy, and gentleness and joy are the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22).

FORGET WHAT IS BEHIND

St. Paul the Apostle said, "...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press towards the goal." (Phil. 3:13). By referring to what is behind St. Paul did not mean sins but righteousness; that he put his virtues behind and was pressing forward.

Therefore, it justifies the saying, "A good man forgets all the good deeds that he has done as he is too busy in the good deeds that he is still doing..."

The saints never put their good deeds in front of them, but behind. They forget such deeds and never talk about them. And if it happens that somebody mention their deeds in their presence, they change the subject so that this person would forget this too...

If they remember their good deeds, they might feel self-satisfaction about their present state and forget about the work of grace in them. But if they forget these deeds and remember nothing but God's grace that works in them, then they will reach forward, feeling that there are wide spheres ahead of them, leading to the desired perfection...

I wish you would forget the past completely, not only the righteousness you did in it but also all hardships and troubles you faced therein. Forget also the evil which spoils the purity of the heart when you remember... Instead of that, reach forward in positive steps towards the love of God... and towards eternity...

Poor are those who limit their thoughts to the past with all its troubles, mistakes or its sweet dreams. There would not be any time or strength left for them to do something for the future.

They talk about the beauty of the past, the greatness of the past, either boasting in it or grieving over it. As for the present, there is nothing about it, it does not exist, the same goes with the future... etc.

The beautiful past cannot satisfy you if the present is troublesome. Therefore, do not live on sweet memories but reach forward. Let your present always be better than your past...

Do not remember from the past except what could make your present better and gives you a push forward in repentance or in growth...

THE CONTRITE PRAYER

There are many characteristics that distinguish a spiritual prayer. One of these is to pray with faith and humility, with understanding, concentration, love, depth and warmth. It is a prayer from the heart, not only from the lips. We would like to talk now about prayer from a contrite heart.

“The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.” (Ps. 51:17).

God never rejects the contrite. The contrite prayer of the tax-collector was accepted by God.

So the tax-collector went out justified though his words were few... only one sentence.

The contrite prayer is a prayer of a person who confesses his sins and his unworthiness.

There is no self-justification in such a prayer, nor excuses but confession that one deserves judgment. In such a prayer, the tax-collector did not dare to lift up his eyes but stood afar in humility...

The contrite prayer might sometimes be accompanied with tears.

It is like the prayer of Hannah, the mother of Samuel and like Peter's tears after he denied the Lord. But these tears should not be artificial or fake nor be a matter of boasting that makes oneself great in one's own eyes or in the eyes of others.

The contrite prayer gives more thanks than demands. In such a prayer one feels unworthy to ask for anything or feels so ashamed of one's sins that one does not dare to ask for anything except God's mercy. In such a prayer one thanks for everything, feeling that one deserves nothing.

The contrite prayer is at the same time a solemn prayer.

In prostration, it is not only the head that clings to the dust, but one says with the psalmist, "My soul clings to the dust." (Ps. 119:25).

It is a prayer that stands in reverence before God, talks to Him with respect, understanding and humble words.

The contrite prayer is a prayer of dust and ashes. It is the prayer of one who sees himself as nothing more than dust and ashes. Like Job after the trials (Job 42:6) and our father Abraham (Gen. 10) and Nehemiah in his humility, tears and confession (Neh. 1).

"Who am I Lord to talk to You?! It is a great modesty from the Lord of Lords to listen to dust."

DO NOT RESIST EVIL

In the Sermon on the mountain, the Lord said, "But I tell you not to resist evil." (Matt. 5:39). That was said with regard to being subject to aggression, so one should not revenge for himself. In the same regard, St. Paul the Apostle said, "Repay no one evil for evil, do not avenge yourselves." (Rom. 12:17-19).

The Lord Jesus Christ stood silent before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate, without defending Himself; while if He had done, He would have convinced them all. But, "He was led as a lamb to

the slaughter, so He opened not His mouth.” (Isa. 53:7). His refusal to resist puzzled Pilate, so he said, “I have found no fault in this Man.” (Luke 23:14).

Joseph the Righteous, was cast into a pit by his brothers and he did not resist. He was sold as a slave and did not resist. Even when Potiphar put him in prison, he did not resist. He had a strong heart that resisted not. But God in Heaven saw and witnessed and it was all recorded...

The righteous Abel did not resist his brother Cain.

David the Prophet did not resist Saul.

In the act of non-resistance there is reliance on God the Almighty.

In most cases of resistance, there is self-reliance... The one who does not resist evil has the virtue of endurance within him. He also has the virtue of patience and the faith that God will act and interfere.

In silence, there is submission to God’s will. Mostly, the one who resists could easily be agitated. He gets excited quickly, reacts quickly and answers back quickly. He also quickly loses his love to the one who offends him.

The non-resistance of evil needs souls that are strong: strong in faith and strong in endurance.

I wish you would train yourself to attain this virtue. This does not mean that you abstain from resisting and wait for God to revenge for you? but to remain silent and forget the offence.

Do not react on the outside but even inside train yourself to remain calm without being upset.

Lift up yourself above the offence and lift up your heart to God. Do not revenge for yourself because God alone is your defender.

WHEAT AND TARES

God has sent you to the earth to spread goodness. As for the evil that is on the earth, leave it and do not resist it.

It is a wise policy that the Lord gave us in the parable of the tares in Matthew 13. His servants asked Him, “Do You want us to go and gather them up? But He said, “No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.” (Matt. 13:28-29).

So the tares remained on the earth and the Lord allowed it not only to stay but to grow and grow till the harvest. It is not for us to gather it...

As for you, have you fatigued yourself in pulling the tares while it is still on the earth. Have you lost your spirituality in doing this, but did not succeed nor win yourself...? Perhaps you have found out that your wheat was uprooted with the tares or became like it in anger and the loss of peace, and perhaps in losing some of the love you had!!

If you feel tired, come and let us both grow wheat together; sow the seeds of good everywhere. Let us plant new seeds and water them with the living water and pray that God may make them grow. Let us ask Him in our prayers and in the Holy Mass to bring them up according to their measure, according to His grace and to accord a cheerful touch to the face of the land, that its furrows may be watered and its fruits be plentiful...

Sow the seeds of good everywhere. Do not be troubled if some of them fall on stony places or among the thorns... Forget all that and rejoice in the few seeds that fell on good soil and grew... This is your portion from all your toil. It is also the portion of God.

Do not waste your time, your nerves or your spirituality in uprooting evil from the earth, but be positive in doing good.

How beautiful is the saying, “Instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle.”

Light does not struggle with darkness, but the mere presence of light is enough to disperse darkness.

PRACTICING CEASELESS PRAYERS

You cannot reach at once what the saints attained in several years. Therefore, you need to follow these gradual steps:

Decide, for yourself, on a short prayer that suits you. You may repeat it several times, in depth, expressing your personal feelings.

Use this prayer at your leisure to keep yourself busy lest your thoughts should wander over trifles or sins. That is how you can gain a double profit: praying and also resisting evil thoughts. At the same time, you use your time in what helps you spiritually.

Keep your mind busy with prayer while you are among people whose talk has nothing to do with your salvation. You do not benefit from it, and, at the same time, you'll be embarrassed to withdraw from them. At least, be there physically, but, as for your heart, keep it busy with God in prayer without anybody noticing.

You may also busy yourself with these prayers during the time you spend in public transport or in waiting for it or while you are waiting for somebody. This could also save you from anxiety.

You may repeat these short prayers while you are having your meals. It feeds your spirit while your body is receiving its food. At the same time, you'll keep table etiquette.

If anyone talks to you during these prayers, do not ignore him by remaining silent thus getting yourself into trouble, but answer him briefly and quietly, then go back to your prayers...

You may also repeat these prayers while you are in bed before you go to sleep. This will keep your subconscious busy with spiritual things, besides the act of praying. By doing this, your bed will be sanctified and your dreams kept pure.

When you wake up, start also by repeating these prayers, even before washing your face. Thus your first thought becomes spiritual and the first one you talk to will be God.

Whenever you find a chance to pray, take advantage of it. That is how you overcome the problem of "wasting time" and get used to prayer.

All these prayers shall not prevent you from practicing the Agpeya prayers (the Book of Hours) or your personal prayers, and standing in reverence before God...

BASICS IN TEACHING SUNDAY SCHOOL

THE PREPARATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

1 WHAT IS A SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON?

1. It is not a record of events that we convey to the students with the hopes of appearing to satisfy the required preparation process in front of other people. Neither is it a lecture that we deliver to our audience or student regardless of their interest in the matter.

2. However, it is, on one hand, a fruit of the live reaction between the servant and the lesson and, on the other hand, between the servant and the students. The Holy Spirit matures this fruit and directs this service towards the salvation of the students and towards the glory of God.

For if the servant who teaches the people does not teach himself, the voice of the Lord will rebuke him saying, " You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? " (Romans 2:21), and again in James 3:1, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgement."

Therefore, the servant should engage himself in the lesson through prayers, relevant spiritual readings, and practical application, so that when the servant speaks with his students from experience and true knowledge, he says, with St. John the Beloved, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-" (1 John 1:1)

If a servant is not aware of the spiritual level of his students, he may burden them with instructions and lessons, which they cannot handle nor apply, and this, in turn, may cause the students to go astray and lose their eternal life. Therefore, it is crucial for the servant to establish a healthy, trustworthy, and fruitful relationship with his students; as well as to share in their joys and cheers, and their sadness and fears. This is what St. Paul refers to in his epistle to the Galatians when he says, "My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19). This close relationship with the students allows the servant to choose the most appropriate lesson that caters to their needs.

Hence a Sunday school lesson is:

A live mixture between the personal lives of the servants and the students through the lesson; the Holy Spirit creates this mixture and allows it to result in the bearing of fruit.

2 THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

1. Humility in prayer before God. God said, "...for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) My beloved brethren, sit down in peace and tranquility with the Lord and talk to Him about your personal need for Him in your service. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and pray saying, "Guide me dear God. What would you like my students and I to learn this week?" Be obedient to His voice. It would be suitable to maintain a prayer time which equals that of the lesson.

2. Accurate knowledge of the meanings contained within the lesson. This is achieved through:

a) Occupying yourself throughout the week with understanding the new lesson, starting from the end of the previous lesson until the beginning of the new one. It is wise to use your free

time, time before sleep, and time with fellow servants to increase and enhance your understanding of the lesson.

b) Resorting to spiritual and religious references and literature to help you develop the right understanding and concepts behind the lines.

c) Resorting to general educational references and literature to embody this understanding and these concepts, making them clear in the minds of your students.

3. Aids of presentation.

It is important that you transform your understanding of the lesson into a simple and clear presentation. It has been stated and proved that 85% of knowledge acquired is acquired through the sense of sight and visual learning, as opposed to the 10% that is acquired through the sense of hearing. The rest of the knowledge acquired is done through the other three senses.

In reality, the least effective way of transmitting knowledge to others is by merely talking; this has the weakest influence on the students. In contrast, the most effective way to teach is to use the "Learning by Doing" method, which requires enough time as well as experience.

What differentiates between the effectiveness of the two means of presentation, are the tools used in the presentation. These tools aid the students in effectively understanding and retaining the purpose of the lesson by engaging both senses of sight and sound. These tools may include audiovisual devices such as pictures and movies, spiritual trips and outings, role playing during class, intellectually stimulating games, etc.

C. RECORDING THE LESSON.

It is recommended that the servant records the following during the preparation of the lesson:

Date of the preparation of the lesson.

Date of the delivery of the lesson.

Title of the lesson.

Purpose of the lesson.

References.

Preface.

Lesson.

Inference.

Bible verse.

Homework.

Aids of presentation.

Other points for memory.

SONGS.

Personal reflections of the servant.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

It is necessary for the servant to clearly understand the purpose of the lesson at the beginning of their preparation. It is also necessary that the purpose of the lesson agrees with the maturity level

of the students. For example, it is more appropriate for children to learn about God's love. On the other hand, learning about the power of God in their lives and in the lives of the saints is more appropriate subject matter for youth. As for young adults, learning about Christian virtues and spiritual practices is most appropriate. Most importantly, the purpose of the lessons should agree with Coptic Orthodox Christian teachings, whether in specific occasions or in general.

REFERENCES:

References could include:

- a. Stories, examples, verses, etc. from the Holy Bible.
- b. Spiritual books and literature.
- c. General educational books and literature.

Recording the references is very useful for the servant because it helps the servant to refer back to them, if forgotten.

PREFACE:

The preface is the background of the lesson. It cultivates the thoughts of the students and directs their thoughts towards the lesson. This allows the lesson to be implanted in their minds and to, eventually, bear fruit. It is important that the preface remain simple, short, and concise. The introduction could be in the form of focused questions, but should not be in the form of stories. Several stories in one lesson may deteriorate its effectiveness.

THE LESSON:

The lesson could be divided into the following sections:

1. Introduction - it should be quick and concise and related to the preface. It should introduce the lesson smoothly without interrupting the chain of thoughts.
2. Body of the lesson - it contains the principle subject of the lesson, and follows these guidelines:
 - a. You must be accurate and careful when explaining theological concepts.
 - b. You must be careful when relating events and examples to elucidate the subject of the lesson, in order to properly guide the students' imagination without restricting it.
 - c. You must diligently expose the Coptic Orthodox doctrine in the lesson.
 - d. You should not use more than one story during the lesson and the story used should be relevant to the subject matter.
3. Focal Point - the point during the lesson at which the purpose of the lesson is clearly defined. (Examples: The Lord responds to the prayers of a needy person, or the angels come to give the saints their heavenly crowns and take them to heaven after many trials and persecutions.)
4. Conclusion - it should be, like the introduction, short and concise. It can summarize the

purpose of the lesson, without introducing any new concepts.

INFERENCES:

Inference is a method used to determine how much the students have absorbed and retained from the lesson. It should be in the form of questions with the following guidelines:

- a. They should clearly show the purpose of the lesson.
- b. They should suit the maturity of the students.
- c. They should be simple and direct.
- d. They should relate to each other.
- e. They should not be `Yes' or `No' questions.
- f. They should each have one correct answer.

BIBLE VERSE:

The memorization of a Bible verse is an excellent way to help the students remember the purpose of the lesson. The chosen Bible verse should meet the following guidelines:

- a. It should show the purpose of the lesson clearly.
- b. It should be short which allows it to be easily memorized.
- c. Children can easily memorize, as well as understand it.

HOMEWORK:

The height of your diligence in preparing the lesson is in choosing the proper and effective homework or application. The homework should have the following characteristics:

- a. It should contain practical applications that apply to everyday life.
- b. It should suit the maturity level of the students.
- c. It should help in mastering the comprehension and retention of the lesson.
- d. It should not include more than one instruction, in order to simplify the application of the lesson.

GUIDELINES IN TEACHING EACH GRADE

TEACHING PRE-SCHOOLERS (Ages 4 to 5 years old)

1. This age is characterized by the inclination towards movements, playing and exploring the world around the child through his or her personal experimentation.
2. In this age the child forms the idea of “I” and concentrates on himself or herself and wants to take everything for himself or herself. We must not expect the child to get rid of the love of thyself quickly but it will take time, effort and prayer.
3. Some of the children also at this stage would like to do opposite of what they are told to do. Kindness and understanding are key factors in treating the children with this respect.
4. Imitation is one of the key characteristics of this age. This can be positively utilized to enhance the love of the children to worship, to get used to going regularly to church, to learn to give to the poor, to learn to deal nicely with people, to learn the polite way of talking, etc. The child is very flexible and ready to be shaped. As the adults around the child follow good manners, the child also easily imitates them.
5. In addition to all the above, the teacher must: start from simple to more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts and back to the total again. Children must love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very eager to attend the class.
6. The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Illustration means limiting the wide imagination of the children at this age. More effective than the illustration means, are the good stories, the hymns accompanied with music, the class activities such as coloring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

TEACHING GRADE 1 (Age 5 to 6 years)

- 1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed: An ability to organize and classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out of a plan. We can see this reflected in their play.
- 2) There is now a far more clear consciousness of “justice” than there had been before. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is “mine” and “not mine”. Along with the sense of “law” and conscious “law breaking”, there is a growth, a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.
- 3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect, and, in listening to Bible stories will show interest in God’s plan for the world.
- 4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities such as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5) Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, except that His suffering and death were not the end, because He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6) In addition to all the above, the teacher should: start from simple to the more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts and back to the total again. **Children should love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very anxiously to class.**

TEACHING GRADE 2 (Ages 7 to 8 years)

1. This age range is characterized by an important mental developmental stage. A sense of cause and effect is developed, as well as an ability to organize and classify, and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in their daily life.

2. There is now a far clearer consciousness of “justice” compared to previous experiences. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clearer understanding of what is “mine” and “not mine”. Along with the sense of “law” and the conscious of “law breaking”, there is a growth, a development of finer feelings, compassion, the desire to protect someone weaker than oneself, and acceptance of certain moral standards.

3. Children at these ages will show interest in cause and effect, and, upon listening to Bible stories, will show interest in God’s plan for the world.

4. The story must be given without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by relevant hymns and class activities such as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5. Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the sufferings of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, because He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we would have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6. In addition to all the above, the teacher should start with the simplest known facts, to lead the children discover the unknown. Children will end up loving the teacher, the class, the lessons and come eagerly to class.

TEACHING GRADE 3 (Age 8 to 9 years)

1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed: an ability to organize, classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in how they play.

2) Now, there is a far more clear consciousness of "justice" than there has been before. The

instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is "mine" and "not mine". Along with the sense of "law" and conscious "law breaking", there is a growth, and a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.

3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect, and, in listening to Bible stories; they will also show interest in God's plan for the world.

4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities such as, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5) Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, as He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at an older age.

6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from simple to more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts and back to the total again. Children should love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very anxiously to class.

TEACHING GRADE 4 (Age 9 to 10 years)

1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed, an ability to organize and classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in their play.

2) There is now a far more clear consciousness of "justice" than there had been before. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is "mine" and "not mine". Along with the sense of "law" and conscious "law breaking" there is a growth, a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.

3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect, and, in listening to Bible stories, and will show interest in God's plan for the world.

4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5) Although it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of Our Lord Jesus Christ as the One who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, as He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from simple to the more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts of back to the total again. Children

should love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very anxiously to class.

TEACHING GRADE 5 (Age 10 to 11)

(1) Children at this age have molded into a certain shape, into certain patterns of behaviour that were superimposed on their natural character. They have been exposed for years to the influence of their family background, their parents, brothers and sisters and relatives. The cultural and ethical standards of the family have influenced their attitudes, made them different from each other.

Whatever their special situation within the family did to affect their personality: jealousy, rejection, possessiveness, competitiveness, etc., these have left deep traces. They are less spontaneous and more self-conscious than at an earlier age. Sunday school teachers will find children less open at this age than at earlier ages.

(2) Sunday School teachers have another difficulty in trying to relate to the students' homes. As Sunday school instruction progresses, it often happens that the religious ideas conveyed there are not in agreement with the concepts of the parents. Thus the teacher has to show great understanding and tact when dealing in class with a child's statement, "Yes, but Daddy says that..." or "Mother says that the Church teaches..." The teacher must always try to see the element of truth in whatever beliefs are held at home: "Yes, this is very interesting. I think the reason for this is that..." He can then add and expand the ideas he wants to convey.

(3) Relations between boys and girls are very self-conscious. They are definitely two different groups usually critical of each other and slightly inimical towards one another.

(4) The search for meaning is now at the start of a new intensive phase, for the onset of clearer thought creates problems in the child's religious ideas. Childish concepts are clung to, but the doubts and confusions are already appearing. At previous stages the child happily kept together unrelated and often contradictory ideas, but now he is becoming aware of the need to relate and reconcile these apparent contradictions.

We require an intensive effort in teaching religion at this stage to help them grow into a "one-world" view of life, rather than a dualistic system which separates religion from the rest of life.

(5) The teacher has to have a real theological maturity to be able to put down things clearly, simply and briefly.

(6) Another type of thinking that one frequently meets at this age is a conscious separation of knowledge into two different parts - one that is learned at school, read about in books, or heard about on TV, and the other that is taught in Church and in Sunday school. The task of the Sunday school teacher in this period is to help them in this process. It has to be relevant to their experience of life, to their interests and curiosity, to the secular knowledge they are acquiring at school, to the human relations they are developing. In other words, the Christian doctrine taught must become part of their own thinking and their knowledge of life as a total experience.

(7) The children's knowledge of the Bible, especially of the New Testament, is very uneven. There are a few stories that they have heard over and over again, and this gives them a false sense of "knowing" the Bible. On the other hand their very limited knowledge of the scriptures,

both in facts and in meaning, is quite clear. Not even the Sermon on the Mount has reached their attention in full, and they have no idea of the meaning of the Old Testament, except for a few stories. This age is a good time to train the children on the use of the Bible and especially the New Testament as a resource book. Learning to know which parts of the Bible are used during the church services they attend, and how to find the appropriate readings, increases their familiarity with the scriptures.

TEACHING GRADE 6 (Age 11 to 12)

1) Children at this age have molded into a certain shape, into certain patterns of behavior that were superimposed on their natural character. They have been exposed for years to the influence of their family background, their parents, brothers and sisters and relatives. The cultural and ethical standards of the family have influenced their attitudes, made them different from each other.

Whatever their special situation within the family did to affect their personality jealousy, rejection, possessiveness, competitiveness, etc. — these have left deep traces. They are less spontaneous and more self-conscious than at an earlier age. Sunday school teachers will find children less open at this age than at earlier ages.

2) Sunday School teachers have another difficulty in trying to relate to the students' homes. As Sunday school instruction progresses, it often happens that the religious ideas conveyed there are not in agreement with the concepts of the parents. Thus the teacher has to show great understanding and tact when dealing in class with a child's statement, "Yes, but Daddy says that..." or "Mother says that the Church teaches..." The teacher must always try to see the element of truth in whatever beliefs are held at home: "Yes, this is very interesting. I think the reason for this is that..." He or she can then add and expand the ideas he or she wants to convey.

3) Relations between boys and girls are very self-conscious. They are definitely two different groups — usually critical of each other and slightly inimical toward each other.

4) The search for meaning is now at the start of a new intensive phase, for the onset of clearer thought creates problems in the child's religious ideas. Childish concepts are clung to, but the doubts and confusions are already appearing. At previous stages the child happily kept together unrelated and often contradictory ideas, but now he or she is becoming aware of the need to relate and reconcile these apparent contradictions.

We require an intensive effort in teaching religion at this stage to help him or her grow into a "one-world" view of life, rather than a dualistic system, which separates religion from the rest of life.

5) The teacher has to have a real theological maturity to be able to put down things clearly, simply and briefly.

6) Another type of thinking that one frequently meets at this age is a conscious separation of knowledge into two different parts - one that I learn at school, read about in books, or hear about on TV, and the other that is taught in Church and in Sunday school. The task of the Sunday school teacher in this period is to help them in this process. It has to be relevant to their experience of life, to their interests of curiosity, to the secular knowledge they are acquiring at school, to the human relations they are developing. In other words, the Christian doctrine taught

must become part of their own thinking and their knowledge of life as a total experience.

7) The children's knowledge of the Bible, especially of the New Testament, is very uneven. There are a few stories that they have heard over and over again, and this gives them a false sense of "knowing" the Bible. On the other hand, their very limited knowledge of the scriptures, both in facts and in meaning, is quite clear. Not even the Sermon on the Mount has reached their attention in full, and they have no idea of the meaning of the Old Testament, except for few stories. This age is a good time to train the children on the use of the Bible and especially the New Testament as a resource book. Learning to know which parts of the Bible are used during the church services they attend, and how to find the appropriate readings, increases their familiarity with the scriptures.

TEACHING GRADE 7 AND 8: (Age 13 to 14)

(1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed, an ability to organize and classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in their play.

(2) There is now a far more clear consciousness of "justice" than there has been before. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is "mine" and "not mine". Along with the sense of "law" and consciousness of "law breaking" there is a growth, a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.

(3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect and, in listening to Bible stories, will show interest in God's plan for the world.

(4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures ... etc.

(5) Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, but He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian. Approach to the problem of suffering and they will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

(6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from simple to the more difficult facts, from known to the unknown and from general to specific and going back to the bigger picture. Children should love the teacher, the class, and the lesson and come very anxiously to class.

TEACHING GRADE 9 (Adolescence: Age 14 To 15)

1) By definition adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this series is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness, and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **Sensitivity and dissatisfaction**. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families and with their own

appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day). Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do is to discover themselves and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

4) What is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents then? Basically, the Church has to offer them **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith, and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding, and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.

5) Our adolescents need urgently two aspects of religious education in order to help them gain maturity. They need the opportunity to make religion a part of their own experience of life, their own thinking, their own motivation, through very informal free discussions, through participation in church work and through friendship. They also need to acquire information that will allow them to think intelligently, and will, at the same time, provide some material for evaluation and judgement.

6) All the teaching they need to acquire about the Bible and about the Church will be better assimilated if they feel a need for it. Thus teaching should be structured around questions and problems that are real to young people. The information must be presented as a means of finding answers. This kind of approach is very demanding on the leader, not only because he or she must be well informed, and must know where he or she can find information, but also because he or she must be flexible and sensitive to what takes place in the students' minds. Basically adolescents need information in the same areas that shaped our program for younger grades - doctrine, liturgies, Bible study, church history, spirituality, and ethics.

7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems

TEACHING GRADE10 (Adolescence: Age 15 to 16)

1) By definition adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this period is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes, which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **sensitivity** and dissatisfaction. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families, with their own appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day). Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they

often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do is to discover themselves, and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, about social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

4) What then is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents? Basically, the Church has to offer those **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.

5) Our adolescents need urgently two aspects of religious education in order to help them gain maturity. They need the opportunity to make religion a part of their own experience of life, their own thinking, and their own motivation, through very informal free discussions, through participation in church work and through friendship. They also need to acquire information that will allow them to think intelligently, and will, at the same time, provide some material for evaluation and judgement.

6) All the teaching they need to acquire about the Bible and about the Church will be better assimilated if they feel a need for it. Thus teaching should be structured around questions and problems that are real to young people. The information must be presented as a means of finding answers. This kind of approach is very demanding on the leader, not only because he must be well informed, and must know where he can find information, but also because he must be flexible and sensitive to what takes place in the students' minds. Basically adolescents need information in the same areas that shaped our program for younger grades - doctrine, liturgies, Bible study, church history, spirituality and ethics.

7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems.

TEACHING GRADE 11:

1) By definition adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this period is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes, which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **sensitivity** and dissatisfaction. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families, with their own appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day). Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do is to discover themselves, and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of

their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, about social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

4) What then is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents? Basically, the Church has to offer those **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.

5) Our adolescents urgently need two aspects of religious education in order to help them gain maturity. They need the opportunity to make religion a part of their own experience of life, their own thinking, and their own motivation, through very informal free discussions, through participation in church work and through friendship. They also need to acquire information that will allow them to think intelligently, and will, at the same time, provide some material for evaluation and judgement.

6) All the teaching they need to acquire about the Bible and about the Church will be better assimilated if they feel a need for it. Thus teaching should be structured around questions and problems that are real to young people. The information must be presented as a means of finding answers. This kind of approach is very demanding on the leader, not only because he must be well informed, and must know where he can find information, but also because he must be flexible and sensitive to what takes place in the students' minds. Basically adolescents need information in the same areas that shaped our program for younger grades - doctrine, liturgies, Bible study, church history, spirituality and ethics.

7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems.

TEACHING GRADE 12:

1) By definition, adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this period is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes, which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **sensitivity** and dissatisfaction. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families, with their own appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day).

Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do, is to discover themselves, and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, about social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

4) What then is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents? Basically, the Church has to offer those **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.

5) Our adolescents urgently need two aspects of religious education in order to help them gain maturity. They need the opportunity to make religion a part of their own experience of life, their own thinking, and their own motivation, through very informal free discussions, through participation in church work and through friendship. They also need to acquire information that will allow them to think intelligently, and will, at the same time, provide some material for evaluation and judgement.

6) All the teaching they need to acquire about the Bible and about the Church will be better assimilated if they feel a need for it. Thus teaching should be structured around questions and problems that are real to young people. The information must be presented as a means of finding answers. This kind of approach is very demanding on the leader, not only because he must be well informed, and must know where he can find information, but also because he must be flexible and sensitive to what takes place in the students' minds. Basically adolescents need information in the same areas that shaped our program for younger grades - doctrine, liturgies, Bible study, church history, spirituality and ethics.

7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems.

THE HOLY BIBLE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY BIBLE

1) WHAT IS THE HOLY BIBLE?

It is a book that is different from other books written by humans because:

a) IT IS THE BOOK OF THE WORDS OF GOD:

The Holy Bible is not based on human wisdom; its authors have been completely guided by the Holy Spirit in its creation. St. Paul says about what is written in the Holy Bible, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” 1Co 2:12-13. And in more direct word, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God” Eph 6:17. Then the words of God are like a “sword of spirit” with which we can overcome Satan and all his wars against us. Also, the words of the Holy Bible are very effective on the human being, since God is the Creator, therefore when we read the words of our Creator, it affects us and wakes up our consciences and gives us internal joy and hope in everything.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Tim 3:16-17.

Even though the Holy Spirit completely guided the Holy Bible's authors in terms of its content, it still allowed each writer to express his or her individual writing technique.

As an example, two of the prophets of the Old Testament – Isaiah and Jeremiah – had completely different styles of writing. Jeremiah is known to be a weeping prophet; he talks about repenting and weeping. He even has a book called Lamentations. But Isaiah is known to use nature or the creation that God has established in order to express his meanings there.

Another example is how the writings of Saint Paul are distinctively different from the writings of Saint Peter. So there was no prohibition or limitations from the Holy Spirit on the writers of the Holy Bible. But everything they wrote, all the meanings, are from the Holy Spirit. They say 40 writers contributed to the writing of the Holy Bible across 1600 years. It spans from the time of Moses the prophet at around the year 1500 BC, to Saint John the Evangelist at about 100 years after Christ. So in a span of 1600 years the whole Holy Bible was written and became a totally coherent book. You don't find contradictions, you don't find mistakes, you don't find anything unacceptable whatsoever.

This is why people say that the Holy Bible is the greatest miracle that mankind has ever known. Jesus our Lord said "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." Mathew 24:35. This is a very amazing thing; there were writers at different locations, writers of different ages, and writers of different capabilities. Some of them were fishermen and some of them were more sophisticated like Saint Paul. The whole book is completely coherent and completely correct the way it is because the author is God Himself.

b) IT IS THE BOOK OF HUMANITY:

You will find the history of humanity in the Holy Bible. It starts with the book of Genesis where we read about the creation of the world “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” Gen 1:1. Then, it covers all the ages before the Lord Jesus Christ (The Old Testament), followed by the New Testament, and continues until it talks about the end of this world and the Kingdom where: “the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea”. Rev 21:1

The Holy Bible is not intended to be a history book, but it is a book of life because it covers the entire history of humanity.

c) IT IS A BOOK OF SAYINGS THAT ALLOW ME TO DISCOVER MYSELF

The Holy Bible is a place where the creation meets its Creator. When the creation hears the voice of its Creator, through reading the Holy Bible, the person discovers his inner soul and researches within himself and reviews himself in everything he does. “To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?” Gen 32:17.
You find the answers to the above questions in the Holy Bible.

The person starts to think “to whom do you belong?” i.e. who controls yourself and your feelings? “Where are you going?” i.e. what is my destination and my eternity. “Whose are these in front of you?” means from where did you get what you own and how do you use it.

Consequently, one cannot have a relationship with God without it being a result of the Holy Bible and reading the words of God: “therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as front-lets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do- to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him, -then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western sea, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand against you: the Lord your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread just as He has said to you” Deut 11:18-25.

Also, in the epistle of St. Paul to his disciple Timothy he said, “but you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” 2 Tim 3:14-15.

2) THE PURPOSE OF READING THE HOLY BIBLE

Reading the Holy Bible has a unique purpose, and cannot be fulfilled through reading any other book. This purpose is to sustain our lives, for “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” Luke 4:4.

Reading the Holy Bible is not only for reviewing the word of God and communicating with Him. It is also not for serious reading with a goal of logically understanding things. The main and true goal of reading the Holy Bible is to get into the inner soul of the human being so he becomes in a state of unification and partnership with the words of the living God. Therefore, this reading is considered as “communion, or Holy union.” But it is different from the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as it is an absorption of the word of God in a different way, through the external senses, with our brain and our feelings. The prophet Ezekiel says: “moreover he said to me, 'son of man, eat what you find, eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.' So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And he said to me, 'Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you'. So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness”. Eze 3:1-3.

Reading the Holy Bible reproaches us sometimes, calls us, comforts us and strengthens us. Sometimes He captivates us and sometimes He despises us. Therefore, sometimes, I see myself as God likes me to be and not as what I am in my sins and weaknesses. It is a unique experience of reading.

Material food does not strengthen us unless we chew it and digest it. The same thing can be said of the Words of God: we have to eat it and let it go inside us, then we digest it, i.e. we keep the food inside us for a while and do not forget it.

3) **HOW DO I ACHIEVE THIS GOAL WHEN READING THE HOLY BIBLE?**

- a) I have to pray before and while I am reading the Holy Bible, such as St. Isaac the Syrian who said “Lord, qualify me to feel the strength of your book.”
- b) Reading the Holy Bible in every stage of our lives gives us a new meaning, new grace, and new joy; there is continuous change that happens within the person “change the way you look by changing your minds” Rom 12:2.

Note: in the Holy liturgy, we have a liturgy for the preached people as a preparation for them to take the Body and Blood of our Lord. The liturgy for the preached is like eating the written word of God for our senses and feelings and our internal development, then we actually take the Body and Blood of our Lord that is the edible word of God.

Understanding the word of God and spiritually benefiting from it.

To understand the Holy Bible in a logical way as information, is not enough and is not what is intended by reading the Holy Bible. A much better way is to spiritually benefit from it and go in depth and get close to God. The question now is: how can a person benefit spiritually from reading the Holy Bible?

a) To explain the Bible through the Bible:

By continuously reading the Holy Bible, we discover the internal structure of the Holy Bible and we discover the main outline.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the key to the Holy Bible. The New Testament is hidden in the Old

Testament and the Old Testament is in fact in the New Testament.

Example: Abraham takes his son Isaac to the mountain to offer him is an example of the Lord Jesus giving Himself up on the cross.

The return of Isaac alive is an example of the Lord's Resurrection conquering the pains of death.

The full understanding of the Holy Bible and tying the Old Testament with the New Testament requires enlightenment and God's help similar to the help which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to the two disciples of Emmaus “and He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scripture.” Luke 24:25.

That is why the Jews did not understand the Holy Bible as the Christians understand it because the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ were kept hidden from them in spite of its clarity in the Old Testament. Why? Because of their stubbornness, pride and stiffness.

b) Liturgies are a practical evidence of the Holy Bible.

All the liturgies in the Coptic Orthodox church are based on the Holy Bible and are a living explanation of it. For example, the Prayer of Reconciliation in the Basil Liturgy contains the following words: “O God the Eternal the Great who brought man with no corruption...” which are all from the Holy Bible. It conveys in a beautiful tone the reconciliation that God Himself arranged because He loved us so much, as well as the heavenly peace that God provided to humanity.

The readings of the Holy mass were written by the Fathers of the church and were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They were not written by humans, but were prepared as a spiritual meal to fit every occasion the church is celebrating for our spiritual benefit and to be able to live with God.

Another example are the readings for Holy Lent, which are carefully chosen to give the believers a spiritual journey with an element to conquer the devil (the temptation on the mountain), repentance (the prodigal son), hope (the Samaritan woman), and so on. All the church readings are chosen from the Holy Bible and they are magnificent because they enable the congregation to contemplate God's words in a timely way.

c) Explaining the Holy Bible through actual lives of the Church Fathers.

The fathers of the church are not just scholars of the Holy Bible, or know its content. Their lives are evidence of how to fulfill all the commandments that are in the Holy Bible and how they applied them to their lives. Their whole being became so spiritual because they immersed themselves totally with God. Therefore, the love of the Saints is a practical explanation of the Holy Bible and is very encouraging to anyone.

For example, Pope Athanasius the Apostolic – the greatest of all popes – was a very great man and a very spiritual person. He loved the Holy Bible and digested everything in it. He defended the belief and preserved the right doctrine.

The practical way to read the Holy Bible:

When reading the Holy Bible, there are many principles and methods that can help you understand and be affected by it:

a) Knowing the subjects and the main outline of the Holy Bible:

The main theme is the salvation of the souls and granting them the ability to enjoy eternity through the work of the Holy Trinity. Under that theme, there are many currents or elements we have to be alert of and know so that we can understand the true meaning of the Holy Bible. For instance, the story of the dream of Jacob in Genesis cannot be looked at as a story. It actually draws the picture of the work of Incarnation and the opening of Heaven onto earth.

b) Hearing God's voice in a personal way:

When reading the Holy Bible, the reader should start to search out to hear the voice of God talking to him in person based on his own needs and state. The elderly person in his readings will find something in it that fits him/her and the youth when reading the same passage will hear a different message that fits him/her. In reading the psalms, everyone has spiritual nourishment and wealth for the soul as if the psalms were written for them, because of the beauty of their meaning, their depth, and their simplicity at the same time.

c) Continue to write down your contemplations:

The best way to read the Holy Bible is when the reader uses a notepad beside him and writes down his/her thoughts and contemplations or some points that he/she needs clarification on.

d) Studying one or two verses a day:

As digestion is necessary for nourishment, we must also study verses from the Holy Bible and recite them with a loud voice to appreciate their depth. As Pope Shenouda III said:

“Study the psalms by heart and they will protect you.” Nothing is better than reciting Psalm 70 which starts with the beautiful words: “Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me. O Lord!”

In order to truly understand and be affected by the Holy Bible you might like to refer to the following simple guideline:

Reading
Meditating
Absorbing
Digesting
Applying

4) **THE STATUS OF THE HOLY BIBLE IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Our Coptic Orthodox church is a first degree church of the book. It is a church that is closely related to the Holy Bible. Its doctrines and beliefs are completely derived from the Holy Bible. You will see many expressions in the liturgy and hymns that are taken to the letter from the Holy Bible. The whole structure of personal worship including prayers, fasting and donations all conform to the instructions of the Holy Bible.

Even material relationships must abide with the instructions of the Holy Bible which is our main source for everything in our church. The church does not accept any other book or any other source that conflicts with the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible is the book of life of the church. The church does not accept any distortion or changes in it.

The Holy Bible is greatly respected in our church, we kiss it and bow our heads in respect when we read the Holy Bible, and we stand in awe and listen carefully to the Holy Bible. In all liturgies of the church, the church gives thanks to God and then in a humble worshiping spirit, they urge the congregation to contemplate and enjoy the Word of God through the Holy Bible. This way the Word of God becomes a nourishing food for the soul for everyone, each according to his/ her spiritual level.

Our Coptic Orthodox church is fully guided by the Holy Bible not only in liturgy and prayers but in all aspects of the church as shown in the following list:

1. In personal prayers
2. In Liturgies
3. In Rites of the Church
4. In Canons of the Church
5. In Holy Traditions
6. In Doctrines
7. In dealing with social issues
8. In Sacraments

Now the question is: why is all this importance given to the Holy Bible in all aspects of life? This is the question we will try to answer, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We could briefly respond by saying that it is the book of eternal life. This is evident when St. Peter said to our Lord Jesus: “Lord to whom we shall go? You have the words of eternal life” John 6:68.

It is not only the book of eternal life, i.e. after we leave this world. It is also the only book specialized in allowing us to experience heavenly joy while we are still on earth without ignoring our daily lives. The Holy Bible is the joyful Testament of the grace of the Lord working in our lives on a daily basis. The focus of these joys is our Lord Jesus Christ who gave us a meaningful life “...I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly” John 10:10.

Therefore, we can describe the Holy Bible as the book that announced the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus Christ did not do this for Himself, but for us all: for our resurrection, to defeat the devil, for our joy, and to gain eternity. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will try to enter into the spirit of the Holy Bible and understand its application in our lives. We do not mean here detailed research in the books of the Holy Bible.

5) **THE MEANINGS OF THE HOLY BIBLE**

While reading the Holy Bible, the reader must be aware of the fact that there maybe one or more meanings to the Holy Bible: the literary meaning (or historical), the symbolic meaning, the foreshadowing meaning and the eternal meaning.

a) Literal Meaning:

An example of the literal meaning of the Holy Bible is when Lot exited Sodom and went to Zoar Mountain, in Genesis 19:22. The literal meaning is clear – that Lot went out of Sodom - but the symbolic meaning is that the spirit should run away from the sinful environment surrounding it.

b) Symbolic Meaning:

The symbolic meaning when the Israelites were committing sin, in Psalm 16:1-16, was that they represented the whole human race in the darkness of sin, and the Lord had mercy on them and saved them. Psalm 16:8-14.

The church of Alexandria is known from its inception, from the second century, by its school that concentrated on the Holy Bible and explaining it symbolically. The approach was taken by the scholar Oreganos based on the teachings of his teacher St. Clements.

c) Foreshadowing Meaning:

There are many events in the Old Testament that foreshadowed an important event that actually happened in the New Testament, especially regarding the act of salvation of our Lord Jesus. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself drew our attention to this foreshadowing when He was talking to the Emmaus disciples by saying: 'ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' and beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:26-27.

The manna was a foreshadow, or symbol, of partaking of the Body and the Blood of our Lord: "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat it and not die" John 6:49-50. St. Paul talked about the exodus of the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt and their crossing of the Red Sea and God taking care of them for 40 years in the desert as a foreshadow of how humanity got rid of the slavery of Satan through baptism and how God is taking care of us through the heavenly food. He says: "moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." 1Cor 10:1-4.

d) The Eternal Meaning:

The eternal meaning is the meaning that leads us up high so that we transport ourselves from the literal, symbolic, and foreshadowing meaning, so we can discover a different meaning for the Holy Bible. This eternal meaning is about the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Eternal Kingdom (Eschatology). "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea" Revelation 21:11.

6) VERSIONS OF THE HOLY BIBLE

Why Are There Different Versions Of The Holy Bible?

When people hear there are over 50 different versions of the Holy Bible in English alone, they often think to themselves, "No wonder there are many denominations each teaching different things, there are many different versions of the Holy Bible." This view, however, is wrong. Yes there are many denominations, but that is not the result of the fact there are many versions of the Bible. There is one Bible.

First we need to understand what we mean by a "version". A better word than "version" is "translation". The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and the New Testament in ancient Greek. If every man could read Hebrew and Greek, then we would have no need for an "English version". Most people cannot read Greek, "It's all Greek to me"! We must rely, therefore, upon men who are fully fluent in English and Greek. These "scholars" read the original Greek Bible and come up with an English equivalent. This process is called translation.

We have all seen a foreign diplomat give a news conference through the help of a translator. One translator may choose different words or sentences, but the message is identical. Translation is a reliable science of communicating between different languages. Remember, it was God Himself who created all the language barriers in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel. God is satisfied that His inspired word can be maintained although translated into over 200 languages.

Translation of the Greek New Testament is a very precise science. The New American Standard Bible, for example, was translated over 10 years, by over 45 scholars and was first published in 1962 AD. Similar painstaking work was applied to the production of the New International (1978 AD), and King James (1611AD) and the New King James (1982AD). These translations and others like them were the products of many years of work from scholars from many denominations.

Each translation has its own strengths and weaknesses. The King James Version (KJV) is excellent, but you must use a dictionary as you read because it uses language typical of the time it was translated (1611). I recommend you purchase a more recent translation. The New King James Version (NKJV) is high on the recommended list. The New International Version (NIV) tries to make the text as easy to understand as possible and is an excellent reading Bible, but not a good study Bible. The New World Translation (1950, the Jehovah's Witnesses Bible) should be avoided because it is actually corrupt, being a sectarian paraphrase rather than a true translation of the Holy Scriptures.

Although the exact choice of words or sentence structure is different in each translation, the meaning is identical. Take the words of Jesus in Mark 16:16 from three "versions" as an

example; NIV: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved". KJV: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". NAS: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." They use different words and sentences but the meaning is identical. To blame religious division on the fact there are different Bible versions, therefore, is incorrect. The view that each translation of the Holy Bible conveys a different message is also incorrect. There is only one Bible message that has been translated into hundreds of different languages.

I) The Septuagint Holy Bible:

The Septuagint is the Greek Old Testament of the Christian Church. It was the version of the Old Testament translated from Hebrew into Greek and was used by the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria before the coming of Christ.

The Septuagint, more than the Hebrew Old Testament, clearly shows that the prophecies of the future Messiah refer to Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to no other. Also, the writers of the New Testament almost exclusively quoted from the Septuagint when they quoted the Old Testament within the pages of the New Testament.

The earliest version of the Old Testament Scriptures which is extant, or of which we possess any certain knowledge, is the translation executed at Alexandria in the third century before the Christian era: this version has been so habitually known by the name of the SEPTUAGINT.

II) The Coptic Holy Bible:

The Holy Bible was translated to the Coptic language in the second century. Translators of books of the Old Testament into Egyptian dialects were naturally made from the Alexandrian Greek version.

The two main dialects, Sahidic and Bohairic, are the most important for the study of early versions of the New Testament. The Sahidic was the leading dialect in the pre-Islamic period. The earliest Bohairic manuscripts date to the 4th century, but most texts come from the 9th century and later.

III) The Arabic Holy Bible (Beirut) [Van Dyke]:

Bible translations into Arabic are known from at least 1,000 years ago, firstly of the Jewish Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), then later also of the Christian New Testament.

In 1973 the Living Bibles International launched a new translation of the Arabic Bible under the direction of Georges Houssney, a Lebanese Christian based in Beirut. Houssney employed two key translators, Said Baz for the New Testament completed in 1982, and Dr. Samuel Shahid for the Old Testament completed in 1988. Rev. Menis AbdulNoor also contributed significantly.

IV) The New King James Version (NKJV):

The New King James Version (NKJV) is a modern translation of the Holy Bible published by Thomas Nelson, Inc. The anglicized edition was originally known as the Revised Authorized Version, but the NKJV title is now used universally.

The NKJV was published in three stages:

- 1 New King James Bible, New Testament; 1979
- 2 New King James Bible, New Testament and Psalms; 1980
- 3 New King James Version of the Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments; 1982

The aim of its translators was to update the vocabulary and grammar of the King James Version, while preserving the classic style and beauty of the 1611 version. Although it uses substantially the same Hebrew and Greek texts as the original KJV, it indicates where more commonly accepted manuscripts differ.

V) New International Version (NIV):

The New International Version is an English translation of the Christian Bible. The NIV is an explicitly Protestant translation. The deuterocanonical books are not included in the translation. It preserved traditional Evangelical theology on many contested points for which the Revised Standard Version has been criticized. Apart from these theological issues, the manuscript base of the NIV is similar to the RSV, using older Greek New Testament texts rather than the later Textus Receptus. The core translation group consisted of fifteen Biblical scholars. The translation took ten years.

VI) American Standard Version (ASV):

The Revised Version, Standard American Edition of the Bible, more commonly known as the American Standard Version (ASV), is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. The divine name of the Almighty (the Tetragrammaton) is consistently rendered Jehovah in the ASV Old Testament, rather than *LORD* as it appears in the King James Bible. The reason for this change, as the Committee explained in the preface, was that "...the American Revisers...were brought to the unanimous conviction that a Jewish superstition, which regarded the Divine Name as too sacred to be uttered, ought no longer to dominate in the English or any other version of the Old Testament..." Other changes from the RV to the ASV included (but were not limited to) substituting "who" and "that" for "which" when referring to people, and *Holy Ghost* was dropped in favor of Holy Spirit. Page headings were added and footnotes were improved.

7) THE DANGERS OF USING ONE VERSE

We must take the whole Holy Bible in its totality. In order to understand the Holy Bible, we must read above and below the verse that we are reading. We must get the context of everything to fully understand what is being written.

If you are not careful to check the context of each verse, you can come up with some odd conclusions.

Take for example, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:28) and "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ..." (Galatians 2:16). But you will also find Saint James' statement that "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24) and "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26). Taken out of context, Saint James appears to be flatly contradicting Saint Paul.

However, after a careful study of both what Saint Paul said and Saint James said, one can conclude that a person is justified not by faith alone but by faith and works.

Another example is: "...Love your enemies," (Luke 6:27) and "...A man's enemies [are] the men

of his own household." (Micah 7:6). After careful consideration of both verses one would conclude that there is no contradiction.

Therefore, we must be careful to read each verse in the light of its surrounding context. If we do not, we can come away with some wrong conclusions about what that verse means. Reading the whole Holy Bible in its totality is necessary if we are "...rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

8) THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE HOLY BIBLE AND BOOKS OF THE WORLD

The Holy Bible, despite of its simplicity, is filled with worldly truths. Keep in mind that the Holy Bible is not meant to be a worldly book. These truths were written in the Holy Bible some 3000 years ago or more, and were written in a simplistic fashion that is acceptable across all times and places. At the time these truths were written by the Holy Bible, the worldly community did not agree with them. Evidently, this community, and not the Holy Bible, were wrong. Now, with the advent of worldly knowledge we find that the Holy Bible has been correct all along and we are just proving it to be so.

There are so many examples to demonstrate the fact that the correct worldly knowledge always agrees with the Holy Bible. However to be brief, only one or two examples will be given in each section. (For further information, please refer to the websites given in the reference list).

I) Natural Science

For ages science did not agree with the scientific truth of the Book of Genesis. Currently, science agrees 100% with the creation of earth and life on it as well as the steps for the creation of humans.

Is it a mere coincidence that what Moses wrote 3400 years ago fits with contemporary science? Impossible. If science is 100% correct regarding a certain matter, it has to agree with the words of God.

A) The Holy Bible frequently refers to the great number of stars in the heavens. Here are two examples.

Genesis 22:17

Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Jeremiah 33:22

"As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me."

Even today, scientists admit that they do not know how many stars there are. Only about 3,000 can be seen with the naked eye. We have seen estimates of 10^{21} stars (The number of grains of sand on the earth's seashores is estimated to be 10^{25} !)

Another example of this is that, for years, science said that the earth was flat. In the book of Isaiah it said the earth is spherical. The church was under this burden for a long time until science proved that the earth is spherical and the Holy Bible is right. The true science agrees with the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible described the shape of the earth centuries before people thought that the earth was spherical.

Isaiah 40:22

“It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.” The word translated “circle” here is the Hebrew word *chuwg* which is also translated “circuit,” or “compass” (depending on the context). That is, it indicates something spherical, rounded, or arched—not something that is flat or square.

The book of Isaiah was written sometime between 740 and 680 BC. This is at least 300 years before Aristotle suggested that the earth might be a sphere in his book: “On the Heavens.”

II) Medicine

- 1) The effects of stress and aggravation on health. Prov. 16:24 and 17:22.
 - 2) The control of infectious diseases. Lev. 13:45-46.
 - 3) The necessity of cleanliness for health. Lev 19 and Numbers 19 and Deuteronomy 23:12-13.
1. The book of Leviticus (written prior to 1400 BC) describes the value of blood.

Leviticus 17:11

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” The blood carries water and nourishment to every cell, maintains the body’s temperature, and removes the waste material of the body’s cells. The blood also carries oxygen from the lungs throughout the body. In 1616, William Harvey discovered that blood circulation is the key factor in physical life—confirming what the Holy Bible revealed 3,000 years earlier. Hence, there’s no contradiction between the correct medicine and the Holy Bible.

III) Social science

History: the Holy Bible is not meant to be a historic book but it stands very accurately when it states historical facts.

Geography: the Holy Bible is not meant to be a geography book but all geographical details of the old world have been confirmed.

- Here is a simple example to demonstrate the fact that the Holy Bible is absolutely right both historically and geographically:

During His personal ministry, Our Lord Jesus once passed through the region of Samaria. Near Sychar, the Lord stopped for a brief rest at Jacob’s well. He engaged a Samaritan woman in conversation, during which He suggested that He could provide the woman with water that could perpetually quench her thirst. Misunderstanding the nature of the Master’s instruction, the woman, alluding to Jacob’s well, declared: “...Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep...” (John 4:11).

The statement is quite correct, for even now, some twenty centuries later, Jacob’s well is approximately 80 feet deep — the equivalent of an eight-story building!

IV) Management and Administration

- Consider for example the miracle of feeding five thousand people from five loaves and two fish and the amount of administration that was involved.

Mark 6:38,44 “But He said to them, 'How many loaves do you have? Go and see.' And when they found out they said, "Five, and two fish." Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave [them] to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among [them] all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.”

Observe all the steps that Our Lord Jesus and His disciples took in order to administer feeding the five thousand people in an organized fashion.

V) Humanities

An example of humanities' subjects is Anthropology. Anthropology is the comparative study of human societies and cultures and their development. One who studies it will find that it conforms 100% to the teaching of the Holy Bible.

- We have cave paintings and other evidence that people inhabited caves. The Holy Bible also describes cave men.

Job 30:5,6

“They were driven out from among men, They shouted at them as at a thief. They had to live in the clefts of the valleys, In caves of the earth and the rocks.”

Note that these were not ape-men, but descendants of those who scattered from Babel. They were driven from the community by those tribes who competed successfully for the more desirable regions of the earth. Then for some reason they deteriorated mentally, physically, and spiritually. We can see how the Holy Bible demonstrates what happens to those who get rejected from society. They get hurt in many aspects such as mentally and physically that they end up looking like the paintings that were discovered on the insides of the caves. This is a result of being rejected by others.

Thus, the Holy Bible is the only book in which all the worldly information is true. If there is any worldly information that disagrees with the Holy Bible, it follows that the worldly information is erroneous.

References:

*There is the ‘Science glorifies God series.’ This series explores different areas in science and how in actuality it confirms with the Holy Bible. Total conformity unless science is wrong, unless whatever is wrong, but the Holy Bible stands right.

<http://www.cmug.org/articles/Dangers.html>

<http://www.clarifyingchristianity.com/science.shtml>

<http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/690-is-the-bible-historically-accurate>

9) **TYPES OF BIBLICAL STUDIES**

There are many studies that could be performed using the Holy Bible. For example, one can have the following studies done;

- Personalities in the Holy Bible
- Study of one Verse
- Study of one Chapter
- Study of certain subjects for example humility, love, gifts of the Holy Spirit... etc.
- Study Theologies in the Holy Bible for example the Oneness of God, the Holy Trinity, Ransom inter-scion... etc.
- Study comparisons between the Holy Bible and other books of the world for example the Holy Bible vs science, the Holy Bible vs medicine, the Holy Bible vs history of mankind, the Holy Bible vs geography of the world, the Holy Bible vs Humanities.

10) **ADDITIONAL (OR RESEARCH STUDIES)**

- The impossibility of distorting the Holy Bible
- Archeological reports
- Geography in the Holy Bible
- Religions and habits of the old world
- How were the books of the Holy Bible compiled?
- The canonistic aspects of the various books of the Holy Bible, the objections raised and the answers to those objections.

11) **STUDY BIBLE AND COMMENTARIES**

- We need the explanations of the Saints
- The varieties of the Study Bibles
- The Orthodox study Bible
- Fr. Tadros Malaty Series (which includes patristic commentaries)
- The Late Bishop Anba Athanasius series
- “El-mousiha El-kensia” issued by St. Mark Church in Cairo
- Bible Dictionaries
- Bible Atlases
- Bible Concordances

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

So many people suffer in their spiritual life as well as their daily lives because of their lack of full knowledge of the Holy Bible, both Old and New Testaments; St. Ironimous said "Our ignorance about the Holy Bible is our ignorance about Christ himself." We need to search the Holy Bible; "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John15:39). Some of us have read and studied the New Testament, yet we do not read or study the Old Testament. This leads to very incomplete and shallow faith. We need to read, study, learn and apply things in our spiritual life from the Old Testament as well.

In this outline, we would like to cover an introduction to the Old Testament by covering the following points:

- 1 Why do we read the Old Testament?
- 2 The history of the Old Testament
- 3 General look at the books of the Old Testament
- 4 Prophecy
- 5 The compilation of the Old Testament books
- 6 The original language of the Old Testament
- 7 Conclusions

1. Why do we read the Old Testament?

- A) We read the Old Testament because it is the Word of God; inspired by the Holy Spirit: "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1: 19-21).
- B) The history of the chosen people refers us to the history of Salvation. This reveals to us the dealings with God and His promises.
- C) The prophecies about the Lord Jesus our Saviour. The Old Testament contains complete prophecies about the Lord Jesus in all aspects. For Example:

His birth for the Virgin: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14).

• **The place of His birth:**

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah, *Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth *are* from of old, From everlasting (Micah 5:2)

• **His Triumphant entry to Jerusalem:**

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He *is* just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey (Zak 9:9)

• **Him being sold for 30 coins:**

Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give *me* my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty *pieces* of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"-that princely price they set on me. So **I** took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter. (Zak 11: 12-13)

• **The sufferings of the Lord Christ:** (Isa. 53: 1-12) He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. (Isa. 53 :7)

d) The symbols of the Lord Christ (personalities or events) for example:

The fiery bush that was seen by Moses and was not consumed (Ex 2: 1-5) was a symbol for the Virgin Mary and the unity of the Divinity and humanity inside the Virgin's womb and was not consumed.

The Bronze serpent was a symbol of Christ's cross (Num 21:4-9 & John 2:14-15)

Personalities that were symbols of the Lord Christ for example Joseph saved the world from the famine (Christ saved the world from the trouble of sin) and Jonah who became a symbol of Christ in his burial and resurrection (Luke 11 :29-30)

- 4) Understanding the New Testament in light of the understanding of the Old Testament. So many events of the New Testament needs, for its understanding, the symbolic events that happened in the Old Testament. For example, all of the different sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbols of the True Sacrifice, our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.
2. The Moral Laws and commandments existing in the Old Testament (Ex. 20:1-17 & Deut 5:6-22) were referred to its importance by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ (Matt. 19: 16-22 and Matt. 22: 34-40)
3. Some of the key personalities of the Old Testament are excellent role models for us. For example: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, ... St. Paul referred to them as in Hebrews 11: 1-29

NOTES:

2. The History of the Old Testament

The History of the Old Testament can be classified into periods:

- **The first period:** From Creation to the entry into Egypt
- **The second period:** From Exodus to Judges
- **The third period:** The era of the kingdom of Israel

- **The fourth period:** The split of the kingdoms
- **The fifth period:** The Babylonian exile and the return from it
- **The sixth period:** The era of successive emperors.

The most important prophets of the Old Testaments: “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;” (2 Peter 1 :19)

BEFORE MOSES:

Many consider Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the first prophets since God declared to them His promise of Salvation to comfort them.

MOSES THE PROPHET:

He was the first individual to be a prophet and leader at the same time. He freed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt which is symbolic to our freedom which we achieved through the cross.

THE FIRST PROPHETS:

They appeared first in the time of Samuel (the last Judge and first prophet). Then came Elijah and Elisha the prophets.

THE LATER PROPHETS:

They are the "large" and "small" prophets (according to the size of the prophecy, not the importance). They gave attention to: the prophecy about the exile as a disciplinary action from God, coming back from the exile, and the salvation of the Lord Christ.

-Please refer to timeline-

3. GENERAL LOOK AT THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Pentateuch-five books

- Genesis: the book of origins. The origin of the universe, human race, etc. Largely a record of Israel’s roots and early history.
- Exodus: the enslavement and deliverance of Israel and their history on the way to Canaan under the leadership of Moses.
- Leviticus: The book of laws concerning morality, cleanliness, food, etc. It teaches access to God through sacrifices.
- Numbers: The book of the wanderings of Israel. Their forty years of Wandering in the wilderness.
- Deuteronomy: A repetition of the laws given shortly before Israel entered Canaan.

Historical Books-Twelve

- Joshua: A record of the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and of the division of the land among the twelve tribes.
- Judges: this history of the six subjugations of Israel and the various deliverances of the land through the fifteen judges.
- Ruth: The history of the life of Ruth, an ancestor of David and Jesus Christ.

- *1 & 2 Samuel*: The history of Samuel, with the beginning and early years of the monarchical period in Israel under the reigns of Saul and David
- *1 & 2 Kings*: the early history of the kingdom of Israel and later of the divided kingdom. The heroic prophets Elijah and Elisha appear.
- *1 & 2 Chronicles*: largely a record of the reigns of David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah up to the time of the captivity.
- *Ezra*: A record of the return of the Jews from the captivity and the rebuilding of the temple.
- *Nehemiah*: an account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the re-establishing of the sacred ordinances.
- *Esther*: The story of Queen Ester's deliverance of the Jews from the plot of Haman and of the establishment of the feast of Purim.

Poetical- five

1. *Job*: A book of suffering. The book shows the malice of Satan, the patience of Job. The vanity of human philosophy, the wisdom of God, and the final deliverance of the sufferer.
2. *Psalms*: A collection of 150 spiritual songs, poems, and prayers. Used through the centuries by the church in its worship.
3. *Proverbs*: A collection of moral and religious maxims and discourses on such topics as wisdom, temperance, justice.
4. *Ecclesiastes*: Reflections on the vanity of life and on man's duties and obligations to God, etc.
5. *Song of Songs*: A religious poem symbolizing the mutual love of Christ and the church.

Prophetical Books - Seventeen

Major Prophets - Five

1. *Isaiah*: The great prophet of the redemption. A book rich in Messianic prophecies mingled with woes pronounced upon sinful nations.
2. *Jeremiah*: the weeping prophet. Lived from the time of Josiah to the captivity, main theme: The backsliding, bondage, and restoration of the Jews.
3. *Lamentations*: a series of dirges by Jeremiah lamenting the afflictions of Israel.
4. *Ezekiel*: one of the mystery books. Full of striking metaphors vividly portraying the sad condition of God's people and the pathway to future exaltation and glory.
5. *Daniel*: A book of personal biography and apocalyptic visions concerning events in both secular and sacred history.

Minor Prophets - Twelve

1. *Hosea*: Contemporary with Isaiah and Micah. Main theme: The apostasy of Israel characterized as spiritual adultery. The book is filled with striking metaphors describing the sins of the people.
2. *Joel*: A prophet of Judah. Main theme: National repentance and its blessing. "The day of the Lord", a time of divine judgments, may be transformed into a season of blessing.
3. *Amos*: The herdsman-prophet was courageous reformer, denouncing selfishness and sin. The book contains a series of five visions.

4. ***Obadiah***: main theme: The doom of Edom and final deliverance of Israel.
5. ***Jonah***: The story of the "reluctant missionary" who was taught by bitter experience the lesson of obedience and the depth of divine mercy.
6. ***Micah***: this book gives a dark picture of the moral condition of Israel and Judah but foretells the establishment of a Messianic kingdom in which righteousness shall prevail.
7. ***Nahum***: Main theme: The destruction of Nineveh. Judah is promised deliverance from Assyria.
8. ***Habakkuk***: Written in the Babylonian period. Main theme: the mysteries of providence. How can a just God allow a wicked nation to oppress Israel?
9. ***Zephaniah***: This book is somber in tone, filled with threatening, but it ends in a vision of the future glory of Israel.
10. ***Haggai***: A colleague of Zechariah. He reproves the people for slackness in building the second temple but promises a return of God's glory when the building would be completed.
11. ***Zechariah***: Contemporary with Haggai. He helps to arouse the Jews to rebuild the temple. He has a series of eight visions and sees the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom.
12. ***Malachi***: Gives a graphic picture of the closing period of the Old Testament History. He shows the necessity of reforms before the coming of the messiah.

Additional Canonical Books

The additional canonical books are a group of books in the Old Testament which was found in the Greek Septuagint of the Old Testament with the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. These books were transferred to the various Christian churches, which translated it into various languages.

The Jewish community refused to include these books as books of the Old Testament in a council held in year 100 A.D., because these books were not in the group collected by Ezra the writer. These books were called Apocrypha, because it was also omitted from the Holy Bible issued in the sixteenth century by the Protestant Church.

Some Christians called these additional books by the word Apocrypha and naming it in this way is wrong. The word "Apocrypha" is a Greek word, which means "hidden", and it is taken to mean "false or untrue". However, the additional canonical books are correct and there is no doubt related to them as has been found by both the Catholic and Orthodox Church.

The additional canonical books are nine books in the Bible and are included in the Bible, or printed in our church or in the Catholic Church.

1. Tobias (14 Chapters)
2. Yahodet (16 chapters)
3. The remainder of Esther (7 chapters)
4. The wisdom of Solomon (19 chapters)
5. Joshua the son of Sirack (51 Chapters)
6. He prophesy of Paroak (6 chapters)
7. The remainder of the book of Daniel (2 Chapters)
8. The first Makabeen (16 Chapters)
9. The second Makabeen (15 Chapters)

4. PROPHECY

The Ultimate goal of the prophecy is to take the world to the era of the Kingdom. Therefore God's methods to declare His will or commandment differed from one situation to another according to the prevailing circumstances of the people, the personality of the prophet and the society.

- The methods through which the prophets received their message from God:

a) From God Himself

This happened when Angels could not do it (e.g. giving the commandment to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham). Also, His appearance in vision to Isaiah (Dan. 7:9-10)

b) Through Angels

As when the Angels appeared in human shape to Abraham (Gen 18:2), to Jacob (Gen. 32:24), to Joshua (1os. 5:13), to Gideon (Jud. 6:11-24), and to Daniel (Daniel 3 :28)

Through Angels in spiritual shapes as to Jacob (Gen. 32:1), Moses while he Was back in Egypt (Ex. 4:24) and Balaam (Num. 22:22-35)

Through hearing the voice of an Angel as with Hagar (Gen 21: 17), to Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 33:2) and (Ex. 23:20-23)

c) In visions or dreams

As happened in Jacob's dreams (Gen. 28:12,13), dreams of Joseph (Gen. 37 and Job 33:15)

As for the vision (which is meant to be between being wake and sleep).

For example the vision of Abraham (Gen. 15: 1-2), the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. .. and many more

d) Through the Holy Spirit

Jeremiah described this when he said: "Shall I not punish them for these *things?*" says the LORD. " Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?" (Jer.20:9)

The same thing was expressed by St. Paul when he said in Acts 18:5 "When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *is* the Christ."

e) The difference between "Prophecy" and "Priesthood"

Prophecy is the connection between God and people and it contains teachings, laws and warnings.

Priesthood is the connection between Man and God and it contains prayers, readings, rites and worship.

f) Characteristics of the prophecies in the Old Testament:

Prophets' predictions were fulfilled overtime. Prophets were exposed to the hatred of people, sometimes because of their prophecies. Usually prophecies were associated with miracles the care of God totally protected the prophets during their writings the prophets sometimes were exposed to discipline from God if they did not perform God's will. Many of the prophecies had symbols which were revealed later or in the future.

6. THE COMPILATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

a) The books of the Old Testaments were originally called the "books" Through the continuous growth of the writings which formed the Old Testament, it did not take a unified name. But the writers themselves called all the books that were written before them "the Books" as in Daniel 9:2: "in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."

As for the New Testament, it referred to the Hebrew canonical books by "the Books" or "scriptures" or "sacred scriptures" as our Lord Jesus said in Matt. 22:29: "Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."" and also St. Paul said in 2 Tim 2: 15 "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Also, the New Testament made all books of the prophets and Apostles to be of equal in importance (2 Peter 3:2,16). St. Jerome (of the fourth century) called the collection of the sacred books "the Divine books".

In the fourth century, the ultimate name of these books was 'Canonical Books'

b) How were the Old Testament books put together?

The order of the books which is issued currently by the Christian Church was the same order by the Jews of Alexandria. There are 3 portions:

1) **The Laws or Torah** (the 5 books of Moses)

These used to be kept in the house of the Lord beside the Tabernacle in the Holy of Holies

2) **The prophecies**

The care of God kept these prophecies all through the years from being lost

3) **The rest of the sacred books**

For example, the books of the psalms.

6. The Original language of the Old Testament

All the books of the Old Testament were written originally in the Hebrew language except for a very few portions of the books of Ezra, Daniel, and one verse in the book of Jeremiah (Jer. 10:11). In none of these books was the Hebrew language mentioned, however, it took different names, e.g. "Hebrew names" or "Canaanites". For example in:

2 King 18:26: Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.

Nehemiah 12:24: And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Joshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise and give thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David the man of God. Isaiah 19:18: In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border.

When the opportunity came in the New Testament to talk about the Hebrew language, it was the Aramaic language which was prevailing at this time, as was seen in Acts 22:2: "And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent."

The Hebrew language had many changes throughout its history as it is clearly manifested in archaeology. In the era from Moses to David, it was the best time for the Hebrew language as it was unaltered. Afterwards it started to decline and many foreign words from the neighbouring people started to spread.

After the Jews returned from the exile, they did not use the Hebrew language, but rather the

Aramaic language. Only the priests used to use it to explain the Holy Scriptures and for their prayers.

7. Conclusions

1. We must read, contemplate and digest the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.
2. The Old testament is the shadow of the New Testament
3. One of the proofs that our Christianity is true is that all the prophecies that were mentioned hundreds of years before Christ were fulfilled
4. We must acquire Coptic Orthodox books to explain the Old Testament for us and to ask questions we do not understand.
5. Our faith is a lot deeper when we study the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

Reference:

1. **"An introduction to the Old Testament"** by Dr. Wahib Gorgi, 1985
2. **An introduction to the Old Testament** by St. George church in El-Matria, 1990
3. **Historical map of the Old Testament** by Fr, Tadros Malaty, 2008

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Unity of the Holy Bible

+ Does the New Testament provide us with continuity from the Old Testament?

The answer is a clear yes and we must not separate at all, between the two parts of the Holy Bible. Many times the New Testament talks about what has been mentioned in the Old Testament.

The Law/The prophets: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill....from the law till all is fulfilled.” [Mat: 5: 17-18].

Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms: “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself....Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” [Luke: 24: 27, 44-45].

The Scriptures: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” [John: 5:39].

It becomes evident from these examples that God’s love for man, The Character of Our Lord Jesus Christ the Savior, and the action of the Holy Spirit of God in man, for the sake of his salvation and eternity, are the axis of the whole Holy bible with its two Testaments.

+ Hence, the Old Testament was not given as a final book in itself. If we wrongly treat it as a final book in itself, we will come to the wrong conclude with an incomprehensible interpretation.

+ There are so many studies about the subject of “the Unity of the Holy bible”

+ More than 40 writers, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, took part in writing the Holy Bible during a period of about 1600 years. The Prophet Moses wrote his part around 1500 years before Christ, while St. John the beloved wrote his gospel approximately 100 years after the birth of Christ.

Those writers had different cultures and different jobs and they lived in different places. However, they all wrote with the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, about one core subject which is Man’s salvation and God’s dealings with man. “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” [2 Peter: 1: 21].

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” [2 Timothy: 3: 16-17]

+ The studies about “the Unity of the Holy Bible” are deep and interesting ones that confirm one's faith and clarify evidently that the Holy Bible is written by God Himself at the hands of

people whom He trusted and chose for writing. Also, it becomes clear that it is not possible to understand the New Testament except through understanding the Old Testament while at the same time; the Old Testament cannot be interpreted correctly without the New Testament.

Exercise: The Holy Bible with its two Testaments must be read. Additionally, The Commands of Our Lord in the two Testaments must be obeyed.

What is the language used for writing the Holy Bible?

Prophet Moses was the first one that God Entrusted to write in the Holy Bible [Exodus 34: 27]
“The Lord said to Moses, “Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a Testament with you and with Israel.”

He wrote in Hebrew. All the writings of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew except some chapters in the prophecies of Ezra and Daniel and one verse in the Book of Jeremiah that were written in the Aramaic language. The Aramaic language was the language used during the life of Jesus Christ on earth. The New Testament was first written in the ancient Greek because this was the language of the scholars between the years A.D. 50 and 100 after Christ.

At that time, many of the Jews lost the ability to read in Hebrew. Therefore, around the year A.D. 300, the Holy Bible was translated from Hebrew to Greek which is known as the **Septuagint version**. **It has become the most common and the one used in most synagogues. The Greek language was used in preaching.**

After that, the Holy Bible was translated to many world languages—up to about 2300 languages.

Strict accuracy is imperative since many have been negligent and have had their own books that are completely different from the Original Holy book.

How did the New Testament reach us? Or what is the Canonization of the New Testament?

“After the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, the apostles went to preach according to the command of the Lord in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”[Acts: 1: 8].

+ At the beginning, the evangelical message of the Gospel was oral, passing through the Holy Tradition: The apostles preached and people believed and became themselves preachers all over the world. However, they started to feel the need for writing: First, to keep the actions of our Lord Jesus Christ; Second, to answer the questions of the coming generations and those posed by heretics. Accordingly, the apostles started writing.

+ After the writing of the 27 books of the New Testament, the last of which was the book of Revelation written by Saint John the beloved and written immediately before the end of the first century, those writings were in different places depending on the location of the apostles.

+ After the end of the persecution era of the Jews and pagans, the church, with the grace and protection of our Lord, started to gather those Holy books. Of course, due to the difficulties posed because of transportation, the church started collecting all the Holy Books by the

beginning of the second century. Then, the Church reviewed them with intense accuracy and they were protected by the Divine Providence to be in the same wording that is in our hands nowadays.

+ **The First Editions of The New Testament:**

We have the first editions of the Old and New Testaments that refer back to the fourth and fifth centuries such as: The Vatican edition – and the Alexandrian edition in London.

We have 4000 copies that refer back to the fourth and fifth centuries up to when the printing machine was invented in the fifteenth century. Since then, printing the Holy Bible spread and the Bible spread to the whole world in about 1300 languages.

The Moratoria Canon by The archaeologist Moratory. There is an edition that refers back to the year 150 that includes a list of the books of the New Testament that is identical to the Bible we have now.

The council of Carthage

The council of Carthage was held in the year A.D. 397 to review all the books of the New Testament and their canonization. They are the same ones that we now have and they consist of 27 books.

Dividing The New Testament into chapters and verses :

When the Holy Bible was written at the beginning, it did not have chapters or verses, with the exceptions of the Psalms, because they were sung.

+ The books were written in the form of continued articles. However, scholars found that the division into chapters and verses facilitates reading and follow-up. This happened, in particular, in the year A.D. 220 as a first attempt. Then, the final division into chapters took place in A.D.1240. The division of the verses followed in the year A.D. 1545. The canonization of the New Testament (27 books)

What is the canon of Scripture?

The Canon book is that book that is at the level of the Holy Scripture, that is, at the level of God's Word led by the Holy Spirit.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” [John: 14: 26].

But what is the rule to accept the book as a canon one?

9. For the book to be canonized, its writer has to be a prophet, or an apostle or someone who has a deep relation with the Lord (Mark, Peter, John)

10. Any of the books that are called Canon but do not agree with the real Christian life lived by the disciples who witnessed what has happened during the service of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is rejected by the disciples and apostles themselves who witnessed everything. In this way, the book would not continue and would not become a canon Book.

Conclusion: The New Testament that we have is a canon scripture and the Church does not recognize any other books in the New Testament. Further, there is no doubt about the writers of the 27 books of the New Testament.

God's Testaments or Covenants with man and the meaning of the New Testament

The word Testament or Covenant means an important agreement between two or more parties. In this particular case, it is an agreement between God and mankind. There are a number of Testaments in the Holy Bible:

The Covenant with Adam:

This Covenant is a general Covenant or agreement with humanity represented by Adam and Eve. The Wonderful creation of Adam is clear in genesis 1: 26-30 "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.

The first commandment to Adam is not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil Gen: 2: 16-17: And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

As a result of this transgression: (a) There was a curse and punishment for this sin in Genesis 3: 15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." A promise of salvation Gen: 3: 21 "Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them".

This Testament was fulfilled in the salvation given to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

The Covenant with Noah:

After Noah went out of the ark, he built an altar for the Lord and offered acceptable sacrifices. "Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done." [Genesis 8:20-21].

After this accepted sacrifice came the covenant between God and Noah as a representative of

humanity” Gen: 9:11 This Covenant also involved a sign “ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. Gen: 9:13
This Covenant was fulfilled and is still valid. The ark of Noah was a symbol for the Baptism of the New Testament through which one can enter the new life which leads to God’s Kingdom.

The Covenant with Abraham:

This was at first a Covenant with Abraham the Patriarch: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Gen 12: 1-3.

Then, this Testament extended to include all those who had the faith of Abraham and followed his deeds and the whole world through the person of our Lord Jesus Christ who is of Abraham’s seed. Circumcision was the sign of this Testament so that man would remember that God is in Agreement with him to give him Blessings if he has faith “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also.” [Romans: 4: 11].

Please read what St. Stephan said about this covenant with Abraham Acts 7:1-8.

The Mosaic Covenant:

Three months after the exit of the Israelites from the slavery in Egypt by the mighty hands of God, He promised to have a covenant with them (Exodus 19:3-6). This covenant is the Ten Commandments. After He gave them the Ten Commandments, Moses offered an acceptable sacrifice and sprinkled the blood on the two tablets and on the people thus he sealed the agreement. “Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.” [Exodus 24:7-8].

Note:

We observe that in every covenant there is the sign of blood to seal the agreement.

The Davidic Covenant:

We read about this Covenant in 2 Sam: 7: 8-16, in which there is a covenant between God and King David. In it, God promised that David’s seed acquired an eternal blessing. Christ came from David’s seed in the flesh and with Him came Eternal blessing. “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. “And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”[Luke: 1: 32-33]. St. Peter spoke that the Lord Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the covenant that God made with David [Acts 2:29-36].

8 THE NEW TESTAMENT:

There is a prophecy about this New Testament in Jeremiah 31: 31-34 “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a New Testament with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— “not according to the Testament that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My Testament which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. “But this is the Testament that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” The New Testament includes God’s promise to end the death of sin that entered into the world.

And to give Eternal Life to those who believe in the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. “For this is My blood of the new Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. [Mat 26: 28].

And Also “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new Testament, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first Testament, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” [Heb 9: 15]. And also “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. “[1John 2: 1]. “And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. “[1 John 2: 25]

The New Covenant was able, through the Blood of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, to accomplish what the Old Covenant failed to [Hebrews 8:6-7].

The Geography of the Holy Book in the New Testament

- A) The map of the places where Jesus Christ served while in the flesh.
- B) The map of the places in the three preaching trips done by Saint Paul the Apostle.

A very brief introduction to each of the New Testament books

+ THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The name of the Gospel’s writer was Levi and he used to work as a tax-collector. It was a job that people despised. Jesus Christ told him to “follow me,” he therefore left everything and followed Him.

And also that Christ is the King who gives us with Him a share in the Heavenly Kingdom. He wrote his Gospel to the Jews to tell them that Lord Jesus is the Awaited Christ the King (he mentioned about 65 prophecies of the Old Testament that were fulfilled in Christ. This is why he mentioned the word “kingdom” 33 times. And he mentioned that Christ is the Son of David 7 Times.

In this Gospel, we find the Sermon on the Mount, which is the constitution of Christianity in chapters 5-7.

He wrote his gospel few years after the writing of Saint Mark’s gospel. At the end of the gospel, he mentioned that Christ is among His people forever (Mat 28: 20).

+ **THE GOSPEL OF MARK**

It was written by our teacher Mark between the years A.D. 65-70. He **is the preacher** who spread the word to Egypt and he founded the Church of Alexandria in A.D. 61. His Hebrew name was John and his Roman name was Mark, as mentioned in Acts 15: 37. His uncle was the Apostle Barnabas. Saint Mark was one of the seventy apostles.

Many very important events took place at his house: The Lord's Supper, the different appearing of Christ after the Resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The Gospel of Mark is short (only 16 chapters). The Gospel focuses upon the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ as the **powerful minister. This suited the Romans who were strong and controlled the whole world. Christ's power is in His Serving others and not in His controlling of others. Mark 9: 35** "And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

+ **THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

Our teacher Luke was a gentile from Antioch. He was a physician and a painter. He became a Christian at the hands of Saint Paul the Apostle and he accompanied him. He was not among the 12 disciples or the 70 apostles. He also wrote the Book of Acts. He wrote his Gospel few years after the writing of the Gospel of Matthew. He wrote it for the Greeks.

He wrote his gospel to an honourable Greek man called Theophilus.

His gospel mentioned incidents that were only recounted by him such as: The parable of the Good Samaritan, The Parable of the Prodigal son, The Parable of the wealthy man and Lazarus and the call for Zacchaeus.

The Gospel asserted the Humanity of Christ as the friend of Humanity as it is the Gospel of "the Son of Man." It spoke of this several times to confirm that God was incarnate to elevate us to unit with Him. It is a Gospel that mentions God who cares for all, Jews and Greeks, men and women, rich and poor, and young and old. It is also the Gospel that is full of the prayers of Christ and His preaching on the importance of praying.

The birth of John the Baptist and that of Jesus Christ (Luke 1-2). It is also the Gospel that discusses the role of women in the Church: The Virgin and Elizabeth, Anna, the widow of Nain and the sinful woman in the city.

+ **THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

John the beloved is one of the 12 Disciples and he is the brother of James the son of Zebedee. Jesus Christ chose him while He was on the Cross to take the Virgin Saint Mary to his house as his mother. He was the disciple who used to lean on the bosom of the Savior. He was called "The disciple whom Jesus loved" [John: 21: 20].

Love is the most prominent feature that prevailed in the life of Saint John the beloved, his Gospel, the epistles he wrote and the Book of Revelation.

His Gospel focused on confirming the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the miracles that showed the Divinity of Christ. He wrote his Gospel after the writing of the first 3 Gospels as some Heresies

started to appear and there was a must to respond to them.

He used Theological expressions such as the “Logos” and “I Am” which is the same expression used in the Old Testament “**Jehovah**”, that is God’s name “**I am He**”.

He also focused on the dialogues of Jesus Christ that show His Divinity such as His dialogue with Nicodemus, [John: 3], The Samaritan Woman [John: 4], and the Jews [John: 5-8].

In this Gospel, we find: Christ the Word of God Almighty, He is the bread of life, He is the Living Water, He is the Creator, He is the Savior, and the Active in His church forever.

He wrote his Gospel to the whole Church and this is why it is called “the Gospel of the church”.

+ **THE BOOK OF ACTS**

The Greek word “Praxis” means acts. In the Book of Acts, we find some of the glorious acts that God gave to the pure Apostles. The writer of the Book of Acts is Luke the Gospel writer. In the Gospel, he wrote about Christ’s wonderful acts while in the Book of Acts he wrote about the acts of the pure Apostles and the spread of Christianity.

In the Book of Acts, Saint Luke states the fulfillment of Jesus Christ promise of sending the Holy Spirit and His acts with the apostles. This is why some call this Book the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

The spread of Christianity among the Jews through Saint Peter and its spread among the Gentiles through Saint Paul.

This book mentions the 3 very important journeys taken by Saint Paul the apostle and the sequence of his suffering for the service.

The Book of Acts was written before the year 70 when the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. Otherwise, Saint Luke would have written about this very important incident.

+ **THE FOURTEEN EPISTLES OF SAINT PAUL**

See the table at page 18 from Father Tadros Malaty’s book and add to it the following points:

+ **The Epistle to the Romans**: Saint Paul wrote it around the year A.D. 57. It was written to deal with the dispute between the Jews and the **Proselytes, who converted from pagan Origins to Judaism**. Saint Paul the Apostle wanted to clarify that God has no partiality but each one according to his faith and deeds. In this Epistle, Saint Paul wanted to clarify Christianity as a faith for the whole humanity where there is death on sin and life through the power of the Holy Spirit [Romans: 7-8].

+ **The first Epistle to the Corinthians**: Corinth is a city in Greece. Saint Paul preached there [Acts: 18] and stayed there for 18 months. After that, he visited it twice more . It was written around the year A.D. 57 and the subject of the epistle is “the Lord Jesus Christ” because people were divided: some with Paul ... Some with Apollo ... and others with Peter. He clarified that the Lord Jesus Christ is all in all. He also talks about how the Christian person can live in true love in dark societies [1 Cor. 12-14] and also about the Resurrection [1 Cor. 15].

+ **The second Epistle to the Corinthians**: He wrote it few months after the first epistle as the news reached him through his disciple Titus regarding the positive impact of the First epistle as many repented [2 Cor. 7:16]. Saint Paul sent the message to express his joy with this and his love for them. He explained to them the depth of his love towards them and the importance of living by the Spirit and not by the letter. He also reminded them of the importance of getting the blessing of giving the poor in Jerusalem.

+ **The Epistle to the Galatians**: Galatia was a city in Asia Minor under the Roman Empire. Saint Paul visited it many times. He wrote the epistle to explain the new life in Christ Jesus and that there is no longer need to the Jewish traditions since the Cross and Christ's Salvation are everything for the salvation of the soul and not the old traditions. In this epistle, he also defended his apostleship.

+ **The Epistle to the Ephesians**: It was a city in Asia Minor under the Roman rule. Saint Paul visited it many times and stayed there for about two years. There, the service grew strongly and he founded a church. The focus of this epistle was that the Church is the Body of Christ and that her members must be ready to fight the devil "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." [Eph 6:11-12].

+ **The epistle to the Philippians**: Philippi was a city in Macedonia, also under the rule of the Roman Empire. Saint Paul visited it and founded there the first Church in Europe in the year A.D. 52. He wrote the epistle around the year A.D. 63, before the end of his imprisonment period in the city of Philippi. The subject of this epistle is the life of joy and unity with all; men and women altogether.

+ **The epistle to the Colossians**: It was a city in Asia Minor. Saint Paul visited it during his third Preaching journey. He wrote the epistle to the Colossians while he was in his first imprisonment period in Rome [Colossians: 3:4]. However, he did not talk about the prison because he did not care about it. Yet, he talked about heaven and Christ the Head of the Church and the life giver. It also includes a response to a new move to go back to Judaism and the works of Law.

+ **The first Epistle to the Thessalonians**: It was the capital of Macedonia in Greece. There, Saint Paul founded a church during his second preaching journey. Saint Paul wrote this epistle to the Thessalonians in the year A.D. 52. It was the first of his writings in the New Testament and he wrote it in Corinth. In the epistle, he wanted to strengthen and encourage them to confront their hardships and persecutions. This is why he talked to them about the joys of Heaven and the second coming of Jesus Christ. He sent to them his disciple Timothy. This did not reduce his love for them. This is why he talked to them a lot about his fatherly love for them.

+ **The second Epistle to the Thessalonians**: Saint Paul wrote it few months after the first epistle, that is, in early-to-mid A.D. 53. Its aim was to reform the understanding of the first epistle as some understood that the second coming of Jesus Christ is so close which led to many difficulties in their daily life and the desire of many to stop working. Therefore, he clarified to them that the second coming of Jesus Christ will happen after the coming of the anti-Christ.

The First Epistle to his disciple Timothy: Timothy's father was Greek while his mother and grandmother were Jewish. He believed at the hands of Saint Paul during his first preaching

journey. Saint Paul found him full of love and zealousness for the Church. So he took him with him in his travels and sent him two epistles about the minister/servant and his deeds inside and outside the church. Since Timothy was a bishop, he explained to him the ministry of the bishop to him.

+ **The second Epistle to his disciple Timothy**: Saint Paul wrote it while he was imprisoned in Rome. He asked Timothy to come with Mark so that he can see them before his martyrdom. He wrote this epistle as if to the whole Church as an epistle of encouragement to tolerate suffering with patience because this would fill the life of the believers with joy and hope.

+ **The Epistle to his disciple Titus**: Originally, Titus was pagan and believed at the hands of Saint Paul. He accompanied Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas to Jerusalem at the end of the first preaching journey and attended with them the apostles' council [Acts 15] as a practical life for the entry of pagans into the Christian faith. He talked to him about the church's work and that it is not necessary to return to Judaism. He also talked to him about baptism and the second birth as well as the importance of obedience in the Christian life.

+ **The Epistle to his disciple Philemon**: Philemon had a slave whose name was Onesimus. He stole the money of his master and went to Rome where he met with Saint Paul and became a Christian. Saint Paul wrote this epistle to make clear that he was ready to pay the debts of Onesimus and send him to Philemon. The epistle is about tolerance, honesty, love and accepting others – daily Christian behavior.

+ **The epistle to the Hebrews**: Saint Paul did not write his name so that he would not raise the outrage of the Jews against him. However, he wrote this epistle to the Christians of a Jewish origin who were expelled from the Jewish Synagogue. He wanted to make clear to them the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some consider that the four Gospels talk about our Lord Jesus and His ministries on earth while the Epistle to the Hebrews talk about the act of Christ as a Heavenly Priest forever.

+ **The Catholic Epistles**

They were not written for a particular person or group, rather, they were written for the whole Church. The Church holds them in high regard and reads sections from them at every Divine Liturgy.

+ **The Epistle of Saint James**: He is called James the righteous, the brother of the Lord Jesus [Gal 1: 19], that is, His maternal cousin. He was ordained bishop of Jerusalem and led the first apostolic Council in the year A.D. 52 [Acts: 15] concerning the entering of Pagans to the faith. He wrote the epistle around the year A.D. 61. During that time, the Church was subject to severe persecution from Domitian and Tarragon. Therefore, the aim of the epistle was to encourage the believers to tolerate suffering because God will give them power which exceeds the suffering. He also focused on the practical faith that appears in sayings, deeds and emotions.

+ **The first Epistle of Peter the Apostle**: There is a similarity between this epistle and that of Saint James, as both of them are directed to those persecuted by the enemy of good. Therefore, it is filled with serious practical encouragement. He also mentioned many of the Old Testament prophecies. He also quotes many of the words and sermons given by Jesus, the Lord of Glory.

+ **The Second Epistle of Peter the Apostle**:

Saint Peter wrote it after The Lord Jesus declared to him the approaching of his departure from

that world. It was therefore a farewell to his children in which he expressed the desire of his heart for the Kingdom of Heaven and the second coming of Jesus Christ. In this epistle, he asserted the importance of maintaining the faith, rejecting heresies and adhering to the light of Christ.

+ **The first Epistle of John the Apostle**: The Apostle of love, God is Love. He wrote this first epistle after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. This is why he did not talk about the Jews' persecution of the church but rather, he focused on God's Love and the mystery of incarnation and the relationship of love to both light filiations and faith. He answered the group of **Gnostics who wanted everything to be supported by evidence and logic, looking away from faith.**

+ **The second epistle of John the Apostle**: The theme here is that true faith is manifest in one's love for God and others.

The third Epistle of John the Apostle: He wrote it to the beloved Gaius. The name of Gaius was mentioned several times in the New Testament. Gaius joined the faith through Saint John the beloved while he was baptized by Saint Paul. Gaius was loving and kind to all, particularly the sojourners and the servants of the Word.

+ **The epistle of Jude**: This is Jude the brother of James, that is, the maternal cousin of the Lord Jesus. He wrote his epistle to all Christians about the importance of faith and receiving it soundly from the hands of the saints and delivering it to the coming generations. To maintain this sound faith, we must watch for heretics whose target is to corrupt the faith by wrong teachings, in pride and disobedience to the Church.

+ **The Book of Revelation of John the Theologian**: Written by Saint John, the gospel writer, circa A.D. 95 while he was exiled to the island of Patmos. Our Lord Jesus Christ declared to him Heavenly matters in a symbolic way as the book is full of forms, colors, names and numbers, all of which are symbolic and prophetic, as it enkindles the feelings of yearning for Heaven and the Heavenly hosts. It also talks about Paradise and the Kingdom of Heaven.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The reader can look at the 27 books of the New Testament and take from them the message that God gives him according to the need of his heart. However, the mission of the New Testament, with its 27 books, can be summarized into four points:

1) The life of Jesus Christ the incarnate God as shown by the four Gospels "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." [John: 1: 18].

2) The action of the Holy Spirit in Man's life is so that man can reach believing in Christ and becoming a Christian. This is clear in the Book of Acts 1:4 "He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father" Then, the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. [Joel: 2: 28].

3) How a person, in unity with Christ, can live practically. This is clear in all the Epistles starting from the Epistle to the Romans to the Epistle of Jude [21 books]. Christianity is not just a philosophical or social life; rather it is living the Gospel of Christ “in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” [Romans: 2: 16].

4) Finally, the Christian joy with heaven, Paradise and Eternity represented by the Book of Revelation “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” [Rev: 2: 10].

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ADDITIONAL ARTICLES: COMMENTS IN THE HOLY BIBLE – WEB LINK

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DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

DOGMA & SPIRITUALITY: THERE IS NO SPIRITUALITY WITHOUT A CORRECT DOGMA

His Grace Anba Abraam bishop of Fayium (of blessed memory)

Translated from Arabic by Fr. Athanasius Iskander

Dogma is the care for studying the truths of the Christian faith with the aim of offering it in a scientific way. Ecclesiastically, dogma is inseparable from the Church, for the Church is the one that explains and comments on the orthodox dogma.

The orthodox dogma is a dogma for life and fellowship with the Lord Christ, with His angels and His saints. It follows that if we seek to live a true spiritual life, we must have an Orthodox dogma. Orthodoxy believes in the Holy Trinity, in one nature of the person of the Lord Christ, out of two natures in a complete union, with one will. (Orthodoxy) believes in the mystery of the Eucharist through which we are united to the Lord's body and blood, where He abides in us and we in Him. All of these are essential in shaping our spiritual life.

There are today some teachings that lessen the importance of dogma and imagine the possibility of having a Christian spiritual life without paying much attention to dogma. These teachings claim that Christian life is a spiritual pious and emotional relationship with God that should be unfettered with dogma! These teachings go under the name "nondenominational".

The truth is, he errs whoever thinks that Christianity is piety and emotion only, and that dogma has no importance in it. The truth is that orthodoxy of spiritual life is intertwined with orthodoxy of dogma. The two cannot be separated. Orthodox dogma is inseparable from the life of the church in the same way that the stream is inseparable from the river. For the dogma cannot be apprehended outside the Church.

The word Orthodoxy means the true, upright, original and constant doctrine. It was so understood before the schism of Chalcedon in 451 AD. Orthodox dogma is based on biblical doctrines and apostolic tradition preserved and explained by the early Fathers. The early church preserved the orthodox dogma, considering it the basis of the true Christian spiritual life.

The holy Bible that teaches us about the Christian virtues is the same Bible that teaches us about the dogma that we believe in. The Bible never separates piety from dogma. There is no orthodox dogma that is not based on the Holy Bible. For example, concerning the mysteries of the Church, we find in the Bible that God is the author of the mysteries and commanded His disciples to continue in them. Also other orthodox dogmas like justification and salvation are found explained in St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians. The sacrament of the priesthood was instituted by the Lord Jesus Himself in John 20:21-23. St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews explains this sacrament and demonstrating its superiority to the priesthood of the Old Testament. St. James in his epistle explains to us the connection between faith and works and how that faith without works is dead.

There were epistles that were written as answers against heresies and innovations and schisms. For example, St. Paul warns the Corinthians:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the

same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1:10) This proves the importance of the one true dogma in the life of the Church.

The Gospel of St. John was written to prove the divinity of the Lord Christ against those who spread doubts about this dogma; he therefore at the outset affirms that the Lord Christ is God's eternal Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). And throughout this Gospel we find that each chapter confirms the divinity of the Lord from different angles. And he seals his words in John 20:30-31:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. By this he proves that Life is tied to His divine Person, and faith in Him as God, as Saviour and Redeemer. The Bible affirms that this is an essential dogma in man's spiritual life. The holy Bible warns against strange doctrines and false teachers, who teach doctrines that, differ from those that our Fathers received (and delivered to us). St. Paul tells his disciple Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:3-5 "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ... from such withdraw thyself."

Besides the Bible, we find the dogmas of monotheism, the Trinity, the incarnation, redemption, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, the general resurrection and the life of the age to come are inscribed in the Creed that we believe in and live wherewith, and in our Liturgy by which we live at all time. We can find our dogma as life in the Divine Liturgy.

We find the history of salvation, and the Church living this salvation through the prayers of the Liturgy and communion of the holy Body and Blood. The prayers of the Liturgy speak to us about the divinity of Christ, of His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and eternal life. It explains to us how we live this (eternal life) through our abiding in God through communion of His Body and Blood.

He who believes in a true dogma will live a true spiritual life. He will live his daily life by this dogma as a daily living habit. There cannot be any spirituality without true dogma. We believe that works and faith are tied together and faith is what introduces work. For example, many non-Christian religions like Buddhism and others ordain more rigorous fasts than Christianity, but what good are these without faith in the Lord Christ? Cornelius wrought many good deeds but these were only perfected after he believed on the Lord Christ. For dogma, faith, spiritual life and all that an Orthodox offers, prayers, fasts, good deeds are all sanctified by the Holy Spirit, which makes him partake from the wells of salvation and obtain the earnest of eternal life. Whatever is offered without the fellowship of the Holy Spirit becomes a moral work, a spiritual exercise of mere social benefit.

Orthodoxy teaches that the grace of God works through His gifts in the holy mysteries. And it believes that any spiritual strife is unprofitable without the participation of grace. Further, the grace of God does not work in man without man's own strife, even as St. John Chrysostom says: "Grace does not work in those who are reclining on their backs."

Orthodoxy allows us to live the life of ecclesiastical oneness through the sacraments. For example in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we are united mystically with the Lord Jesus (and with each other). And in the (communal) prayers we are all united in spirit, thought and being.

For every believer according to his rank has a role; the priest, the deacons and the congregation, in unity offer prayers in oneness of heart and soul. The prayers of the hours (Agpeya) also unite us even if we were in different places, when we gather to pray to the Lord on a holy occasion.

Orthodoxy teaches us to care for the whole creation. For we pray for the good weather and the fruits of the earth, for the waters of the rivers, for those who are travelling, for the sick and the departed. We pray for the widow and the stranger. We pray for our country, for the president, the chiefs, the counsellors ... for all.

Orthodoxy teaches us to behave in a true Christian attitude towards men and the environment. For example, in the liturgy we pray for the widow, the orphan, the stranger and the sojourner. An orthodox who participates in these prayers cannot behave unseemly towards the widow, the orphan, the stranger and the sojourner. We also pray for waters of the river, for the good air and the fruits of the earth, etc. An orthodox Christian cannot pollute the river water, or destroy the trees or pollute the air etc.

How can I help those whom I serve to live an orthodox life, both as dogma and a spiritual life? There are three principles:

1. By explaining that the relationship with the Lord Christ has to be a complete relationship that encompasses knowledge about His person, His teachings and what He has offered us. That we should seek to perform all that He asks of us in love, and live according to His commands.
2. Constant teaching: as we are told in the Didascalia: “abolish sins by teaching” We do this by teaching the dogmas and the rites of the Church, her sacraments and all that pertains to them in the Bible in a livable way.
3. Ecclesiastical reference: In addition to the teachings of the early fathers, who taught us the faith, we should study their commentaries and explanations and to return to the mind of the church exemplified by her contemporary fathers that can explain the difficult matters.

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DOGMATIC THEOLOGY I

The Existence of God. The Oneness of God. The Triune God. The Divinity of the Lord Jesus.
The Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

[1] THE EXISTENCE OF GOD:

Does God Exist?

By: George Bassilious St Antonius Coptic Orthodox Church, San Francisco Bay Area "If there were no God, there would be no atheists" -- GK Chesterton, Where All Roads Lead I.

I. INTRODUCTION

- The existence or non-existence of God is the most important question we humans are ever asked to answer. If God does exist, a significant set of consequences follow, which should affect every day and every moment of our earthly existence.
- We are living in an increasingly atheistic world. The magazines we read, the music we hear, the peers and professors we have, are all shifting towards disbelief in God
- Every Christian must be ready to discuss the question of God's existence -- especially if he/she is in a leadership position. This can make all the difference to the young people who are still open to see both sides of the question.
- Science is becoming our greatest endeavor to discover truth; people tend to equate science with truth and other kinds of knowledge with imagination. Atheists have used this mindset to their advantage by claiming that science has disproved God.

II. CAN WE PROVE GOD'S EXISTENCE?

- The simple answer to this question is yes!
- The existence of God can be proven using logical principles. Not empirical methods.
- In other words, we cannot setup an experiment in a laboratory where God will appear for us in a test tube or under the conditions of some other controlled environment.
- But we must understand that the scientific method, while extremely valuable, is only one of the many vehicles that we have for learning about truth and reality.

III. THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE

- The aim of science is to study matter and energy. For example, love is a fact of life, but since it is neither matter nor energy it cannot be investigated by science. There is no gadget to measure the mass, length, breadth, or temperature of love.
- The aim of science is not to investigate all reality, but rather to investigate those realities that are seen in the form of matter and energy.
- God is neither matter nor energy. Therefore the methods of experimental sciences cannot be applied to disprove His existence.

- It is true that we can't prove God by the empirical method of verification. But there are many things we can't prove in this way.
- For example, we can't use the scientific method to prove the existence of Abraham Lincoln. History, by its very nature, is unrepeatable. We can't rerun 1994 Super Bowl game, yet no one denies that these events took place.
- No one would deny the existence of love or justice or compassion, yet none of these can be proven scientifically. There are certain things that simply can't be measured, and the existence of God fits into that category.

IV. DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS FOR EACH SCIENCE

In the search for truth, one uses different instruments of investigation. Every department of Science has its own specific instruments for investigating truth.

Example: Medicine Scalpel Astronomy Telescope Biology Microscope Chemistry Test Tubes.

- Same with God, since He is neither matter nor energy and cannot be dissected with a scalpel or placed in a test tube, we use other instruments to investigate His truth. i.e. Prayer, Repentance, Purity of Heart, His Word (Bible), His Body (Church).
- We simply use spiritual tools to discover spiritual truths
- Faith in God is not against reason, it is beyond reason. If we could analyze God in a test tube and understand him logically, He would not be God. We would be God

V. ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

- The Law of Cause and Effect
- It has always been a fundamental first principle of philosophy and science that "from nothing, nothing comes"
- We know that every event in the Universe has a cause for it. Apples fall down because of gravity while rockets go up because of thrust from burning fuel.
- Every effect has a cause. That cause in turn has another cause behind it. This cause in turn must have another cause behind it.
- Everything in this Universe has a cause except the First Cause. This first cause gave rise to everything else. "God".

There are 4 possible explanations for the existence of the universe. It is either:

1. An illusion 2. Self-created 3. Eternal 4. Created

1) An Illusion: If the universe is merely an illusion, than who or what is having the illusion? Something must exist to experience the illusion. We don't have to worry about such people. If

they are right, even they don't exist! And they shouldn't worry about us, because we don't exist!

2) Self-Created: This is referred to as "spontaneous generation" But for something to create itself, it must first be! In other words, in order for something to create itself, it must exist prior to itself. This is, of course, logically impossible.

3) Eternal: Science proved that the Universe is not eternal. For example it would violate the 2nd law of Thermodynamics. According to this law, the universe will eventually reach a state of equilibrium, a cold, dark, dead, virtually motionless universe. Clearly if the universe is without beginning, then the universe should already be in a state of equilibrium.

4) Created: Having established the other 3 options to be unreasonable, we arrive at the final option: the universe is created. In the words of the very first line of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

Moreover, if something exists, there must exist what it takes for it to exist. The universe exists.

Therefore, there must exist what it takes for the universe to exist.

What it takes for the universe to exist cannot exist within it

Therefore, what it takes for the universe to exist must transcend it.

Also whatever comes to being or goes out of being doesn't have to be. Suppose that nothing has to be. Then right now nothing would exist.

If the universe began to exist, then all being must trace its origin to some past moment.

And we said that from nothing, nothing comes. So the universe could not have begun.

So there must exist something which has to exist, which cannot not exist. This sort of being is called necessary.

Either this necessity belongs to the thing in itself or it is derived from another. If derived from another there must ultimately exist a being whose necessity is not derived, that is, an absolutely necessary being. This absolutely necessary being is God.

The Argument from the Origin of the Idea of God

We have ideas of many things. These ideas must arise either from ourselves or from things outside us.

One of the ideas we have is the idea of God, an infinite, all-perfect being.

This idea could not have been caused by ourselves, because we know ourselves to be limited and imperfect, and no effect can be greater than its cause.

Therefore, the idea must have been caused by something outside us. Someone that is infinite, all-perfect, all knowing

- But only God himself has those qualities. Therefore God must be the cause of the idea we have of him.
- Therefore God exists.
- The Argument From Design
- Common sense tells us that the existence of a magnificent universe sustained by countless laws of physics requires the existence of a Creator of those laws, a Designer of those structures.
- An intricately crafted universe points to an intelligent Designer. Could time plus chance result in such an intricate design of our universe? Would that not be the greatest leap of faith?

Consider this: What are the chances that a tornado blowing through a junkyard containing all the parts of a 747, accidentally assembling them into a plane, and leaving it ready for take-off?

- When one sees a beautiful painting, his thoughts immediately go to the artist who worked on it. When one looks at the infinitely complex Universe, one has to think of the infinitely intelligent and powerful Artist who put it all together!
- A Planet Perfect for Life
- Our atmosphere contains a mixture of gases in perfect proportions to sustain life. Oxygen makes up 21% of our air. If the proportion of oxygen in the air increased by only 2%, objects around us could literally burst into flame.
- If earth were only a little larger, making its gravity slightly stronger, hydrogen would be unable to escape earth's gravity and would collect in our atmosphere, making it inhospitable to life. Yet, if earth were only slightly smaller, oxygen would escape.
- The earth travels through space at 66,600 miles an hour as it orbits the sun. That speed perfectly offsets the sun's gravitational pull and keeps earth's orbit the proper distance from the sun. If earth's speed were less, it would be gradually pulled toward the sun, eventually scorching and extinguishing life. Mercury, the planet closest to the sun, has a daytime temperature of about 600 degrees
- Astronomers estimate that, if the distance from earth to the sun changed by as little as 2 percent, all life would be extinguished as water either froze or evaporated.
- No wonder the Genesis creation account concludes with this summary of God's handiwork: "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).
- Davies also estimated that if the strength of gravity were changed by only one part in a ten followed by a hundred zeroes, life could never have developed (ibid.).
- J. P. Moreland (1987, p. 53) claims, "If the mass of a proton were increased by 0.2 percent, hydrogen would be unstable and life would not have formed."
- Stephen Hawking, the world's most famous living physicist, has calculated that if the rate of

the universe's expansion had been smaller by 1 sec or even one part in a hundred thousand million, the universe would have collapsed into a fireball.

□ The Argument From Conscience (Moral Values)

□ Our sense of moral responsibility cannot be explained except by the existence of a Superior Lawgiver whom we are bound to obey.

□ CS Lewis said "When I was an atheist my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line.

□ The existence of a standard of morality requires the existence of a moral God. What else could set the standard? Unless there is a God, there is absolutely no objective basis for morality.

□ If there is no God, who holds us accountable for these things? What can you appeal to to say they are wrong?

□ A moral constitution and moral law imply a creator, law-giver, and judge. This creator, this law-giver and judge, is God

□ Relational Verification of God

□ In our everyday life we all experience love, peace, anger. All these feelings are "real", but there is no scientific method to detect them, verify them, or to measure them.

□ Love is neither matter nor energy. Therefore no scientific apparatus can measure it. Yet love is accepted as a reality. This is because people experience love relationally.

□ The same concept is applied in our knowledge of God. He is neither matter nor energy as we stated above. He is a Supreme Being, and He can be known, experienced, and verified only by the method of relations.

□ God can be known in a personal way, and when people know God it reflects in their lives. There are so many changed lives around that no one can refute this as mere propaganda.

□ Countless number of Christians have devoted their lives to serve the poor, the orphans and the unfortunate. How many atheists do that?

□ Further, when these deluded young people reap the consequences, atheists are nowhere to be seen. They do not run hospitals, orphanages, old-age homes, and shelters for the destitute. Christians do that because of their relationship with God. This relationship motivates them to express their love practically.

VI. PASCAL'S WAGER

□ Pascal asks us to approach the question of the truthfulness of Christianity as though we were faced with making a wager: a forced wager in which we must bet on one side or the other. Either God does or does not exist. If Christianity is true, then an eternity of infinite happiness awaits the faithful. If false, nothing but annihilation follows death. If we bet on God, and Christianity is

false, then perhaps we will have lost temporal, finite pleasures. But if we bet on God and Christianity is true, then we may have lost finite pleasures but gained infinite pleasures. Pascal's point is that the prudent betting man will always wager the finite amount to win the infinite amount. Thus, in the hypothetical case of epistemic parity, one is most rational to bet on God.

VII. CONCLUSION

□ In many cases the arguments are not be the real issue. The issue is that Atheists have decided beforehand that they want to be autonomous, independent, masters of their own destiny. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things Romans 1:20-23

□ Blaise Pascal the French philosopher and mathematician said: "God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind. Yet evidence sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed."

□ God wants all His creation not only to know Him but to get into a deep relationship with Him. He desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:4). But we have to be ready to search for this truth with all out heart. "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." Jer 29:13.

□ Pascal also says that there are three kinds of people: those who have sought God and found him, those who are seeking and have not yet found, and those who neither seek nor find. The first are reasonable and happy, the second are reasonable and unhappy, and the third are both unreasonable and unhappy. If what's at stake stimulates us at least to seek, then it will at least stimulate us to be reasonable. And if the promise Christ makes is true, all who seek will find (Mt 7:7-8), then we will be reasonable AND happy.

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[2] WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD. THE ONENESS OF GOD. GOD IS ONE AND HAS NO PARTNERS

We believe in One God and that He has no equal. Our belief is Monotheistic, unlike the pagans who believe in many gods. The Bible in both its testaments confirms that God is one. The Lord Jesus Christ says "... No one is good but One, that is, God." (Matthew 19:17). St. Paul also says: "... an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no other God but one." (1 Coronations 8:4). Also in the Book of Deuteronomy: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (De. 6:4). In the book of Isaiah, God states: "I am the LORD, and there is no other, there is no God

besides Me.” (Is. 45:4). Further down the passage God continues: “... Have not I, The LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior, there is none besides ME.” (Is. 45:21).

[3] THE HOLY TRINITY:

I. INTRODUCTION: The doctrine and belief in the Holy Trinity is a cornerstone of Christianity. This belief is that there is one God, one ousia or essence, and three hypostases or Persons Who are distinct but not separate. This formula is part of what distinguishes Christians from non-Christians. For example, Mormons speak about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but they are not one God in their doctrine. They believe that they are three separate gods and there are many other gods besides them. Also, Jehovah Witnesses also speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but deny the Holy Trinity saying that the Son was created and less than the Father and that the Holy Spirit is not a Person at all, but rather a force or power.

II. DEFINITIONS: Whenever speaking about theology, one must not only be very accurate and particular as to which words to use, one must also make sure that the right definitions to those words are understood in order to make sure that everyone is speaking with the same understanding. There is a long history as to how these terms evolved and the different meanings for which they have been used, but the terminology used today is as follows. Ousia is a Greek word that means “essence”. So God is one in essence. We also say that He is one nature. However, to distinguish between the Holy Trinity, we say that He is three hypostases. In English, we say that He is three Persons with a capital “P”.

III. ANALOGIES: When trying to understand Who God is, we can only go so far as to what God reveals to us since this is what our limited mind will comprehend when trying to understand the unlimited God. You may have heard of the story of one who was walking along the beach and he saw a child taking water from the sea and trying to put it in a hole in the sand. This man thought that what the child was doing was silly, but then was rebuked himself of trying to understand the unlimited God by our limited mind. However, the fathers of the Church have given us analogies to help us both understand the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and explain it to others.

Although no analogy is absolutely perfect, they are the best we have to come close to understanding principles of theology. Some of these analogies are: a) The Sun – The sun in the sky emits both light and heat. However, one cannot really separate these three things: the sun, the light, and the heat. One never exists without the other two. Thus, although they are three distinct things when speaking about them, they are also one. b) Human Being – The human being is body, soul, and spirit. However, they are all one person and when we speak about any person we distinguish but not separate between one and another component. c) Finger – Fingers on a hand are three parts, but each of those parts have the same components – in a sense the same essence. The only difference between the three parts is the end part that has the nail. This signifies that One from the Trinity – the Son, the Word of God – took flesh.

IV. THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES: Although there is no explicit reference to the term “Holy Trinity”, yet there are several passages in the Holy Bible that mention the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. From the very beginning of the Holy Scriptures, the first verses in the book of Genesis expose us to this when it is written: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said,...” (Gen. 1:1-3). So here we are immediately exposed to God

the Father, the Holy Spirit Who was hovering over the face of the waters and the Son, the Word of God, Who says. Moreover, in the Hebrew, God is written as Elohim, or the plural of God, referring in the same context, to the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

And it is clear that this God that Moses wrote about at the time of creation is the same God spoken of when he wrote in Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” So there is One God Who is the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. There are multiple other verses in the Holy Bible that speak about the One God. There are a few verses in the Holy Scriptures where God, or the Lord, is used in the plural but still referring to the One God. For example, when God created man and woman, He is referred to in both the singular and the plural at the same time: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

After the fall, it is further written: “Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’— therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen. 3:22-24).

The same occurs in the story of the tower of Babel: “And the Lord said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech’” (Gen. 11:6-7). There are also several other references to the Holy Trinity in the Holy Bible. Isaiah refers to this mystery in his book when he writes concerning the sending of the Messiah, the Son of God, by God the Father and the Holy Spirit: “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit Have sent Me” (Is. 48:16; see also Is. 61:1).

There is also an explicit reference in the Gospel according to St. Matthew speaking of the faith and formula by which one is baptized: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,…” (Matt. 28:19). We also have the Divine Manifestation (Theophany) at the time of the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ where the Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove and the voice of the Father was heard from heaven (Matt. 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22).

St. Paul also gives us the apostolic blessing: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen” (2Cor. 13:14) amongst other verses where he mentions the Holy Trinity (Rom. 8:1-4; 1Cor. 12:3-7; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:18; 4:4-6; 2Thess. 2:13-14; Tit. 3:4-6; Heb. 9:14). St. Peter in his first epistle also mentions the Holy Trinity: “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1Pet. 1:2). In order to establish the Biblical teaching of the Holy Trinity, one must see the verses that state that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, in addition to the verses that state that there is only one God. There are many verses referring to all of these. By the grace of God, we will address these separately in subsequent lessons. However, we will limit this topic here as a

summary of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and how this can be understood and explained.

V. DIVINE TITLES AND ATTRIBUTES REFERRING TO ALL THREE HYPOSTASES:

There are certain attributes and titles that the Holy Bible uses in respect to God Himself. Furthermore, these words are used in reference to each of the three hypostases of the Holy Trinity to show that they are not only God, but are one and the same essence since they have been described by each of these words. We will only mention some of these attributes.

□ Love – Father (Rom. 5:5, 8; 8:39; 2Cor. 13:11, 14; Eph. 2:4; 6:23; 2Thess. 3:5; 1Jn. 4:7-8), Son (Rom. 5:8; 8:35, 39; 2Cor. 5:14; Eph. 2:5; 3:19; 5:2, 25; 6:23; 1Tim. 1:14; 2Tim. 1:13; Tit. 3:4), Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:8).

□ Truth – Father (Jer. 10:10; Rom. 1:25; 3:7; 15:8), Son (Jn 14:6; 2Cor. 11:10; Eph. 4:21; Rev. 3:7), Holy Spirit (1Jn. 5:6; Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16; 13).

□ Eternal – Father (Rom. 1:20; Tit. 1:2), Son (1Tim. 1:17), Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14).

□ Life-giving –Father (Rom. 4:17; 6:4, 22-23; 1Tim. 6:13; Tit. 1:2), Son (Jn 5:21; Rom. 5:17, 21; 6:4, 22-23; 1Cor. 15:45; 2Cor. 4:10-11; 2Tim. 1:1, 10), Holy Spirit (Jn 6:63; Rom. 8:2, 10-11; 2Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:8). In Ps. 33:6, it is clear that this title is for the Holy Trinity: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth”.

□ Holy – In the book of Isaiah alone, the phrase “the Holy One of Israel” appears 25 times referring to God. The same phrase is mentioned in Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Jer. 50:29; 51:5; Ez. 39:7. Furthermore, the Trisagion, i.e. “Holy, Holy, Holy” is mentioned in Isaiah 6:3 as well as the book of Revelation 4:8 to Him Who is sitting on the throne. St. John tells us in his Gospel that this praise in the book of Isaiah was directed towards the Son when he writes: “These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him” (Jn. 12:41). The other times this title is mentioned in the book of Revelation (3:7; 6:10; 15:4), they are all in reference to the Son.

There are also many verses in the Holy Bible that mention the Holy Spirit (e.g. Ps. 51:11; Matt. 1:18; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 1:41; Jn. 14:26; Rom. 5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16; 1Cor. 2:13; 6:19; 7:34; 12:3; 2Cor. 6:6; 13:14; Eph. 1:13; 3:5; 4:30; 1Thess. 1:5-6; 4:8; 2Tim. 1:14; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15; besides many others). Since the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9, 14; 15:19; 1Cor. 2:11, 14; 3:16; 7:40; 12:3; Eph. 4:30) and the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9), then one can infer from these verses that St. Paul is also saying that the Father and Son are Holy.

VI. THEOLOGY VS. ECONOMY: One must distinguish between the theology (qeolog...a) of the Holy Trinity – i.e. the doctrine, divinity, and nature of the Holy Trinity – and the economy (okonom...a), i.e. the creation and salvation of mankind through the action of the Holy Trinity for humanity. This refers more to the Divine plan that was in the mind of God before the ages (cf. Eph. 3:9; 2Tim. 1:9-10; Rom. 16:25-26; 1Cor. 2:7-8) and is being carried out over time and will be fulfilled in the last day at the general resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

St. Paul writes about this in Ephesians 1:3-11: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will..." It was this role of the Holy Trinity in the economy, i.e. the Divine plan, that led the fathers of the Church to use the formula "from the Father, by the Son, through the Holy Spirit" and also "from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit". The Holy Bible speaks about the work of the Holy Trinity in each of these steps in the economy.

a) The Creation was the work of the Holy Trinity: As mentioned above, this is clear from the first verses of the book of Genesis. However, there are several verses speaking of both the Father and the Son creating: "God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9); "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2); "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3); "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Col. 1:16-17); "God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9); that is, through the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jn. 1:1-4; see also Wisdom. 9:1); that is, through the Wisdom: "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens" (Prov. 3:19; see also 8:22-30, 33; Wisdom 7:21). There are also other clear verses in the Holy Bible that mention the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation (cf. Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; Job 33:4; Ps. 33:6).

b) The Role of the Trinity in the Incarnation: The Holy Bible states clearly that it is the Son Who took flesh being sent by the Father: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:1, 14); "who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man" (Phil. 2:6-8); "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same" (Heb. 2:14); "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). The Holy Spirit also had a role in the Incarnation as is written in the fourfold Gospel (cf. Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). But Isaiah writes that the Son was sent by the Father and the Holy Spirit: "Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit Have sent Me" (Is. 48:16).

c) The Role of the Trinity in the Sacrifice of the Cross: The Father out of His love offered His Only-Begotten Son: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16); "But God

demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8); “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jn. 4:9-10); “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:10; compare 2Cor. 5:18-19, 21). This was done in order to be justified and purified (Rom. 3:24-25; compare Tit. 3:4-7), and to become sons by adoption (Eph. 1:3-5; Gal. 4:4-7; 1Jn. 3:1), and to gain all things: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). The Son also offered Himself for us of His own free will: “who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14); “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep... Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

This command I have received from My Father” (Jn. 10:15, 17-18); “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5:2); “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8); “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed” (Tit. 2:14); “who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1Tim. 2:6); “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us” (1Jn. 3:16); “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost” (Matt. 18:11; Lk. 9:56; 19:10); “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45). See also Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:14; Heb. 9:26; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 2:14-19 where St. Paul speaks about the redemption and reconciliation that occurred through the shedding of His blood on our behalf.

The Holy Spirit also had a role in the economy of the Cross. In one verse, St. Paul writes about the role of the Holy Trinity in the sacrifice of the Cross: “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God...” (Heb. 9:14). The Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit proclaiming that He is the One chosen from before time to be the Savior and Redeemer: “He established me before time [was] in the beginning, before he made the earth” (Prov. 8:23, LXX); “and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4); “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10:38; compare Lk. 4:18; Matt. 3:16; Jn. 1:32; Acts 4:26, 27). This was done in agreement with the prophets (Is. 11:1, 2; 42:1; 61:1, 2).

d) The Role of the Trinity in the Power of the Resurrection: Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead by His own power and authority: See Matt. 28:64; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:6; 1Cor. 15:12. “He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1Cor. 15:4); “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1Cor. 15:20); “and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again”(2Cor. 5:15).

The Father raised Christ from the dead (see Acts 2:24; 5:30; 13:30; 17:31; Gal. 1:1; Rom. 4:24; 10:9; 1Cor. 6:14; 2Cor. 4:14; Col. 2:12; Heb. 13:20). “...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be

head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:20-23).

The Holy Spirit also has His role in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1Pet. 3:18); “and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4); “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11; compare Ez. 37:14).

e) The Role of the Trinity in the Glorious Ascension: Christ was “received up in glory” (1Tim. 3:16) and was “carried up to heaven” (Lk. 24:51) by the work of the Holy Trinity. Christ ascended to the heavens by Himself through the power of His Divinity: “Therefore He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. (Now this, He ascended--what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things)” (Eph. 4:8-10); “who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1Pet. 3:22). “He was taken up” (Acts 1:2, 9, 11, 22). “He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mk. 16:19); “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2); “He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3); “who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1); “and has become higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26); “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:12).

The Father lifted up the Son to the heavens: “Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11); “which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:20-22); “The Lord said to My Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’” (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:44; Mk. 12:36; Lk. 20:42; Acts 2:34; Heb. 1:13); “even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6).

The Holy Spirit also had a role in the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to the heavens. The Gospels in particular speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ being “led up by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness” (Matt. 4:1). There was also a close connection between the ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on the Pentecost (see Jn. 16:7, 14; Jn. 7:39; Acts 2:32-33). Furthermore, one should keep in mind the one essence in the three hypostases and the unity of the hypostases that are distinct but not separate. So the one nature and the one will give the Holy Trinity a role in all steps of the economy. As we also said previously, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

f) The Role of the Trinity in the Resurrection of the Flesh on the Last Day: The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the assurance of the resurrection of the flesh in the last day. This is such a firm and established belief that Christianity is founded on that St. Paul makes it clear that if there is no resurrection of the dead then Christ is not risen. “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, and then Christ is not risen.

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming” (1Cor. 15:12-23).

The Father Who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead will also raise us up in the last day: “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power” (1Cor. 6:14); “knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you” (2Cor. 4:14). The Holy Spirit will raise us up in the last day: “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).

VII. RELATIONSHIP OF THE HOLY TRINITY WITH THE BELIEVERS: We have already touched on the relationship of the Holy Trinity with the believers. But in continuation of the last section, each of the steps of the economy is for the salvation of the human race for eternal life. But then the question becomes: “How does one become worthy of the redemption that was offered?” Our Lord Jesus Christ answered this when He said about the Holy Spirit: “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you” (Jn. 16:14-15). So the Holy Spirit transfers all of the saving effect of the sacrifice on the Cross to the believers through the Church.

St. Paul says the exact same teaching when he writes: “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). In fact, the path to salvation cannot begin without the Holy Spirit Who leads us to believe that Christ is Lord: “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1Cor. 12:3). He also makes known to us the things that God has granted to us (1Cor. 2:10-12).

Through the Holy Spirit we become sons of God by adoption as opposed to our Lord Jesus Christ Who is the Only-Begotten Son of God by nature: “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father! Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:47); “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of

bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:14-15; see also Eph. 1:3-5).

Without the gift of the Holy Spirit, we cannot be one with Christ: “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Rom. 8:9). And once we have been baptized, i.e. born of water and Spirit (Jn. 3:5), and receive the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation we become one in the body of Christ, the Church: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1Cor. 12:12-13; Rom. 12:5). “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:46); “in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22; compare Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; 3:15). And when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, we become one in His Body (1Cor. 10:16-17; cf. Jn. 6:56).

This all occurs at the hands of the priest who has been given this authority by the Holy Spirit given by our Lord Jesus Christ, the True and Eternal High Priest, when He breathed on the face of His holy apostles saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn. 20:22-23). St. Paul affirms that He has received this same authority of the Holy Spirit when he writes: “and I think I also have the Spirit of God” (1Cor. 7:40). The Holy Spirit works in us to be conformed to the image of the Son (Rom. 8:29) to the glory of God the Father: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Cor. 3:18; compare Phil. 3:3-11). So this is why the Holy Spirit must dwell in us and make us a temple for God: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9); “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1Cor. 3:16-17; compare 1Cor. 6:19-20).

And once the Holy Spirit dwells in us, the Father and the Son also dwell in us and we become a dwelling for the Holy Trinity: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (Jn. 14:23). St. Paul continues this teaching from the above verses about the Holy Spirit and the Father dwelling in us and also says that Christ dwells in us when the Holy Spirit dwells in us (Rom. 8:9-10; compare Gal. 2:20). He furthermore teaches us how to pray in order to have a relationship with God (Rom. 8:26-27; Eph. 6:18; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15) and through Whom the love of God is poured into our hearts (Rom. 5:5-7).

Therefore, in order to have the proper relationship with the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit must work in us to “cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14) and “put to death the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13). He works in us to sanctify us in order to become holiness and righteousness before God (Eph. 4:24) and in order to bear fruit that is acceptable to God (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:8-10). This is because we are all called to holiness: “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit” (1Thess. 4:7-8). Not only does He sanctify us, He sanctifies our gifts that they may be

acceptable to God (Rom. 15:16). In addition to these and other verses mentioned previously, there are the numerous verses where the Holy Spirit gives us power, peace, love, and all of the means that are necessary to overcome Satan and the sin and to live according to God's will. The Holy Spirit as the Paraclete [meaning not only Comforter or Helper, but also a Defender or Intercessor] intercedes for us and is through Whom we are able to call upon God and pray to Him as sons since the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of grace and supplication" (Zach. 12:10): "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16); "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27); "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18); "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). He is also the one Spirit that gives all of the gifts in the Church, the body of Christ, to each one as He sees fit (1Cor. 12; Rom. 12) for edification, the salvation of souls, and the spreading of the kingdom that will in the end be delivered to God the Father (1Cor. 15:24).

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QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you explain the Holy Trinity to someone? The key here is keeping it as simple as possible, but clear, to the point, and still comprehensive.
- 2) Give three verses, or groups of verses, from the Holy Bible that mention the Holy Trinity.

[4] THE DIVINITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:

The Lord Jesus Christ is God incarnate, and He is not a man who became God. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh.” (1 Timothy 3:16). We have three types of evidence for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and that He is God manifested in the flesh.

A) CLEAR AND DIRECT VERSES:

The Gospel of St. John concentrates and specializes in showing the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. John started his Gospel as such: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), then he continues saying: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14) and then: “I and My Father are one.” (John 10:30). When the Lord Jesus says: “I and my Father are one” He means it from the Divinity, and the essence and not from the hypostasis point of view.

The hypostasis of the Son is the knowledge i.e. God’s Mind, or the “Logos” in Greek. When St. Paul talked about the service in the Church he said: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28). Thus, Christ is God who shed His blood for the Church.

B) GOD’S UNLIMITED CHARACTERISTICS THAT EXISTED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:

† His omnipresence

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” (John 3:13), and as such, the coming of Jesus Christ to the world and the fact that He was still in Heaven is like the sun ray that comes out of the sun and it still exists in the sun.

God is present everywhere and also the Lord Jesus is present everywhere, and He said: “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 28:20). Similarly, when St. Stephen was gazing into the heavens, the Bible said: “.... And saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55).

† He is timeless:

When the Lord Jesus was talking to the Jews who were proud to be related to Abraham the patriarch, He told them: “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58). In His last prayer that showed what was in our Savior’s heart, He said: “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was: (John 17:5).

† Characteristic of Creation:

God created the world by His Son, i.e. His mind. When God came to our world in the flesh, He performed many miracles of creation. He fed the five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish (it is the only miracle mentioned in the four gospels). In this miracle, the Lord created a large quantity of bread and fish to feed the multitude and a even much was left over. Also, when He transformed the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. This was an

act of creation. Also, when He created the eyes to the born blind in John 9.

† ***Characteristic of Life-giving:***

God is the life-giver. The Lord Jesus raised people from the dead by His order saying: “Lazarus, come forth, and he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes...” (John 11:43-44).

† ***Characteristic of Total authority over Nature:***

When the disciples were distressed in the storm: “Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.” (Matthew 14:25). “And when He got into the boat, the wind ceased.” Matthew 14:32). Also in the miracle of the two dimes. The lord said to Peter: “... go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.” (Matthew 17:27).

† ***Characteristic of Total authority over the Angels and the demons:***

The Lord Jesus conquered the demons and cast them out of many people with great authority. He did not accept witness from the devil: “And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of God!” And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ.” (Luke 4:41).

As for total authority over the angels, it was clear in many situations; “And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.” (Mark 1:13). During His passion; “And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:51-53).

c) ***The Transfiguration, The Resurrection and The Ascension:***

The transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ on the mountain before His disciples Peter, James and John was not just obtaining light from outside, but the Lord permitted His Divine Light to emit from within Him, even for a short blink of an eye “and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.” (Matthew 17:2). Also calling Moses and Elijah from the other world to come to the mountain is a full disclosure of His Divinity.

Then when the great time of salvation on the Cross came, He put down His life by His own free will when all the people conspired against Him and all the Kings of the earth rose against the Lord and His anointed one and He knew that beforehand. When the soldiers came to the garden where He was praying “Jesus said to them, “I am He.”... they drew back and fell to the ground. I have told you that I am He. Let these go their way.” (John 18:5-8).

During His crucifixion He performed miracles greater than all miracles He performed when He was walking in the flesh before the cross. That is why we sing in the church saying: “Holy is the One who performed in His weakness greater acts than in His Power.” Then when He was buried in the grave for three days and He rose by Himself without anyone raising Him and He became the first fruit of the dead.

The glory of the resurrection was so great and He conquered death and the devil by His own death and He raised us with Him. This resurrection is unique because He rose by Himself and there was no death after it. He even appeared to His disciples and to chosen people for forty days: "... whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "... Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. This same Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:2-11).

[5] THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The belief of the Church is based on the word of God written in the Holy Bible and it clearly confirms the Divinity of the Holy Spirit and His equality with the Father and the Son in essence and in Divine Perfection.

† God is the Creator ... The Holy Spirit is the Creator:

In the book of Job he says: "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." (Job 33:4). From the beginning of the Holy Bible, where it started with the creation it says: "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:1-2).

† God Knows Everything .. The Holy Spirit Knows Everything

When St. Paul wanted to declare the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His knowledge of everything thing at all times he said: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." (1Coronations 2:9-10).

When the apostles were performing their missionary work, they were under total guidance from the Holy Spirit who knows everything at all times so that their mission would be successful. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:2-3).

† God is Omnipresent ... The Holy Spirit is omnipresent:

David in his Psalms said: "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea." (Psalm 139:7-9).

† God is the One who raises People from the Dead ... The Holy Spirit is the One who raises People from the dead

When St. Paul spoke about the work of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus in our lives, and that

His resurrection will raise us from the dead and give us life; this transfer of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus to us is through the Holy Spirit of God that works within us “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11).

† God is the only One who Knows the Future ... The Holy Spirit is the One who revealed the Future to the prophets

The Holy Spirit spoke on the tongues of the prophets: “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21). He is the one who spoke on the tongues of the martyrs and the confessors as the Lord has promised: “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” (Luke 12:11-12).

During the time when St. Stephen, the archdeacon, was being martyred, the book of Acts says: “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.” (Acts 6:10).

† Sayings by the Lord Jesus Christ.

When He was talking to the Samaritan woman about the true worship of God He explained to her: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24).

During the baptism of our Lord in the Jordan river “When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said: “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22).

Regarding the eternity of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus said: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper that He may abide with you forever.” (John 14:16).

Thus, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. God is alive with His Spirit. God speaks His Word through His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is eternal as God is, equal to the Father and the Son in essence and He is One in the Divinity of the Father and the Son.

DOGMATIC THEOLOGY II

The Fall of Adam and Eve – The Great Redemption – Salvation – Salvation of the soul and the work of the Holy Trinity – The Doctrine of the Coptic Orthodox Church regarding the Virgin Mary – Our belief in intercession.

THE FALL OF ADAM AND EVE:

“Then God said: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26). “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28). God created Adam and Eve and blessed them. He created them after He created everything else for their own comfort. How did God create Adam? We see this in the teachings of the Bible when it says “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.’. Here we are shown that the spiritual element which comes forth when God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”; therefore making man to the likeness of God, because God is a spirit, not a body. Thus, Adam had gained beautiful and spiritual characteristics of freedom, holiness, and eternity from the Lord God.

Freedom is very important when God created Man. He privileged him over the other creatures, planets, sun, and stars. He did not want Adam and Eve to be under any control.

As for Holiness, God wanted Adam to live a holy life away from any sin or evil because He tells us, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16).

As for Eternity, it is either a happy eternity in the Kingdom of God or a painful and miserable eternity in Hades that is prepared for the Devil and his soldiers. Of course, God wanted for man to enjoy his eternity in the Kingdom of Heaven. Was Man created with no sin? No. Since he is a free being, then the possibility of his fall was there and indeed when he was subject to sin, he fell.

Thus, God wanted holiness and happy eternity for Man, but He does not force Man to do anything. Therefore in the Prayer of Reconciliation in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil we say: “O Great and Eternal God Who created Man of incorruption” God then gave Adam his commandment: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17).

But the devil tempted Eve and Adam and evil started to infiltrate them gradually, and the element of darkness eventually overpowered them, causing them to fall and disobey God. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” (Genesis 3:6).

Thus, sin tarnished the spirit of Man, and he brought onto himself destruction and death. The robe of righteousness and purity was removed as it is written, “... and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” (Genesis 3:7).

At this time, Man lost everything when he sinned, many diseases entered him, including fear when he says “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid” (Genesis 3:10). Then Adam and Eve were expelled from the presence of God in the Garden of Eden because light has no partnership with darkness. “So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way of the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:24).

Although Adam was expelled, he was not forgotten by God. This expulsion had to happen to fulfill God’s justice, but being forgotten would contradict the love of God and His mercy on Man. God then started to plan for the Salvation of Man by removing him from the hands of the Devil and return him to the Paradise of Joy and the Kingdom of God in a way that is superior to when Man was in the first paradise. Therefore, from the first day, “the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21). Those tunics of skin were symbols of the great redemption that was yet to happen for the salvation of Adam and Eve and their children.

But the painful situation of the fall of Adam and Eve did not end with them. It was transferred to their children and thus death was transferred to everyone, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12) and “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Sin is directed towards God directly and is disobedience of His commandments and disrespect for His love and is a response to the Devil, we see this in the Psalms as it is written, “Against You, You only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4). Therefore, in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil we say: “For Death that entered into this world through the envy of the Devil” Therefore, death is not made by the Creator, but it has entered through the created.

THE GREAT REDEMPTION:

Since sin was directed towards God, then its punishment is endless and it is the eternal death. Therefore, it was necessary for someone to pay for this sin and fulfill the divine justice to free Adam and the world everywhere and in all ages.

Redemption here means someone must die instead of someone else. But in this case, who shall die instead of the whole world and for all ages? He cannot be an angel to fulfill such great redemption. He cannot be a man, prophet or saint to fulfill this redemption in such a broad perspective. Who can pay for such an endless punishment and fulfill the divine justice? He must be God Himself, manifested in the flesh, to be instead of all humanity. This person is Our Lord Jesus Christ who shed His blood to redeem us all. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

St. Paul also says: “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:6-10). St. Peter says: “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible

things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” (1 Peter 1:18-20). Therefore, the ransom is wanted and is unlimited to give unlimited redemption of all sins to all people everywhere and at all times.

SALVATION:

The word “salvation” in a general way means getting rid of a crisis or a painful situation to reach a comfortable situation. When we talk about the salvation of mankind, we mean that mankind is saved from the eternal corruption and get rid of sin which leads to death and eternal perish. It saves us from the devil and eternal hell.

In addition to the ransom to pay for the price of sin and fulfill the divine justice, man must get rid of the devil and his stronghold on him. The devil must be weak and his might is broken so man can trample over him and get rid of his control. Thus, we need someone who can get into the battlefield with the devil and win the battle for the sake of mankind. It was necessary that God Himself come “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He came to bless our nature, as we notice in the Divine Liturgy of St. Gregory, “You blessed my nature in You”.

He came to defeat the devil on the mountain of temptation, and open the door of victory over the Devil until He finally defeated him on the Holy wood of the Cross, and thus He chained it and restricted his powers.

Therefore, salvation happens through two things: first is by the Grace of God within the human being by the spiritual fight, secondly by breaking the might of the Devil and his defeat, so he becomes a defeated enemy. “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10).

All matters related to the salvation of man and his rescue from the Devil and death is very important, that is why it had many symbols in the Old Testament, many prophecies and many events. We mention from it:-

† When the Lord Jesus met the two disciples going to Emmaus (although this incident happened in the New Testament, it has many references to the Old Testament) the Lord told them “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:25-27).

† All the prophets lived waiting for this salvation and were very happy for it “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:65).

† The story of the salvation of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, and their exodus with a mighty arm, and the perishing of Pharaoh and his men was a symbol of the salvation of Man from the slavery of the devil. The blood sprinkled on the “two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses” (Exodus 12:7) was the sign of rescue and is a symbol of the blood of Jesus Christ “...

For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE SALVATION:

The Holy Spirit has a fundamental role that cannot be overlooked in the salvation of the human soul. We can summarize the salvation by saying that the Holy Spirit of God must work in the human soul from within and carry this soul to become the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in him. This is proven when said “No Man can say that Jesus is God except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:26).

We can give glimpses about the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of the soul and connect it to Jesus by using symbols from the Old Testament and actual situations from the New Testament.

a) Symbols from the Old Testaments for the Work of the Holy Spirit in the Salvation of the Soul:

(1) The story of the sons of the prophets with Elisha in 2 Kings 6:1-7; “And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us, Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell.” So he answered, “Go.” Then one said, “Please consent to go with your servants.” And he answered, “I will go.” So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Alas, master! For it was borrowed.” So the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. Therefore he said, “Pick it up for yourself.” So he reached out his hand and took it.” In this incidence, the fall of the piece of iron and its sinking represents the sin. “It is bare” because it disrobes man from his righteousness and takes him down. The wooden stick that was thrown into the water represents the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the blood that was shed on it for our salvation. The water represents the Holy Spirit Who is capable of restoring us from the dungeon and damnation.

(2) The story of the Elder of Abraham's hour (his agent) in bringing Rebecca as a wife to Isaac is told to us in Genesis.

In this story the servant of Abraham “the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had” represents the Holy Spirit. The representative of Abraham went to the Land of his family and he had many gifts from his master and went and brought Rebecca (who represents the human soul) to Isaac (who represents Jesus). “Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebecca and she became his wife, and he loved her.” (Genesis 24:67).

b) The Role of The Holy Spirit in the Salvation as it shows in the New Testament:

(1) In the conception of the Virgin Mary when the Angel Gabriel told her “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy

One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35). Thus the conception of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus was without the seed of a man. This was the fundamental work of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of salvation. Thus, when the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus by the Holy Spirit, she did not transfer the physical sin that she carried as a human to the baby Lord Jesus in her womb.

(2) Our Lord Jesus Christ was clear in his teaching about the Holy Spirit and His essential work in the salvation of the soul. “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:26).

He started to explain to His disciples that in order for the Holy Spirit to be sent to work in the Church, salvation must be completed first. This salvation will take place on the Cross, and through the blood that is shed on the Cross. “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.” (John 16:7-8).

As for the work of the Holy Spirit inside the person for the salvation of his soul, the Lord Jesus explained it by saying: “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more, of judgement, because the fouler of this world is judged.” (John 16:8-11).

And in truth, after the crucifixion, resurrection and ten days after the ascension of Our Lord Jesus into the Heavens, while the disciples gathered in the Upper room as the Lord told them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4).

Thus the Church of the New Testament was born on the Fiftieth day when the Holy Spirit started to work in His everlasting mission in the New Testament. Unlike the Old Testament when the Holy Spirit only comes upon three groups of people: the priests, prophets and kings. But now, the Holy Spirit works with whoever works hard for Him and for the belief in Jesus Christ.

Whoever asks in humility will receive the Holy Spirit and will become the temple of God and the Spirit of God resides in him through the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation. The prophecy of Joel the Prophet says: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” (Joel 2:28).

One of the best examples of the work of the Holy Spirit is in Peter the disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He denied his master and then was transformed, and with one sermon he converted 3000 people and was then tortured and crucified for the name of Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE SALVATION OF SOULS:

This is summarized in one sentence we say in the Divine Liturgy of St. Gregory: “The love of God the Father and the Grace of His only begotten Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the partnership and the Gift of the Holy Spirit be with you.”

Thus, God's endless love and his preparation of salvation, his incarnation to fulfill this redemption and salvation, and the coming of the Holy Spirit from the Father to give us the heavenly power through His work in the sacraments of the church (as we will discuss later) and giving us the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH REGARDING THE VIRGIN MARY:

(1) The Virgin Mary is the Mother of God “Theotokos” Our Church cherishes the name of the Virgin Mary the Mother of God. This name is taken from the Holy Bible and not from human thinking or ideas. It is a divine declaration.

Isaiah the Prophet said: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14) “Immanuel which is translated “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14).

† When Elizabeth received the Virgin Mary carrying our Lord in her womb, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and said: “But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:43) then the baby leaped in her womb from joy and worshipping of His Lord.

† The prophecy of the Angels to the Shepherds is seen, “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11).

† In the prophecy of the Angel to the Virgin Mary, the Angel said: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

(2) THE VIRGIN MARY OF THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY “EPARTHENOS”

† What the angel said in his words when he came to Mary: “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.” (Luke 1:26-27). The word “virgin” in Greek is “Eparthenos” and in Hebrew is “Alma”. Both the Greek and Hebrew words mean “Perpetual virginity” because she gave birth to the Saviour of the World and her virginity remained intact.

† Some of the traditional stories of the church that tell us when the Virgin Mary entered the temple after giving birth to the Lord, she stood in the rows of the virgins and when they tried to prevent her from that, Zakariah the priest told them to leave her there in the row of virgins.

† In the commemoration of Saints in the Divine Liturgy we say: “the Ever Virgin Mary” i.e. The perpetual virgin.

† The symbol of St. Mary's virginity is the burning bush that Moses saw on the mountain since her womb was the carrier of the divine and human and she was not burnt by the divine nature

“And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.” (Exodus 3:2).

(3) THE VIRGIN MARY IS THE SECOND HEAVEN

The Heaven is the throne of God. The Virgin Mary carried God inside her and that is why she was called the “Second Heaven”. The word of God's swelling in Greek is “Episkiazo” (meaning overshadow) and in Hebrew “Shakan” (meaning dwelling).

Those are the words used in the Holy Bible to express the dwelling of God in the tabernacle in the Old Testament. “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” (Exodus 40:34-35). This is the same word used during the transfiguration “And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying: “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Mark 9:7).

In the good tidings from the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary he said: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35).

COPTIC ORTHODOX DOCTRINE IN INTERCESSION

DEFINITION OF INTERCESSION IN GENERAL:

Intercession is mediation. For instance a person with influence would mediate on behalf of another person and submit his request to the King or a person of power. From this simple example we find all the elements of intercession. A small person or someone in a small position has a request to submit to the king or a great person, but because he feels that he does not deserve it, he may submit his request with some enforcement or recommendation from another person who has influence over the king so that he may find grace in the king's eyes.

There are three kinds of intercession in the spiritual life:

1) RANSOM (PROPI TIATORY) INTERCESSION:

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6) St. John says also “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2).

The human nature perished and death entered into human lives. Jesus' blood on the Cross was the price for this sin so that Man can stand with condemnation before God. No one can stand before God without sin, because everyone was lost and perished and needed the glory of God. But through the Ransom Intercession of Our Lord Jesus Christ, man can stand before God without condemnation because he believed in the blood of Jesus Christ. All the offering in the Old Testament was a symbol for the Offering that was made on the Cross “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

St. John the Evangelist in the book of Revelation saw the people who benefited from the intercession of the blood of Jesus when he said: “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14).

2) ENTREATING INTERCESSION:

Because God loved us and called us His children, He told His disciples when you pray you say: “Our Father Who art in heaven ...” Do we deserve to be called children of God when we go about in our lives not careful about our spiritual life and we have repeated sins? Of course we do not deserve to be called children of God, and we lost our influence (favour) as children because of our many sins and breaking God's commandments. What happens to us when we face tribulation or get sick while we have lost our influence that we have with God?. Can we boldly ask Him? We still pray to Him and ask Him, but at the same time we ask from the Saints to pray for us and we say in the song of “Rejoice O Mary ...” “we have no favour with Jesus Christ Our Lord except your request and intercession, You Our Lady the Mother of God ...” In the Holy Bible it says; “I honour who honours me” and truly, the Virgin Mary , the angels and Saints have honoured the Lord and He honours them when they ask Him on our behalf.

EXAMPLES OF INTERCESSION FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

† Abraham intercedes on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:16-33 “And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing” (Genesis 18:17). To this point, God loves Abraham because of his obedience, while Sodom and Gomorrah was filled with evil and corruption. Abraham started talking to God and asking Him to forgive the two cities if he found even 10 righteous people and the Lord listened to Abraham. But Abraham could not find even 10 people “Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.” (Genesis 19:24).

† Elisha the Prophet asked on behalf of his disciple “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw.” (2 Kings 6:8). Then when they entered Samaria he prayed again “So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, “LORD, open the eyes of these men that they may see.” And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw” (2 Kings 6:20).

† During the time of Solomon the King (the son of David), when Solomon sinned against the Lord, God wanted to divide the kingdom, but He said not during Solomon's time “for the sake” of David my slave because God had a good relation with David and He said “I found his heart according to my heart.”

EXAMPLES OF INTERCESSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The intercession of the Virgin Mary at the wedding of Cana of Galilee where the Lord performed His first miracles through the intercession of the Virgin Mary when he transformed the water into wine and sadness into happiness. It so happened that the people at the wedding asked from the Virgin Mary to intercede on their behalf. (John 2:1-11).

† St. Paul asks for the prayer of the people of the Church for him “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and

all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

NOTE:

The intercession in the songs and exaltations are many in our church, e.g. the song of Hitin “Ari Epresvevin” we ask for the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the angels. But when we ask for the prayers of the Saints for us, we say “Tobh Emepchoice = a series of invocations of the saints, each verse begins with “Ask the Lord on our behalf O St. George” and ends with “that He may forgive us our sins.”

3) THE INTERCESSION OF THE POOR:

Donating and helping the poor is a great deed and a great intercession for us with the Lord Our Saviour.

† Matthew 25:34-46: “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; ... when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ... Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

† “He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given.” (Proverbs 19:17).

† “Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon.” (Luke 16:9).

† “Blessed is he who considers the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; you will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness; you will sustain him on his sickbed.” (Psalm 41:1-3).

DOGMATIC THEOLOGY III – CHURCH SACRAMENTS

INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH SACRAMENTS

Definition

A Church Sacrament is a holy ordinance through which the believer receives an invisible grace under the form of an outward sign, visible or audible. It is instituted by Christ, Himself.

Some Protestants say that the Sacraments are mere symbols and “signs of the new covenant”. They also believe that they are merely outward rituals through the observance of which “the church of Christ confesses her Lord and is visibly distinguished from the world.” But our Church believes that there is a real efficacy in the Sacraments themselves and that they truly bring invisible graces to the believers.

For instance it is said that Baptism brings salvation. *“When once the Divine long suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us.”* (1Pet. 3: 20-21).

And the Holy Communion brings true life in this world: *“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you”* (John 6:53).

“Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day”. “He who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:54 - 58).

The same can be said of the other sacraments.

NUMBER OF CHURCH SACRAMENTS

There are seven Sacraments: Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Penance, Holy Communion, Unction for the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders.

The first four Sacraments are necessary for every believer and the other three are not necessary for everyone.

Who has the Right to Perform Church Sacraments?

A bishop may perform any Church Sacrament but there must be at least three bishops for the consecration of a bishop in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. A priest cannot confer Holy Orders but he can perform the other six Sacraments; a deacon can only help the bishop or the priest in celebrating the seven Sacraments.

Some Protestants say that Sacraments and all church ordinances can be celebrated by anyone of the laity and that there is no need for the clergy, supposing that all Christians are of the same standing and Christ did not distinguish among anyone in His Church. In reply, please turn to what is mentioned in this Curriculum under the Sacrament of the Holy Orders.

Others think that the Sacraments lose their efficacy if the minister's life is evil. But our Church teaches that the blessings acquired through the Sacraments do not depend on the life of the minister because of the following reasons:

The Apostle Paul asserts that the word of grace in the heart does not depend on any human effort but rather, it is absolutely dependent on God. ***“Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase”***(1Cor.3: 7).

Though the Lord did not baptize and baptism was left to the disciples, it is written that it was He who baptized. (John 1:33;4:12).

In the same manner we can say that it is not the minister who performs the Sacraments but God who works in him, with him and through him. ***“For it is God who works in you”***(Phil. 2:13).

“We then, as workers together with Him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain”(2Cor. 6:1).

“I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” (1Cor. 15:10).

We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” (2Cor. 5:20).

When Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and against God, taking their censers and offering incense, they were severely punished but God ordered that ***“The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy.”*** (Numbers 16:38).

The Lord ordered us to accept the teachings of even the wicked teachers while *not* imitating their bad example (Matt. 23:1-3).

St. John Chrysostom said; “It happens that the leaders are wicked and the laity are righteous. But the grace does not depend upon the life of the clergy. This I say in order that no one should doubt of the legality of ordinances celebrated if he examines the priest's life because everything depends upon the power of God who alone grants the grace through the sacrament performed”.

And St. Athanasius said; “The priest does not consecrate the water (of baptism) but merely performs the due service for which he obtains grace from God”. He also said; “If we baptize, confirm and forgive everything is due to Christ who performs it.”

It was also said, “It makes no difference whether the Sacraments are given at the hands of righteous or wicked ministers because sacraments resemble the seeds which are scattered on the earth by the farmer and which will produce the due crop whether the hands of the farmer are clean or dirty and because if the efficacy of the sacraments depends upon the life of the ministers, it follows that our salvation depends upon their desire”.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Definition:

Baptism is the Sacrament through which a person is born again and accepted into the membership of the Church after being dipped into water three times, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Of all the Sacraments it is the first because it is considered to be the door through which the believer enters the Church and the kingdom of grace according to what was said by the Lord *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”* (John 3:5).

Therefore, baptism must be received by believers before they can receive any other Sacrament.

Symbols in the Old Testament

The Ark of Noah, *“When once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, baptism”* (1 Pet. 3:20, 21).

The circumcision *“In Him, you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ buried with Him in baptism”* (Col. 2:11, 12).

Crossing the Red Sea *“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our Fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”* (1Cor. 10:1, 2).

Baptism of John the Baptist:

Although it was from heaven yet it was *“. . . a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins”* (Luke 3:3) and had no power of rebirth. It was to prepare the Jews to accept Christ and at the same time, a sign or preparation for Christian baptism.

Baptism by the Disciples before the Death of Christ

It was said that the disciples used to baptize during the days of our Lord on earth (John 4:2). But this baptism was also to prepare the Jews for accepting Christ. St. John Chrysostom says that it was exactly the same as the baptism of John the Baptist.

Institution of the Sacrament

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted this Sacrament after His resurrection when He said, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* (Matt. 28:18-19)

The use of water is because Christ was baptized in water (Matt. 3:13-16).

Christ said, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God”*** (John 3:5).

It was thus used by the Apostles and the early Church in the apostolic age, ***“Then Peter answered, can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptized?”*** (Act 10:46, 47). ***“And both Philip and the eunuch went down both into the Water, and he baptized him”*** (Acts 8:38).

It has been used since the very beginning of the Church. Water cleans the dirt of the body and baptism cleans the dirt of the soul.

The dipping into water is because: Christ was thus baptized ***“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the Water.”*** (Matt.3:16).

The early Church in the Apostolic Age thus baptized also. ***“And both Philip and the eunuch went down both into the water and he baptized him”*** (Acts 8:38). There is no doubt that the eunuch must have had some water with him in his chariot and Philip could have used some of it for sprinkling him had baptize with sprinkling been allowed.

The word “Baptism” comes from a Greek word, which means “to dye” or to dip into water. Baptism resembles death and burial with Christ, where burying a dead body is to put it down into the grave ***“... do you not know, that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”*** (Rom. 6:34).

Therefore it is not right to baptize with the sprinkling of water as others do.

The Invisible Grace:

Rebirth: ***“Jesus answered and said unto him, most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*** Nicodemus said to Him ***“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”*** Jesus answered: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you: “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”*** (John 3:3-5).

For this reason the Apostle Paul calls baptism regeneration, ***“not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy. He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”*** (Titus 3:5).

Remission of sins: ***“Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”*** (Acts 2:38).

Purification and sanctification: ***“There is also an antitype which now saves us, baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)”*** (1 Pet. 3:21).

“..Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25-26).

Salvation: *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”* (Mark 16:16). *“There is also an antitype which now saves us-baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God).* (1 Pet. 3:21).

Adoption: *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:26-27).

ONE BAPTISM

Our Church teaches that those who have been validly baptized must not be baptized again. This is what St. Paul affirmed ***“One Lord, one faith, one baptism”*** (Eph.4: 5).

Baptism is the rebirth or regeneration. As man is born bodily only once so we cannot be spiritually born more than once.

Baptism is the partaking of Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:12); Christ died and arose only once.

As such, even when Christians reject the faith and later return to the church, they will not be baptized a second time. In this case it is sufficient that they perform the two sacraments of penance and Holy Communion.

BAPTISM OF INFANTS

Some Churches say that Baptism should be given only to grown persons. But our Church believes that babies too should be baptized for the following reasons:

Babies inherited the original sin of Adam; as such it is necessary for them to be purified of it through baptism.

In the Old Testament babies had to be circumcised in order to be accepted into God’s covenant. And since circumcision was a type of baptism, therefore, babies should now be baptized in order to be accepted as members in the Church. It should be kept in mind that circumcision, which was a seal of faith (Rom. 4:11), was applied to children who were incapable of faith. This sign marked them out as recipients of the convenient blessings of God.

God did not prevent babies from accepting some of the great graces, e.g. Jeremiah was sanctified before coming forth out of the womb (Jer.1:5). John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb. (Luke 1:5).

In the Apostolic Age, whole families, including babies, were baptized. Examples of these include the family of Cornelius (Acts 10:48), of Lydia (Acts 16:14 - 15), of the prison guard (Act 16:33), and that of Stephanas (1Cor. 1:16).

This was the custom in the Church since the early centuries as is shown in history and the writings of the fathers.

Origin said “The Apostles handed over to the church the tradition of baptizing; Babies are baptized for the remission of sins to be washed of the inherited sin”. It was said that “Baptizing babies is an apostolic tradition”. In the Apostolic traditions we read, “They shall baptize the little

children first. If they can answer for themselves let them answer. But if they cannot let their parents answer or someone from their family”. Christ’s Church on earth is composed of all those who profess faith in Him and obedience to His laws together with their children.

BAPTISM OF BLOOD

Martyrs who shed their blood for the sake of Christ before being baptized are considered to have received this kind of baptism according to the statement of our Lord *“Therefore whoever confess Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”*(Matt.10:32). Again *“...But whoever loses his life for My sake will find it”* (Matt. 16:25).

OBLIGATIONS OF THE BAPTIZED

Before receiving baptism, one must publicly declare:

Repentance *“Then Peter said to them: Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 2:3 8).

His Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”* (Mark 16:16). In his/her confession of faith he/she must recite the Creed.

But in the case of babies, who are of course unable to declare repentance or faith before baptism, their parents, godfathers or godmothers make that declaration instead of them as they promise to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

DEFINITION

Confirmation is the Sacrament through which the believer is granted the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit alone can confirm him or her in the new life given through Baptism. Like the Sacrament of Baptism, this Sacrament can never be repeated for the same person.

Institution of the Sacrament

It was instituted through the various promises, which the Lord gave for granting the Holy Spirit. (John: Chapters 7, 14, 15, 16 etc).

Time of Administration

Since the believer, through this Sacrament, is confirmed in the new life given to him or to her after Baptism, it should be administered directly after Baptism. Some Churches say that it should be delayed until the baby grows to the age of maturity. In reply it may be sufficient to state the following:

The Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord directly after Baptism (Matt. 3:16).

The Apostles used to celebrate this Sacrament by the laying of hands, directly after Baptism (Acts 8:14, 17, 19:5, 6).

Since babies are worthy of receiving the grace of Baptism, there is no reason for preventing them from receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Bible declares that some babies were filled with the Holy Spirit even from their mothers' womb (e.g. St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)).

THE VISIBLE SIGN

In the early days, the Church celebrated this Sacrament by the laying of hands. *“then they laid (Peter and John) hands in them and they received the Holy Spirit”*. (Acts 8:17) *“when they (the Ephesians) heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them”* (Acts 19:5, 6).

The laying of hands was afterwards replaced by the unction of the holy oil (Mairoun). *“But you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things. But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him”* (1 John 2:20,27).

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2Cor. 1:21, 22).

Certain parts of the body have to be anointed with Mairoun after certain prayers.

It is related that the holy oil was first made by the Apostles using the spices and ointments that were prepared for the body of the Lord at the time of the burial and after the burial (Luke 23:56,24:1). St. Mark brought part of it to Egypt and since that time, fresh oil continued to be made and added to the rest of it.

It is now made of olive oil and certain spices and consecrated by the Patriarch, assisted by the bishops and accompanied by lengthy prayers.

THE INVISIBLE GRACE

Through this Sacrament the believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit who confirms him or her in the new life given to him or her in baptism. The Holy Spirit gives the power of growth in that new life, enlightening and teaching all things, ***“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”*** (1John 2:20-21) and keeps the individual firm in the way of truth.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Might, Knowledge, Godliness, and the Fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2), and are given to the believers through this Sacrament.

Who has the Right to Anoint?

This right was primarily confined to the Apostles. From them, it was conveyed to the bishops—their successors. But due to the difficulties of travel and the impossibility of a bishop being able to confirm all over large dioceses, the custom arose in which the bishop blesses the oil and then allows the priest to anoint with the oil, thus conveying the blessing of the bishops.

ANOINTING OF KINGS

Christian Kings in Christian countries are anointed with holy oil in order that they may receive the special blessing of the Holy Spirit in order to help fill them with the wisdom and guidance of God in performing their duties. This was also the custom in the Old Testament when the Kings of Israel had to be anointed by the hands of the prophets.

When anointing David as king of Israel, it was said that he has been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. ***“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward”*** (1Sam 16:13).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

What is your relationship with the Holy Spirit since you were anointed with the Holy Chrism (Myron) after your baptism?.

Do you feel your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit of God dwells and works in you?

Did you enter into communion with the Holy Spirit which the priest mentions in the blessing prayer?

Does the Spirit of God partake in every deed you perform? Or you work alone without the Spirit of God independent with your opinion, will management and personal desires?

Does the work of the Spirit give you special warmth, either in your prayers or contemplations, in your service or your love to God, His church and kingdom?

Are you able to carry out the commandment of the Apostle which says, "... *be filled with the Spirit.* " (Eph. 5:18).

Does the Spirit of God speak on your tongue as it was said, "*For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you?*" (Matt. 10:20). If it is so, certainly your words will have power and effect on the hearts of your listeners... Or do you talk by yourself and the Spirit does not open your mouth?

Do you have the fruits of the Spirit about which the Apostle St. Paul talked in (Gal. 5:22) when he said, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control.* " Or does your life bear no fruit or you wish for the gifts of the Holy Spirit without having the fruit of the Spirit?!

Do you sometimes feel that you "*grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*" (Eph. 4:30) with certain conduct which does not agree with the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.

Do you "*quench the Spirit.* " (1 Thess. 5:19). With the life of Luke warmth and lack of response to the work of the Spirit in you?!

Would you re-consider the extent of your relationship with the Holy spirit and then ask: Is your life a spiritual life? Are your words spiritual?

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

DEFINITION

Although believers are reborn through the Sacrament of Baptism and receive the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation, this does not mean that they have obtained immunity against sin. The Bible teaches us that even the best saint is vulnerable to sin. (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David etc. in the Old Testament; Peter, John, etc. in the New Testament).

All these Saints committed sin, even when they were at the pinnacle of their holiness. For this reason, the Sacrament of Penance was instituted in order that through it the sinner can return to God after confessing his/her sins to the priest. Power given by Christ to his ministers absolves all sinners and guides them to repent and believe in Him. The penitent receives, through the mediation of the priest, forgiveness of sins when he repents and confesses sins.

Because it is critical that everyone ought to examine himself before accepting the Holy Communion, this Sacrament of Penance is therefore administered generally before accepting the Holy Communion.

“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body”. (1Cor. 11:28, 29).

THE INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT

It was instituted by the three-fold promise of the Lord:

When Christ said to Peter after declaring that He is the Son of God: *“...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*(Matt. 18:18).

When He promised all the disciples saying: *“Assuredly I say to you. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”* (Matt.18: 18).

When, after resurrection, He showed them their great commission to the world. *“As my Father has sent Me, I also send you. And when he had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them. Receive the Holy Spirit: If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”* (John 20:21 -23).

THE OUTWARD SIGN

There are two audible signs involved with this Sacrament:

In the confession of the penitent to the priest, the confessor stands in:

Repentance and sorrow for the sins committed. *“Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”* (Acts 3:19).

Resolution not to return to those sins. When the prodigal son returned to his father he was at once pardoned and accepted because the father was sure that he would not return to that far country.

Faith in the mercy and forgiveness of God. Everyone that came to the Lord while on earth asking for mercy used to hear this cheerful phrase: “their sins be forgiven them” because of his faith in Him, or least, the faith of those who brought him to the Lord.

Confessing sins to the priest, especially those that have mastery over the sinner. The reasons for confessing sins, to a Father of Confession, are:

To become absolved from all sins

To hear advices about how to deal with temptations and lead a holy life.

The words of absolution spoken by the priest over the penitent

The Sacrament of Penance is referred to as *spiritual medicine*. The priest is considered a *spiritual physician*, treating all the diseases of the penitents. Therefore he should treat every case as carefully as possible.

It should be well known that the “seal of confession” is the obligation of secrecy imposed upon the priest with regard to everything made known to him in confession. The obligation is absolute, and admits no exception.

THE INVISIBLE GRACE

The invisible graces granted through this Sacrament are:

Remission of sins

Reconciliation with God

The Kind of Sin that Can Be Forgiven:

The Bible teaches us that every sin can be forgiven however grave it may be, provided that the sinner returns to God in repentance.

“Therefore I say to you all, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men .” (Matt. 12:31)

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Is 1:18)

It also teaches that God is ready to pardon and accept everyone. ***“... the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out;” (John 6:37)***

“..God our savior Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:3-4)

David, who committed two grave sins, was pardoned. Peter, who denied the Lord three times in a very shameful way, was pardoned. Also the woman who was taken in adultery was pardoned,

“She said, ‘No one, Lord,’ and Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more,’” (John 8:11).

Christ asked for pardon even to those who committed the greatest crime of crucifying Him.

In (Matt. 12:31) we find that ***“the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven men.”*** This means that those who reject and oppose the work of the Holy Spirit, and refuse to accept God’s salvation until they pass away from this world, will not be pardoned.

Ecclesiastical Discipline

In some cases, the priest finds it necessary to enforce a type of discipline on the sinner when he commits a great sin (e.g. he can rebuke him, ask him to fast for a number of days, spend longer time in daily prayer, tell him to give some money to the poor, prevent him from receiving the Holy Communion for some time, or impose some other sort of discipline).

Christ granted this authority to the ministers. He gave them the authority not only to loose, but also to bind (Matt. 16:19), and not only to remit sins, but also to retain them (John 20:23).

The Apostles used this authority ***“...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”***(1Cor. 5:5)

See also (2Cor. 2:6,7 and 1 Tim. 5:20).

This discipline is imposed...

... in order for the sinner to realize how grave his sin is

... in order for it to serve as a cure for his soul.

When the sinner of Corinth was punished, he repented and St. Paul wrote to the Church to accept him. ***“This punishment, which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow”***.(2Cor. 2:6,7)

... in order for others to fear and refrain from committing the same or similar sins. ***“Those who are sinning, rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear”*** (1 Tim 5:20).

The minister should be very careful in using this correctly. He should recognize that, as a physician, he must be very careful in applying the various kinds of medicine. A slight disease is not in need of the same drug, which is needed in serious cases. “Treat -as a kind physician- the sick person. Use some medicines for his salvation. Do not use severe remedies, but use gentle remedies. Clean his wounds and make him firm through the words of consolation. If the wound is deep, use the medicine to build up the flesh. If it is filled with puss, clean it with a disinfectant medicine, (i.e. with rebuking words and afterwards with comforting words). If the wound becomes wider, use a severe unguent (*ointment*) (i.e. terrify him with the Day of Judgment). If it becomes wider, burn it and order him to fast for some days. If you find that there is no use of any kind of treatment, consult very experienced physicians and cautiously cut the corrupted. But do not hasten to cut any member.”

But the Church of Rome thinks that these punishments are meant to pacify the justice of God. This is completely wrong, because nothing can pacify His justice except the blood of Christ, which was shed for our redemption (Rom 3:25; Col. 1:20; 1 Pet 2:24 etc.).

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO ADMINISTER THIS SACRAMENT?

This right was primarily given to the Apostles, as shown above. Afterwards it was transferred to their successors, the bishops. Following that, it passed to the priests who are in direct contact with the people.

CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

The Sacrament of Confession without the Sacrament of Repentance, in the Coptic Orthodox Church, would not be true confession...

Repentance is an utter conviction from the heart that you have sinned.

Repentance is to judge and convict yourself... So confession is just an admittance of your own... condemnation...

Then it is not the phrase, "*I have sinned,*" or reciting your sins. The true confession starts in the heart, with one rejecting his own deeds and despising his behaviour.

The one who condemns himself accepts any punishment that befalls him either from God or people, considering that he deserves it....

To grumble about the punishment proves that there has been no repentance...

Repentance also includes trying your best to remedy the consequences resulting from sin... and retribute any injustice that occurred to others.

Therefore, Zacchaeus, in his repentance, stood and said to the Lord, "*... and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four fold.*" (Lk. 19:8) As for you, restore at least the same thing. Repentance without restoration is not sufficient...

Repentance needs a humble heart. The one who persists in his pride and dignity would not be able to repent.

The one who always defends himself and justifies his deed and words is not a repentant person. His pride stops him from repentance.

The Priest is supposed to say to the confessor, "*May God absolve you,*" when he sees that the person has repented. The absolution is not to be said to the unrepentant. When one hears the phrase, "*May God absolve you,*" it refers to the sins that this person has repented...

The confessor, who is absolutely sure that he has sinned, and his conscience is harshly rebuking him, could change his behaviour and repent. On the other hand, the one who justifies himself could easily continue in his sins as he does not feel their weight and they do not internally disturb him.

How could one repent while he is not convinced that he is wrong!! The first step is one's conviction that he has sinned.

Therefore, confession is the second step, not the starting point. There is a big difference between a true confession and another without conviction.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

Definition & Names

This is the crowning service of the Christian Church, the culmination of Christian worship, and the summit of Christian experience where devout believers hold intimate communion with their living Lord. The Church through the ages has regarded this Sacrament as the supreme act of communal worship.

Through this Sacrament we eat the Blessed Flesh of our Lord and drink His Precious Blood in the form of bread and wine.

It is called:

The Holy Communion

The Lord's Table

The Flesh and Blood of Christ

The Eucharist

SYMBOLS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

It was said of the offerings, which Melchizedek offered, for the first and last time in the Old Testament, that they were offerings of bread and wine. "***And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High***" (Gen. 14:18). For this reason it was said of our Lord "***You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek***" (Heb. 5:6, 10, 7:17).

The Passover that the children of Israel offered on the night of their exit from Egypt and which they offered every year. "***Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.***" (1Cor. 5:7).

"The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

The "manna" which Israel ate in the wilderness for forty years.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread (manna) from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven." (John 6:3 2). "***This is the bread which came down from heaven not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.***" (John 6:58)

INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT

It pleased our Lord to institute this Sacrament on a very momentous occasion. The Evangelist told us that He instituted it at the approach of the Passover Feast, which was considered to be the greatest feast of the Jews and was a type of sacrifice of Himself. It was also instituted directly before His death and on the night of His passion when He was about to give Himself for the life of the world. "***The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and***

when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. These do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."(1Cor. 11:23-25)

THE VISIBLE SIGN

There are two visible signs in this Sacrament: The bread & wine

The service of mass, particularly those prayers, through which the Holy Spirit descends upon the bread and wine and changes them into the Body and Blood of the Lord.

The bread should be made of pure wheat and should be leavened because the Sacrament was instituted at a time when all the Jews were using leavened bread. The law ordered that Israel should feast on the evening of the 14th day of the same month and begin to eat unleavened bread at the time of eating the Passover. *"Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. In the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses since whoever eats what is leavened that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land"* (Exodus 12:6, 18, 19).

But the Sacrament was instituted on the 13th day of the month because of the following reasons: it is expressly said that it was *"before the Feast of the Passover"* (John 13:1).

The next morning after laying hands on Jesus, it was said that the Jews were preparing themselves to keep the feast. *"Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the praetorium lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover"*(John 18:28).

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the preparation of the Passover and about the sixth hour, and he said to the Jews, 'Behold your king'" (John 19:13, 14).

They were preparing themselves for the feast even after the death of Christ on the cross. *"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day (For that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their*

legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away"(John 19:31).

This shows that the preparation for the feast was on Friday and that the feast was on Saturday (the following day), which began, as is the custom of the Jews, on Friday evening. For this reason it was said of that Saturday that it was a high (great) day.

It was the custom that the governor should release unto the people at the time of the feast, a prisoner of their choosing. Accordingly, Barabas was released on Friday. The prisoner was generally released before the feast in order that he may celebrate with his household.

It was said of Judas Iscariot that “... *after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly’.... For some thought because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘Buy those things we need for the feast’ or that he should give something to the poor.*” (John 13:27-29).

This illustrates that on Thursday the feast had not yet begun because preparations for the feast had to be made before and not on the same day or thereafter.

But the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the bread should be unleavened because it was said “*Now on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him, ‘Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?’ And He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover.*” (Matt. 26:17-19).

However, it is clear from the previous verses that the feast was on Saturday and it is impossible to find a verse contradicting another. The reason for this seeming contradiction is that the feast was on Saturday and the lamb was to be slain on the evening of Friday (the 14th day).

The 14th day was called the Passover and the unleavened seven days were to begin at the evening of this 14th day. The Jews used to consider the day beginning from the previous day; thus Friday begins at Thursday evening. When St. Matthew and St. Mark said that the Lord instituted this Sacrament on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread they meant that He instituted it on Friday (which began on the evening of Thursday). The feast of Passover, which was to be followed by the seven days of unleavened bread, was often called the first day of the unleavened bread. (Luke 22:7).

Moreover, most commentators affirm that this Sacrament was instituted on the 13th day of the month, (i.e. before the Passover, or rather, before the first day of the unleavened bread).

John Chrysostom says: “The Evangelist in saying, ‘Then came the days of unleavened bread when the Passover must be killed’, does not mean that it had already come but that it was at hand and refers to the beginning of that day because every day begins at the previous evening.”

In interpreting “*Now on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him, ‘Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?’ And He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover.*” (Matt. 26:17-19), the Pulpit Commentary states (P. 519): “we have arrived at the Thursday in the Holy week, Nisan 13th. The festival actually began at sunset of the 14th, which was called the day of preparation because the lambs of the feast were slain in the afternoon of that day preparatory to their being eaten before the morning of the 15th. Domestic preparation began on the 13th hence this was considered (the first day of unleavened bread).”

Adam Clarke in his commentary states: “As the feast of unleavened bread did not begin till the day after the Passover the 15th day of the month; this could not have been properly the first day of that feast but as the Jews began to eat unleavened bread on the 14th (Ex. 1:18). This day was often termed the first day of the unleavened bread. The Evangelists use it in this sense and call even the paschal day by this name. See (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7).

In addition to all this, it is worth mentioning that the Bible states in every place that our Lord ***“took bread and blessed it”*** (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1Cor. 11:23 etc.). Whenever the word “bread” is used it is understood to mean leavened bread (i.e. ordinary bread). It was never said in the Bible that He took unleavened bread.

And the wine should be: 1. Very pure, 2. the fruit of the vine

“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it all of you for this My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’” (Matt. 26:27-29)

Mixed with water, because the Lord thus used it (Orders of the Apostles 8:22) and because in this way, it resembles the blood and water that came out of the Lord’s side. (John 19:32)

THE INVISIBLE GRACES

We partake of the flesh and of the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We get the spiritual food, which helps us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Jesus said unto them:

“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall never hunger and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” “For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed.”(John 6:35, 55)

We receive remission of sins. ***“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it all of you for this My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom.’”*** (Matt. 26:27-29).

We abide in Christ and Christ abides in us. ***“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.”*** (John 6:56).

We obtain Holy Fellowship with Christ Himself with our fellow worshippers and with all the Church on earth. Likewise, we have fellowship with the saints around the throne of God, with the angels, archangels and all the orders of heaven. The Holy Communion tells us that God’s salvation comes to us in fellowship with our fellow men. This is not truly understood as an individual act of worship but the common meal of the family of God our Father.

We are given true life in this world. Unless the branch abides in the vine, it cannot have life. Then Jesus said unto them, ***“Most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... He who feeds on Me, will live because of Me.”*** (John 6:53, 57)

We are given eternal life. ***“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” “He who eats this bread will live forever.”***(John 6:54, 58)

THE CHANGE OF BREAD AND WINE

We believe that after prayer the bread and wine are spiritually changed to the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, we do not look at mere bread and mere wine on the altar, but rather, we truly look at the Body and Blood of the Lord in the form of bread and wine.

The Church Fathers said: “We believe that our Lord Jesus is present in this Sacrament, not in type or by way of granting his grace as in the case of other Sacraments, but He is truly and actually present. For this reason, the bread is changed after prayer into the Lord’s Body, which was born in Bethlehem from the Virgin Mary, baptized at Jordan, suffered, buried and rose from the dead. Likewise, the wine is changed into the very Blood of the Lord, which was shed on the cross. The way of the Lord’s presence is by changing the bread and wine into His blessed Body and precious Blood.

But some Protestants say that we take the bread and wine as a mere memorial service in remembrance of the Lord’s sufferings and death. In reply we have to refer to:

THE BIBLE

Everything that is mentioned in the Bible in regards to this Sacrament supports our doctrine.

The Jews, to whom the Lord spoke about the living bread, took His words literally. They heard Jesus saying: ***“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”*** (John 6:51)

Afterwards, they began to strive among themselves saying: ***“How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”***(John 6:52). Had they been mistaken in taking His words literally, the Lord would have told them the true sense, which He meant. But contrary to this, He began to repeat the same teaching more powerfully and more clearly: ***“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed.’”*** (John. 6:53-55)

The disciples also, taking the master’s words literally and being unable to understand the possibility of eating the Lord’s flesh and drinking His blood, began to murmur saying: ***“This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”*** But the Savior began to convince them of the reality of that teaching and said to them: ***“Does this offend you?”***

What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?” (John 6:61-62)

When the Lord gave the Holy Communion to His Disciples, He ***“took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, ‘Drink from it all of you, for this is My blood of the new covenant.’”***

(Matt. 26:26-28)

There was no need for the Lord to speak at that time in parables or proverbs, as it was His last day with them, and He had to open to them all heart, and speak to them very simply with clear

words. *“His Disciples said to Him, ‘See, now you are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech.’”* (John 16:29)

St. Paul says: *“The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”* (1Cor. 10:16)

Then he repeats the same words used by the Savior when He instituted the sacrament. *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me.’ Therefore whoever, eats this bread, or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”* (1Cor. 11:23-27)

TO THE DECISIONS OF THE EARLY SYNODS

The Council of Nicea agreed: “We should not look at the bread and cup on the holy table as if they were mere bread and wine, but we must lift up the mind beyond the senses and perceive, by faith, that the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world rests here, slain by the priests and that they are partaking of the very body of the Lord and His very blood.

The 3rd World Council held at Ephesus confirmed the message of St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, which ran as follows: “We admit that the only begotten Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ died in body; we confess His resurrection and ascension to heavens and we offer, in the churches, the bloodless sacrifice. Thus we approach the blessed sacraments and we are sanctified when we partake of the blessed body of Jesus Christ our Savior and His precious blood”.

One of the Church Councils asserts that the bloodless sacrifice, which is offered in remembrance of the Savior and the blessed incarnation, was never called by anyone of the Holy Apostles or the forefathers, the form of Christ’s body, neither were they taught to proclaim the same but they hear Him saying: *“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”*(John 6:53)

“He did not say the form of my body. Neither the Lord nor the Apostles spoke of the form of Christ’s body and blood but they spoke of the very body and the very blood. Whenever they are spoken of as bread and wine, the reference refers to that *before* prayers.”

The writing of the early Fathers:

Clement, Dionisius and Cyril of Alexandria; Macarius and Cyril of Jerusalem; John Chrysostom, Gregory, Basil and many others affirmed that the bread and wine are spiritually changed after prayer into the very body and the very blood of the Lord. Justin and Irenaeus attribute to the Logos, the operative power by which the elements become the Body and Blood of Christ. Clement of Alexandria, Origin and Athanasius assert that the spiritual content of the Eucharist is identified with the Logos. This idea finds expression in one of the ancient Egyptian liturgies, when the Logos is invoked to come upon the bread that it becomes the Body of the Logos.

The Writings of the Protestants Themselves

Calvin, one of their most prominent leaders said, “If any one inquires of me respecting the manner, I shall not be ashamed to acknowledge that it is a mystery too sublime for me to be able to express or even to comprehend and to be still more explicit I rather experience it than understand it. Here, therefore, without any controversy I embrace the truth of God on which I can safely rely. He pronounces His flesh to be the food and His blood the drink of my soul. I offer my soul to him to be nourished with such aliment.”

Martin Luther, the great leader of the Protestants said: “Christ said: This is my flesh, and we can do nothing better than to respect His words.”

The Scottish Confession of the 1560 Presbyterian Church, says: “So that we confess and undoubtedly believe that the faithful in the right use of the Lord’s Table do so eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus that He remains in them and they in Him; yea they are so made flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone.” (*The Holy Communion* by David Cairns & others P.75).

THE HOLY COMMUNION AS A SACRIFICE

We believe that this Sacrament is a bloodless sacrifice offered for our salvation. This, we can prove from the following:

When instituting the Sacrament, our Lord said:

“This is My body which is given (sacrificed) for you. This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you.”(Luke 22:19,20)

St Paul, in his comparison between the sacrifices and altar of the gentiles and the Christian sacrifices and their altar (1Cor. 10: 18-21) gives the proof that the Holy Communion is offered on the altar as a true sacrifice.

In (Heb. 13:10) he refers also to the Christian altar.

This sacrifice of the New Testament was foretold in the Old Testament: ***“For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering;(or “sacrifice” as in other translation) for My name shall be great among the nations says the Lord of hosts.”(Mal. 1:11)***

It is clear that the Prophet speaks here about a new sacrifice, which had to be offered in the time of the Gospel. When interpreting this verse, the Pulpit commentary says: “The Fathers and mediaeval writers and many modern commentators see in this verse a prophecy of the Holy Eucharist the pure offering commemorative of Christ’s sacrifice, which is found in every nation under heaven where the name of Christ is adored.”

The Council of Nicea called the Holy Communion unbloody sacrifice. “Neither the Lord, nor the Apostles, nor the fathers called the holy unbloody sacrifice a sign but they always called it the very Flesh and the very Blood of the Lord”.

In Ch. 14 of the Didache—the teachings of the Twelve Apostles—it is said that the worship should be preceded by a confession of sins “that your sacrifice may be pure”. This sacrifice is

identified with “the pure offering” of Malachi 1:11 (*The Early History of the Liturgy* by J.H. Srawley p. 21).

All Church Fathers called it sacrifice. For instance Irenaeus, in his work “*Adversus Haereses*” written about A.D. 180, made several references to the Eucharist. The various titles under which he alludes to it are “Eucharist”, “the oblation of the Church”, “the new oblation of the new covenant”, “the pure sacrifice” (in reference to Mal. 1:11) (*The Early History of the Liturgy* by J. H. Srawley P. 35, 36).

When speaking about the Holy Communion in the Anglican Church, one of her men said: “The sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross is made present and contemporary by the consecration of the elements (bread and wine); this is wholly and entirely God’s gift of grace to man.” (*The Holy Communion*” by David Cairns and others, P. 64)

In “*The Manual of Worship*” of the “United Presbyterian Church of North America,” it is said (P. 81) “It is a solemn moment when standing at the altar the minister says, Let us pray.” If there is an altar, then there must be a sacrifice.

This sacrifice is the same as that which was offered on the Cross. John Chrysostom says: “Our great High priest offered the sacrifice which purifies us. Since then we also offer this same sacrifice”.

There are some differences between this sacrifice and that which was offered on the Cross:

Our Lord offered a visible sacrifice on the Cross, while in the Holy Communion; He offers an invisible one under the form of bread and wine.

On the Cross He offered a bloody sacrifice through the shedding of His blood. In the Holy Communion He offers a bloodless sacrifice because “*knowing that Christ being raised from the dead death no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.*” (Rom 6:9)

On the Cross, the sacrifice was offered for all the race of man once only and in one place, but the bloodless sacrifice is offered continuously in every place on earth and only for those who receive it in faith.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO CELEBRATE THIS SACRAMENT?

Our Lord gave this right to the Apostles when He told them: “*Do this in remembrance of Me*” (*Luke 22:19*) And the Apostles gave it to their successors, the bishops. However, because Christianity was soon spread, the Bishops could not go to all towns and villages to celebrate the Sacrament. For this reason they gave the right to the priests. The deacons can only help the bishops and priests. The laity are strictly forbidden to celebrate the sacrament.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO PARTAKE OF THE HOLY COMMUNION?

All baptized persons have the right to partake. It was the custom in the previous centuries for all believers to take the Holy Communion every week, bearing in mind the words of the Lord: “*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, abides in Me and I in him*”(John 6:53,56)

For this reason it is very essential that every Christian should take the Holy Communion from time to time, at least once or twice or three times a year, if not every week.

But before taking the Holy Communion the believer must prepare himself for it. ***“Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself not discerning the Lord’s body.”*** (1Cor. 11:28, 29).

And as the babies are allowed to receive baptism they should also be allowed to take the Holy Communion in order not to be deprived of this food of the spirit. And we must take both the Body and the Blood. But the Church of Rome gives only the Body. In response we state the following:

When the Lord gave His disciples the Holy Communion, He gave them ***both*** the Body and the Blood. Moreover, when giving the cup, He expressly ordered that all of us should drink of it. ***“Drink from it all of you.”*** (Matt. 26:27).

Whenever the Holy Communion is spoken of in the Bible, both the Body and the Blood are mentioned.

All the Church fathers said that both the body and the blood were given to the believers since the first century.

Even the Roman Church fathers say that believers used to take both the Body and the Blood till the 12TH century.

When the flesh is divided and given to the believers, we believe that every part of it, even the smallest part, is the perfect body of the Lord. Similarly, this is the case with the blood. We also believe that once the bread and wine are changed, they remain the Flesh and the Blood until they are completely consumed. But some Protestants think that what is left over, after the Holy Communion has been received, can be dispensed with as something of no importance.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE UNCTION OF THE SICK

Definition

Unction of the Sick is the Sacrament through which the priest anoints the body of the sick, asking for divine grace to cure both body and soul.

There are some who think that St. James mentioned this unction as an ordinary means of healing diseases. In response, we state the following:

Had it been an ordinary means of healing diseases, it should have been said that anyone could anoint with the oil. But St. James says that it is the priests who should anoint.

And the healing power is not attributed merely to the oil, but also to the prayer: ***“...Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick...” (James 5:14-15)***

Moreover, it is said, directly after that: ***“...And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (James 5:15)***. This forgiveness can never be granted merely through the oil, but also through the prayer.

Others say that it was a healing gift given only to the Apostles. It is sufficient to say that St. James speaks of this unction not as a special gift given to the Apostles but as a Sacrament to be always administered by the priests.

The Church of Rome calls this Sacrament “Extreme (or last) Unction”, on the basis that it is administered to the sick, only when they are at the point of death. Meanwhile the Bible speaks of it as means of healing and helping the sick not only at the point of death.

INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT

The Lord Himself instituted this Sacrament:

Because it was said of the Apostles ***“They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them”***. (Mark 6:13). It is of course to be understood that they were sent out to do the same.

St. James, in his Epistle, says (5:14, 15) ***“Anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”***

It should not be taken for granted that the Apostles did not preach a gospel of their own, but that which they received from the Lord Himself. ***“But I make known to you brethren that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ”***(Gal. 1:11,12). Therefore, St. James must have received that teaching directly from the Lord.

Moreover, the Disciples did not institute the church Sacrament (mysteries), but they merely called themselves “*stewards of the mysteries of God*” (1Cor. 4:1). If it was not clearly and explicitly mentioned in the Bible that Christ instituted this Sacrament or some other Sacraments, it was because many things were done by Him and were not written (John 2 1:25).

The fathers said that it was used as a Church Sacrament since the first centuries.

Even the Protestant historians state that “when the early Christians were seriously sick, they used to call the priests of the church, and after confessing their sins, they were anointed with oil by them”.

THE VISIBLE SIGN

There are two outward signs in this Sacrament:

The oil with which the sick person is anointed—Before using it for anointing the sick, it should be consecrated through certain prayers.

The prayers, which are offered to God for healing the sick—There are certain prayers, seven in total, prepared by the church for this sacrament. In addition to these prayers, certain portions of the Bible are also read.

THE INVISIBLE GRACE

The invisible grace, which is granted through this Sacrament, is the healing of the body and the soul.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT?

Although this authority was given to priests, bishops may of course celebrate the Sacrament if they wish to do so. But it was given to priests because they are in direct contact with the congregation.

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

DEFINITION

The Sacrament of Matrimony is the holy service through which the bridegroom and the bride are united together and given the divine grace, which sanctifies their matrimonial union, making it perfect and spiritual, like the unity of Christ with the Church. This Sacrament is of very great importance. It is not merely the life of the two persons, because the home, the state, the Church and the Kingdom of God are deeply involved. It is not a Sacrament to be regarded lightly or performed thoughtlessly and indiscriminately.

INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT

There is no doubt that God Himself instituted Matrimony, at the creation of the world. ***“God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He them; male and female created He them, and God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.”*** (Genesis 1:27, 28).

In the New Testament Christ confirmed this Sacrament:

By attending the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee. (John 2). By His teaching - When answering the questions of the Pharisees who came unto Him and said; “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

His answer was, ***“Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female”*** and said ***“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are not more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”*** (Matt.19: 4-6).

Some church fathers hold the opinion that Christ instituted this Sacrament in the 40 days during which He used to appear to His disciples, after His resurrection and He spoke of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Acts: 1:3).

PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

There are three purposes of marriage

1) Preservation and growth of mankind ***“male and female He created them. And God blessed them and God said to them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.”*** (Gen. 1:27-28).The growth of mankind tends, of course, to the growth of the Church.

2) Mutual help between husband and wife ***“And the Lord said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him and help meet comparable to him”.*** (Gen. 2:18).

3) After the fall of man and the entering of sin to the world there arose another end, i.e. that marriage might help to keep man and woman from the temptation of carnal lusts. ***“Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me; it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless to avoid fornication’ let every man have his own wife and let every woman have***

her own husband. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot, let them marry, for it is better to many than to burn” (1Cor. 7:1-9).

THE OUTWARD SIGN

There are three outward signs in this Sacrament:

- 1) The declaration of the bridegroom and the bride in front of the Church that they wish, by their own free will, to be married to each other and that each will be loyal to the other till the end of life.
- 2) The matrimonial service that the priest performs and through which he asks for the Divine Grace to the bridegroom and the bride.
- 3) The oil with which the bridegroom and the bride are anointed at the time of the matrimonial service.

THE INVISIBLE GRACE

The function of this Sacrament is:

To sanctify the matrimonial union and make it a spiritual one. *“Matrimony is honorable in all and the bed undefiled”*. (Heb. 13:4). *“For this is the will of God even your sanctification that ye should abstain from fornication that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.”* (1 Thess. 4:3, 4)

To help keep the husband and wife united together and inseparable, just as the unity of Christ with the Church is everlasting. *“What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”* (Matt. 19:6).

To keep the husband and wife loyal and faithful to each other.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE HUSBAND & WIFE

Before marriage:

- (1) Both should be Christians because Christ’s grace cannot be given to non-Christians, whether in this Sacrament or other Sacraments.
- (2) Both should belong to the Orthodox Church. If any of them does not, he or she should first join that Church.
- (3) Both should not be previously connected together with a carnal or spiritual affinity, which prevents their marriage.
- (4) Each should be willing to get married to the other. The desire of parents is not sufficient. The priest should ask each of them privately and openly whether he or she agrees to be married to the other.

At Marriage:

(1) Since Matrimony is one of the Church Sacraments, marriage should be through the church. It is the duty of the priests to teach their congregation that every marriage should be in the church and that the Church does not allow any marriage performed outside it.

After Marriage:

(1) The husband should have only one wife and the wife should have only one husband. ***“And He answered and said unto them: have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female and said: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they twain shall become one flesh.”*** (Matt.19: 4, 5).

(2) If either of them dies, the other can marry. ***“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.”*** (1Cor. 7:39).

(3) They can never separate but for one reason, that is fornication ***“They are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God joined together let no man put asunder whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication and shall marry another, commits adultery and whose marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”*** (Matt.19:6, 9).

Therefore no one is allowed to leave his/her mate for any other reason.

Who has the right to celebrate the Sacrament?

This right is given to priests. Bishops can also celebrate the Sacrament.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE?

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Marriage, according to the Christian concept, is that a spiritual person, or a temple of the Holy Spirit, weds another spiritual person, who is also a temple of the Holy Spirit. Both are spiritually joined together through the sacrament of marriage, to become one...

Therefore, both must be of the same faith, the perfect faith, because the Holy Spirit should not join contradictory beliefs together. That is how marriage succeeds and the Holy Spirit harmoniously and spiritually works in both. To join together two who are not repentant, who are far from the Holy Spirit and its works, is not a spiritual action.

For this reason, the Church accepts the confession of the engaged couple, and they receive the Holy Communion before their marriage, so both would start a perfect spiritual life together, in co-operation.

Such a marriage would not be subject to the differences that usually happen when the spiritual life of the married couple is not perfect... We are trying to set up rules for the personal statute. Some think of extending the reasons for divorce, when life becomes impossible for the married couple!... Why does it become impossible? Because they do not live in the spirit, according to the understanding of a Christian marriage...

Those people want a non-Christian marriage (non-spiritual) not ruled by the Law of Christ which does not permit divorce, except for a cause... If the Christian married couple lived a spiritual life, the clause of divorce could be abolished completely, from the personal statute. There would be no need for it, as the great love that joins the married couple together would never allow divorce. On the contrary, instead of separation, the relationship between them will deepen day after day...

The most beautiful analogy of the Christian marriage, and the relationship between the married couple, is the relationship between Christ and the Church. As the Apostle said, *"This is a great mystery. "* (Eph 5:32).

Is there a deeper similarity than that? Or a greater love than that? *"Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself. "* (Eph 5:33).

Christian marriage is not just a passing relationship that eventually ends! It is a life-time relationship. The woman to the man is, *"... bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. "* (Gen 2:23) She is his body and he is her head. Both are one body. For her sake, he leaves his father and mother... What an amazing relationship!

THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY ORDERS

DEFINITION

“Holy Orders” is the sacrament through which the clergy are ordained to celebrate the various church services. Some Protestants say that Christ did not distinguish any one in His church and that all the members are the same and that there is no need for setting apart special persons as ministers. This is untrue because of the following reasons:

Christ set apart special persons as Apostles and spent a whole night before choosing them. ***“And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God: And when it was day He called unto Him His disciples and of them He chose twelve whom also He named Apostles.”*** (Luke 6:12, 13).

He gave them special privileges that were not given to any others e.g. He said to them: ***“Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*** (Matt. 18:18).

When sending them before His ascension, He promised to always be with them ***“even unto the end of the world”***. (Matt. 28:20). This promise is of course taken to hold for their successors also.

When Judas killed himself, the number of the Apostles dropped by one, so they met together, spent some time in discussion and prayer in order to choose another to fill this vacancy (Acts. 1:15-26). Had it not been necessary that there should be certain persons set apart for God’s services, they would not have taken the trouble of appointing another individual in the place of Judas.

If all Christians were of the same degree, they could perform the same services in the Church. But a careful study of the Bible, particularly the book of Acts, indicates that the clergy had their own duties, which the laity could not dare to perform, and that every category of the clergy had its own duties, which could not be performed by another category. For instance, when Philip preached in Samaria, he, being a deacon, had not the right to lay on his hands for granting the gift of the Holy Spirit. For this reason the Church of Jerusalem ***“...sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.”*** (Acts 8:14-15).

The Bible appointed certain conditions that should be observed when choosing the bishops, and other conditions when choosing the deacons (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1).

The Bible also appointed certain procedures for the ordination of the clergy (e.g. the laying on of hands), ***“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership”***(1Tim. 4: 14).

All historians agree that there have been certain ministers in the Church since the first century. All the Churches that were instituted during the first century keep lists of their bishops since their beginning.

INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted this Sacrament.

It was He who appointed the twelve Apostles and the seventy disciples.

It was He who sent the Apostles into the world before His ascension. ***“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*** (Matt.28: 19, 20).

St. Paul says that it was Christ Himself who appointed some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ***“And He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”*** (Eph.4: 11).

And when advising the ministers of the Church of Ephesus, he said to them: ***“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”*** (Acts.20: 28).

According to the power given to them by the Lord, those apostles appointed bishops, priests and deacons in the churches, which they established as will be seen afterwards.

THE VISIBLE SIGN

There are two visible signs:

The laying on of hands - The Bible stated that this was performed in the case of bishops (1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6) and priests (1 Tim. 5:22) and deacons (Acts. 6:6).

The prayers of consecration (Acts 6: 6, 14:23)

THE INVISIBLE GRACE

The ordained minister is given a divine gift appropriate to the service to which he is called. ***“Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.”*** (1Tim. 4: 14). ***“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”*** (2 Tim. 1:6).

The Holy Spirit, who alone can help the minister to perform his duties, gives this gift.

DEGREES OF THE HOLY ORDERS

The Bible mentions three degrees:

1. The bishop
2. The priest
3. The deacon

1) **THE BISHOPS**

Ordination of the clergy - It was the Apostles who consecrated bishops, *“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands”* (2 Tim. 1:6) and ordained priests, *“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”* (Acts 14:23) and deacons, *“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, . . . whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.”* (Acts 6:3-6).

The bishops, whom the Apostles consecrated, were given that right of ordination. St. Paul, writing to Titus, said:

“For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are waiting and ordain elders (priests) in every city as I had appointed thee”(Tit. 1:5).

When writing to Timothy, he said: *“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins.”* (1Tim. 5:22).

Trial of the clergy and rebuking them. *“Against an elder (priest) receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear.”* (1 Tim. 5:19,20).

Consecration of the holy oil used for the Sacrament of confirmation.

Consecration of the altar and the holy vessels in the case of building a new church or getting new vessels.

They also have the right to celebrate all Church Sacraments and enjoy all rites if they like.

Management of the general affairs of the Church.

2) **THE PRIESTS**

Priests are mentioned in many places of the Bible. *“They ordained them elders (priests) in every church”* (Acts 14:23) *“For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (priests) in every city, as I had appointed thee.”* (Tit. 1:5)

“Let the elders (priests) that rule be counted worthy of double honor.” (1 Tim 5:17) *“Is any sick man among you? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the church, and let them pray over him anointing him, with oil in the name of the Lord”* (James 5:14)

The priest has the right to celebrate the six Sacraments mentioned earlier, and possesses many rites in the church. He has also the right to teach and preach.

3) THE DEACONS:

Deacons are mentioned in the Bible in Acts 6:3.6, Phil. 1:1 and 1Tim. A deacon does not have the right to celebrate any of the Church Sacraments but only to help the priest and the bishop in celebrating them. They are also responsible to keep good order in the church, read the various portions of the Bible in the church, teach, preach, and perform any service, which the priest may ask them to do. It was said in the “Orders of the Apostles” that “the deacons are the bishop’s eyes and ears”. In the former times there was a degree of “deaconess.” Her function was to serve the women in the Church, to keep good order in the place allotted for them in the church, and to anoint the bodies of women. At the Sacrament of Confirmation they are anointed by the priest only on their foreheads. (Didaskalia 34).

“No woman is allowed to come to the bishop to ask for any things unless she is accompanied by the deaconess” (Didaskalia 6). “If there is any need for, sending a deaconess, because it is not fit to send a deacon,” (Didaskalia 6).

“If there is any need for the bishop to send anyone to the woman’s houses, he should send a deaconess, because it is not fit to send a deacon” (Didaskalia 34). It seems that this degree existed in the church at the Apostolic time. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, said: “***I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant (or “deaconess’ as in other copies and other versions) of the church which is at Cenchrea***” (Romans 16:1). When writing to Timothy he said: “***Let not a widow be taken into the number (into the list) under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.***” (1 Tim 5: 9).

Some things that the Apostle refers to, is the list of those who were deaconesses in the Church.

ORDINATION OF THE CLERGY

A bishop is consecrated by the laying on of hands of at least three bishops, because one bishop alone cannot consecrate a bishop.

A priest or a deacon is ordained by the laying on of hands of only one bishop.

Ordination can never be repeated for the same degree if the bishop, priest or deacon was previously ordained in a legal way. In the Apostolic Canons (68) it is stated that, “if any bishop, priest or deacon is re-ordained for the same degree, he will become worthy of excommunication together with him who ordained him.”

No money should be paid at all for the ordination of any one of the three degrees. When Simon offered money for the sake of obtaining one of God’s gifts, St. Peter rebuked him by saying “***thy money perish with thee because thou haste thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.***” (Acts 8:18-20).

The Church teaches that every ordination performed as a result of any payment is illegal and that the bishop who accepts any money should be excommunicated.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE CLERGY

BEFORE ORDINATION

Those who are chosen for the Holy Orders must be:

Sure that the call came to them from God. ***“No man taketh this honor (of the holy orders) unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron.”*** (Heb. 5:4).

Blameless, in order to be good examples to the congregation. St Paul wrote to Timothy saying: ***“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”*** (1Tim. 4: 12). In (1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1) St. Paul mentioned many conditions, which should be taken into consideration when choosing bishops and deacons.

Well acquainted with the Bible and Church teachings.

AFTER ORDINATION

They should serve not as hired men who work merely to get their wages. ***“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”*** (1 Pet. 5:2). ***“He that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth and the wolf catches them and scattereth the sheep.”*** (John 10: 12).

But they should be good shepherds, full of deep feelings: that the sheep are theirs and that they are responsible for feeding them and keeping them from beasts. They should also know that the good shepherd must be ready to offer any sacrifice that may be needed for the sake of the sheep. ***“The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.”*** (John 10:11)

DOGMATIC THEOLOGY IV: SALVATION IN THE ORTHODOX CONCEPT NO SALVATION EXCEPT THROUGH THE BLOOD, OF CHRIST ALONE

No faith nor works without the blood of Christ can be of any benefit••. Faith means to believe in the blood of Christ, and works are those based on the merits of the blood of Christ, as St. Paul the Apostle says, " ••. *without shedding of blood there is no remission*" (Heb. 9:22).

What then is the role of the blood of Christ in the process of salvation? and what is the role of faith?. What also is the role of works?.

- Works without the blood of Christ: There can be no salvation except through the blood of Christ. No good works, however excellent, elevated or perfect they may be, can save man without the blood of Christ. Therefore the righteous people, who pleased God in old times with their good works, remained also in hades until the Lord Christ brought them out after His crucifixion. Good works alone cannot save a person without believing in the blood of Christ. .. Otherwise, the heathen who do good works would be saved through their works!! God forbid.

As a general rule I tell you: Any verses included in the Holy Bible attacking works mean works alone without the blood of Christ or the works of Law of the Old Testament. Without the blood of Christ works are of no avail. So, When St. Paul the Apostle Speaks about works he means works alone without the blood of Christ as in Tit 3:5. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done,* " and Eph. 2:9 *Not of works, lest anyone should boast*'.

So, in case an unbeliever does good works, the righteousness of the Law will avail him nothing, and his good works alone without faith will not save him. You have to say to such a person who is not in the faith, 'Your works are not sufficient. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.' There is a main difference between words said to a believer and words said to an unbeliever. Addressing an unbeliever, you must destroy any works because they avail nothing without the blood of Christ. You must say to him, 'Your works will not save you••• What saves you is the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is the start point towards salvation?

Then, when such a person believes, you have to tell him about the good works that suit his faith because, "*faith without works is dead.*" (Jas 2:20).

- Why can there be no salvation except through the blood of Christ? ••

1. Sin is disobedience to God, transgression of His rights and lack of love for Him... Since God is Unlimited, sin is unlimited too because it is committed against God, the Unlimited.

So, sin cannot be forgiven except by an unlimited propitiation. But whatever works man can do are limited. God alone is Unlimited. The only solution then for the remission of sin was that God Himself becomes incarnate and dies. Thus His death can be an unlimited propitiation (atonement) that satisfies God's unlimited justice which required punishing the unlimited sin committed against God the Unlimited.

2. This applies to the sin of Adam as well as to the sin of anyone else; because sin is sin, God's justice is the same, and death-the punishment of sin-is the same in the Old Testament as in the New Testament. It is stated that, *"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God", "There is none who does good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:23,12)*. So, everyone became under the sentence of death, *" that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. "(Rom. 3:19)*.

There became no other means to attain salvation except that God's grace would seek us and it did. God's grace sought us, and saved us through the blood of Christ, the only means for salvation.

3. Therefore, St. Paul the Apostle said, *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" (Rom. 3:24,25)*.

+ *"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose which was given to us..." (2 Tim. 1:9)*.

+ *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5)*.

+ *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. " (Eph. 2:8,9)*.

+ *"And if by grace, then it is not longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace... " (Rom. 11:6)*.

We mention such verses used by the Protestants and do not conceal them because we do not deny God's grace which sought us, nor deny the free salvation given us by God. We cannot deny that all of us were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) and would have perished but for His most holy blood. But the point is that we understand the 'true meaning of these verses and confess that we attain salvation through the blood of Christ.

4: However, we say that the blood of Christ is one thing and the deserts of His blood is another thing. The blood of Christ is capable of the remission of the sins of the whole world•• but did the whole world gain the remission of their sins?! •• *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (Jn. 3:16)*.

Is the entire world saved because of His giving His only begotten Son? Or only those who believe in Him are saved?

So, the blood of Christ is available, ready to save and capable of that.. but there are certain conditions that must be fulfilled first so that a sinner might deserve to be saved by this blood. St. John the beloved also says about Christ, *"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins. And not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2)*.

The propitiation of Christ, then, is unlimited, and is sufficient for the remission of all sins of all people in all ages, in the past, present and future...

However, in spite of the availability of the blood of Christ, some people perished, some still perish and others will perish! That is because the deserts of the blood of Christ require certain conditions.

CONDITIONS OF SALVATION THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

I would like to set before you four essential conditions:

1. Faith.
2. Baptism.
3. Church sacraments necessary for salvation.
4. Good works.

1- FAITH

1. Faith being a condition: Faith is a main condition to deserve the blood of Christ. The Lord Christ asserted this, saying about Himself, "*whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (Jn. 3:16).

The importance of this condition is again asserted in the same chapter by the Lord Christ when He said, "*He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" (Jn. 3:18).

St. John the Apostle says also at the conclusion of the gospel written by him, "*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*" (Jn. 20:31). The condition then for your salvation is to believe..

St. Paul the Apostle preached the same in Antioch, he said, " *... through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him everyone who believes is justified.* " (Acts 13:38, 39).

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared to the Jews that without faith there would be no salvation, He said, " *... if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*" (In. 8:24).

How dangerous are the words, "*you will die in your sins*"! There is the blood of Christ, and it is capable of saving ... but it cannot save you against your will. In order to be saved through the blood of Christ, you must believe.. This is the first condition, not the only one. It is a step towards baptism. Faith is the condition which SS. Paul and Silas required from the Philippian Jailer saying to him, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household*" (Acts 16:31).

2- What is faith? The term "faith" is very broad and includes many things.. When St. Paul said, "*having been justified by faith*" (Rom. 5:1), what did he mean by that faith by which we have been justified? St. Paul also lays before us a very serious question regarding faith, he says, "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves*" (2 Cor. 13:5)

We have then to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith or not.. What sort of faith is this?

- Living faith:

The faith required for salvation must be a living one. This is well indicated by our master James the Apostle, as he says, "*faith without works is dead*" (Jas. 2:20) and also, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" (Jas. 2:26).

Such dead faith, void of works, cannot save anyone as St. James the Apostle says, "*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works, Can faith save him?*" (Jas. 2:14).

It is true that the apostle said that we have been justified by faith (Rom. 5:1) but such faith has two main qualities: it is living and supported by works.. In both qualities, good works are found.

Thus, we do not think that any Protestant – even though he denies works - can say that salvation may be attained through faith void of works. The apostle says further, "*Even the demons believe - and tremble!*"(Jas.2:19).

Do you mean then, brother, by faith that sort of faith which the devils have, though they are destitute of any good works? The devils believe and tremble because they are aware of their horrible evils and corruption.. ! The words 'living faith supported by works' may extend to involve the whole spiritual life. How can that be? Listen carefully, beloved brethren, to what the apostle says:

- Faith working through love: St. Paul the Apostle says, "*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*" (Gal. 5:6). What does the quality "working through love" mean? What is this love? And how can it be?

Such love is explained by St. Paul the Apostle demonstrated by various good works. He says, "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own; is not provoked; thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things*" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

Therefore if faith is working with love, undoubtedly it will include all such qualities which are all in fact-works. Here, the essence of Christianity is clear.. It is not mere verses, but spirit and life (In. 6:63). This proves true the words of the Holy Bible that the letter kills t but the spirit gives life (2Cor. 3:6).

The letter says that there is something called faith, but the spirit explains to you the nature of faith and how it includes all good works. Do our protesting brethren then mean faith in its broad meaning which involves the whole spiritual life? Do they mean faith in its sublime meaning referred to by St. Paul in (Heb. 11) when speaking about the heroes of faith? Or do they mean faith alone void of the aforementioned qualities?!

If so, let us discuss to see whether such faith can save them as St. James the Apostle exclaims...

3. Faith and love:

Those who say that faith alone, apart from works, justifies a person, find a strong answer in the words of St. Paul the Apostle. He says “ *and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing*” (1 Cor. 13:1). Is there more faith than this?

As for you brother far as you can soar in faith what is the farthest level you can attain? Would you attain all faith that removes mountains? “Believe me, even if you attain such a level without love, you will be nothing!

Such faith cannot save you..! If St. Paul the Apostle, with all his faith is nothing without love what about you? Therefore, the apostle set love in a higher level above faith, saying, “*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love*” (1 Cor. 13:13).

4- The believers and the elect: As we have previously said, faith must be alive and working through love.. But some people may go far while defining the word "believers" as to make it synonymous to the word "elect". This makes such people declare that a believer never perishes... And if they hear or read about some believer who perished, they say he was not a believer according to their own view!! Certainly the elect can never perish.. but who said that the believers are the elect?

The Holy Bible gave us various meanings for the word "faith".. In one verse it is stated, “*Even the demons believe - and tremble*” (Jas. 1:19).. And in another verse St. Paul the Apostle defines faith saying, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1).

The Holy Bible mentions also that there is a kind of faith which is dead; and though it is dead, the apostle calls it faith. Another kind is faith void of works and this kind of faith cannot save anyone, (Jas.2:20, 14)

But though it cannot save anyone, the apostle calls it faith. It is stated in the Bible that, “*They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable... and fall short of the glory of God.*” (Rom. 3:12, 23).

Were all people unbelievers and the earth void of faith? Or rather God called them believers who sinned while in faith? God did not deprive those sinners from the name "believers", as He said once on the mouth of Jeremiah the Prophet, “*For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water... My people have forgotten Me days without number*”(Jer. 2:13, 32). Nevertheless He called them His people... God said also through Isaiah the Prophet, “*I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me*” (Isa. 1:2). Yet, in spite of their rebelling, He called them children. This reminds us of God's words concerning the lost son, “*For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found*” (Lk.15:24). In spite of his loss and spiritual death He called him "son". Again in the words of the apostle, “*though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing*” (1 Cor. 13:2); in these words there is another evidence that even a person lacking love and considered as nothing is called a believer.

The Lord even calls them believers, who resemble the seed that fell on rock and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away. He says, “*But the ones on the rock are those who. When they hear.*

Receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away" (Lt. 8:6, 13).

Of course those apostates cannot be called "elect" though the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned that they were believers for a while... This applies also to those mentioned by the apostle in (1 Tim. 4:1). *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons"*. Of course such people cannot be called "elect" though they were in the faith before their apostasy.

Now, I hope the great difference between the two words has been made clear.. All the elect are believers, but not all believers are elect for some may depart from the faith giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. We shall return to this point again, my beloved, but now let us put it aside for a while to talk about the second condition of salvation and its main entrance... i.e. Baptism.

2. BAPTISM

THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM FOR SALVATION

The words of the Lord Christ to Nicodemus show the importance of baptism for He says, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (Jn.3:3)*. The meaning of this birth is explained by the Lord when He answered the question of Nicodemus saying, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (In 3:5)*. It is an explicit verse which indicates that without baptism no one can enter the Kingdom of God, nor even see it.. Thus, salvation is to be attained through baptism preceded by faith. Therefore the Lord Christ said expressly and plainly, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk.16:16)*.

Also when He sent His disciples to preach His Kingdom all over the world, He said to them, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19,20)*.

This verse indicates that salvation requires faith, which comes through discipleship; and baptism, the direct gate to salvation; besides good works which appear in keeping the commandments... So, if baptism had not been necessary for salvation, the Lord would have said to His disciples just to go and preach faith without referring to baptism...

St. Paul the Apostle in his Epistle to his disciple Titus, bishop of Crete - explains how salvation is attained through baptism which is regeneration. He says, *"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:4.5)*.

BAPTISM IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The early church followed the principle laid down by the Lord Christ i.e. *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (MR 16:16). So, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter the Apostle preached the word of faith and those who listened were cut to the heart and when they asked what they would do, St. Peter said to them, *"Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 1:37, 38).

The verse says explicitly that the remission of sins comes through baptism... And how can one have salvation without having one's sins forgiven!! This means that baptism is necessary for one's salvation, for through baptism sins are forgiven and one is made capable of receiving the Holy spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is received in the second sacrament of the church which is the sacrament of the Holy Chrism or (Myron), and this is evident from the previous verse...

On the day of the Pentecost, after hearing the words of St. Peter about baptism they, *"gladly received his word, were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them"* (Acts 2:41) If faith alone was sufficient to give salvation, what was the need to baptize three thousand souls on one day! How easy it was for the apostles to say to the people, 'Now, brethren, since you have believed, go and be blessed by God. That is enough. You are already saved and the matter is over.

In the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, after he had accepted faith through St. Philip, he asked the apostle, *"What hinders me from being baptized?"* *"And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him... and he went on his way..."* (Acts 8:36-39).

Likewise, the Philippian jailer who accepted faith through Paul and Silas ... *Immediately, he and all his family were baptized"* (Acts 16:33). We have also the example of Cornelius to whom the angel of God appeared in a vision saying to him, *"Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God" ..* After St. Peter had preached to him the word of life, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word and St. Peter answered, *"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord"* (Acts 10:47, 48).

And Lydia, a seller of purple from the City of Thyatira, when she accepted faith through St. Paul the Apostle, *"she and her household were baptized"* (Acts 16:15).

Beautiful indeed are the words of St. Paul the Apostle about baptism which say, *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:27)..

In baptism then one puts on Christ.. What greater salvation than this there could be!.. Baptism is the gate through which one attains salvation, while faith paves the way to it.

We say this because many Protestants think that one's faith is capable of saving one...! Or in other words they think that regeneration is achieved through faith not through baptism! They do not admit that baptism is the regeneration in spite of the plain verse speaking about the washing of regeneration (Tit. 3:5)!! And also in spite of the words of the apostle in the Epistle to the Ephesians, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle..."* (Eph.5:25-27).

The Protestants and their followers take the words, "*sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*" to mean that sanctification is done by the "*word*" ignoring the words "*the washing of water*" as if they were of no meaning... The "*word*" here means preaching. What do the words "*the washing of water*" mean then? They mean baptism which one obtains after hearing the word preached. This conforms to the commandment of the Lord Christ, "*make disciples... baptizing them...*". Making disciples is effected through preaching the word and baptizing is effected through the washing of water.

A THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF THE "IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM"

What is the fundamental teaching of Christianity about baptism as a means for salvation? Why is baptism necessary for salvation? Why can no one be saved without it? The matter is very clear and can be explained as follows:

The Holy Bible says, "*For the wages of sin is death...*" (Rom. 6:23). Then, there must be death... and the way to salvation must begin with death, continue through death and the last stage in the process of salvation is to be attained through death... It means that salvation begins with death, is perfected in death and continues through death because the wages of sin is death... What does all this mean?

1. Salvation began with death: Salvation began with the death of Christ on the cross paying for sin and purchasing us with His blood. But how does salvation reach you? It reaches you through death. How is this affected? Christ gave salvation through His death... And in order that you may have a share in such salvation, you must share Christ His death.. You must die with Christ and rise with Him in order to be glorified with Him. Thus, St. Paul the apostle says, "*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*" (Phil. 3:10).

Unless you undergo such death, you will be seized by the second death which is torment forever in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). But how can you undergo such death? How can you share Christ His death? This is affected through baptism as St. Paul the Apostle says, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? There/ore we were buried with Him through baptism into death...*" (Rom. 6:3, 4).

It is our death with Christ and burial with Him that makes us share the glories of His resurrection. So, St. Paul the Apostle says, "*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection... Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.*" (Rom. 6:5, 8).

Now, we can sum up the issue as follows: The wages of sin is death... so man must die and be Buried... But Christ died for us and we have to share His death in order not to be apart from the deserts of His death...

It is not proper at all to leave Christ die alone for us without sharing His death or at least being conformed to His death having the fellowship of His sufferings... Thus St. Paul the Apostle says, "*baptized into His death... buried with Him... we have been united together in the likeness of His death... our old man was crucified with Him... Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.*" (Rom. 6:3-8).

The Holy Bible explains to us that such death is effected through baptism... in which we must be immersed completely as if buried in the baptismal font as St. Paul says, "*we were buried with Him through baptism into death*" (Rom. 6:4). Then we rise from the water of baptism to "*Walk in newness of life... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with...*" (Rom. 6:4,6).

Baptism, then, is necessary for salvation because it is sharing in the death of Christ, believing in death as a means of life and admitting that the wages of sin is death... Those who say that salvation is attained through faith alone, without baptism, have not yet understood faith properly.. So, let us discuss the matter together to understand it well: What is faith? It is to believe that the wages of sin is death; to believe that Christ died for you; and to believe that you must die with Him in order to live with Him also ... Thus, faith leads you to what we have already said i.e.

Salvation began with death, the death of Christ... It is a paid for salvation... We began to attain this salvation through death for we died with Christ and were buried with Him in Baptism. That is the salvation which we attained. We add now that such salvation continues through death...

2. Salvation continues through death: St. Paul the Apostle says, "*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts*" (Rom. 6:11, 12). These are beautiful words indeed which explain to us the Orthodox faith thoroughly. "*Do not let sin reign in your mortal body*"; we entered into salvation through death.. so, our bodies must be always dead against worldly lusts. For as long as the body is dead, salvation lives in it••

But, when the carnal lusts rise from this death and begin to move, we become liable to lose salvation since salvation is only attained through death, so, we pray God in the ninth hour saying, 'Mortify our bodily senses, O Christ our Lord and deliver us'. This conforms to the verse, "... *but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*" (Rom 8:13)

St. Paul the Apostle says also, "*So' then death is working iii us*" (2 Cor. 4:12). He asserts the same saying, "*For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh*" (2 Cor. 4:11); and also, "*And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness*" (Rom 8:10). He says also, "*For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter*" (Rom. 8:36), "*Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body*" (2 Cor. 4:10).

So, as long as we are along the way of salvation, the body must be dead against sin; death must work in us. If someone says he is already saved, yet he still loves the world and the things of the world, he is in fact mistaken, for, "*friendship with the world is enmity with God*" (Jas. 4:4). Salvation, then, continues through death: death of the deeds of the body, death of the lusts of the body, and death against the world, material and its demands which fight the spirit.

+ What is the meaning of the words, "*We shall be saved by His life*" Let us meditate on the verse which says, "*For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*" (Rom. 5:10). What do the words "*we shall be saved by His life*" mean?

These words perhaps mean that we shall be saved by His life as an Advocate, a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek who is, "*able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them*" (Heb.7:25).. We are saved by His life due to His being an advocate because we always sin, "*And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*" (1 Jn. 2:1).

We can say here that the continuous intercession of Christ for us means that we are continually in need for salvation and for its work in us all the time. There is another beautiful meaning for the words, "... *we shall be saved by His life*". We find this meaning in the speech of St. Paul the Apostle, where he says, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20)... Being crucified with Christ. This is the death required, "*have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal. 5:24). Thus we are saved, when Christ lives in us. Also, the words, "*it is no longer I who live*" show submission of one's will completely to the Lord so that one can always say, 'not what I will, but what You will' One becomes as if dead, as not existing.. It is no longer the person who lives but Christ lives in him. He addresses Christ saying, "*I shall be saved by Your death, I shall be saved by Your living in me*".

This is the right concept of salvation according to Orthodoxy: We have been saved through the death of Christ when we died with Him in baptism... We are now capable of being saved by Christ living in us and by our submitting our lives wholly to His will saying along with the apostle, "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*".

3. Salvation is perfected in death: We have said that salvation begins with death in baptism, continues through death against the worldly lusts.. But, till when?. The Holy Bible says, "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Rev.2:10). Thus, death keeps working within you until the body dies actually.. As long as you do away with the deeds of the body, then you are still on the way of salvation... When will you reach the end of the way?. You will reach it when you die and pass to the other world.

Then, you are still on the way... would you stop in the middle and cry out, 'I am already saved'! Be humble, brother, and listen to the apostle saying, "... *considering the outcome of their conduct*" (Heb. 13:7). Do not boast vainly because many had begun in the Spirit, but were made perfect by the flesh (Gal. 3:3).

Now let us move to another point and we shall return to the previous one in detail - God willing - when we speak about perfection of salvation.

3- SACRAMENTS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

Some sacraments are not necessary for your salvation. For example, you may not marry, but you are the offspring of marriage. You may not have a disease and so you may not need the sacrament of the Holy Unction... You may not be ordained a priest, but you do need the sacrament of the Holy Orders (Priesthood) to give you the Holy Spirit that will work in the other sacraments which you need for your salvation ... No doubt you are in need of the sacrament of Baptism which we have already discussed..; and also the sacrament of the Holy Unction (Chrism or Myron), the sacrament of repentance and the sacrament of Eucharist (Holy communion)... Now, we shall talk about the importance of each of these sacraments separately.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY UNCTION

When St. Peter called upon the Jews to be baptized, he said to them, *"Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)*. What is this gift of the Holy Spirit? And is it necessary for our salvation? What is its importance? And can we be saved without it?

We can never be saved without this gift of the Holy Spirit... That is because our whole spiritual life is just a response of our will to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Unless we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, all our life will be futile and subject to perdition. It is a gift which we receive through the sacrament of the Holy Unction and for which we cry out in prayers continually saying, *«Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" otherwise we shall perish.*

Your spiritual life does not at all depend on your human arm (power)... but it is a fellowship with the Holy Spirit as we shall explain in the chapter entitled "Striving and Grace".

You must then receive this sacrament of the Holy Unction, for St. John the Apostle says about it, *"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things", "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true" (1Jn. 2:20,27).*

To know the importance of the Holy Spirit for your salvation, let me ask you, 'Can you lead a spiritual life without the work of the Holy Spirit within you? Can you proceed along the way of salvation without the work of the Holy Spirit supporting you? If it is impossible... then you must receive this unction. Therefore, the apostles were very careful regarding giving the gift of the Holy Spirit to the believers. At first, it was given by the laying of the hands of the apostles... that was before using Myron (Chrism). We see this evident in the story of the acceptance of faith in Samaria, where this sacrament was considered complementary to faith and baptism.. The Holy Bible says, *"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17)*. So we see that baptism was not sufficient - alone - for the people of Samaria.. they had to receive the Holy Spirit.

The same applies to the faith of the Ephesians. When St. Paul came to Ephesus and finding some disciples *"he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed!" And they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2)*. They were baptized into John's baptism only... But when St. Paul talked to them, *H .. they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them" (Acts 19:5,6)*.

In baptism, then, we share Christ His death and we become sons... while by the Holy Spirit we live in a way that suits our being sons... Both matters are necessary for our salvation.

THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST (HOLY COMMUNION)

To know the importance of partaking of the flesh and blood of the Lord, we shortly cite the words of the Lord, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and*

drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life. and I will raise him up at the last day... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me. and I in him... (Jn. 6:53-58).

From this speech, we see that eternal life depends on partaking of the flesh of the Lord to the extent that whoever does not partake of it, will have no life... he will perish .. Would you ask after all this what the necessity of the Holy Communion for salvation is! Being Orthodox, and having the Orthodox faith, we believe in what is said in the Divine Mass about the flesh of the Lord, “ *given for us: salvation, and remission of sins, and eternal life for whoever partakes of it*”.

So, if anyone asks, 'Is salvation possible without the holy communion? I say, 'No, this this is impossible... because the flesh of the Lord is given for us: salvation and remission of sins and eternal life for whoever partakes of it... How can we explain the importance of Eucharist theologically? ...

You are saved through baptism from the original sin ... This is the first salvation you have attained. Through baptism you have become a son of God, worthy of the deserts of the blood of Christ... But you commit new sins every day, and you need to wash out your sins with the blood, for, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1Jn. 1:8). Every day you sin, and you need the flesh of Christ sacrificed on your behalf. You need the Holy Sacrifice atonement for your sins... In fact, the Holy offering of Eucharist is a continuation of the sacrifice of Christ.

Therefore, you cannot be saved of your sins without. It because it is given for us: salvation and remission of sins... Through it, we also abide in the Lord as He Himself said. Someone may say to you, if you want to be saved, just throw yourself at the feet of Christ and say to Him: accept me, O Jesus!! My brethren, such words need to be put into action... do you want Christ to accept you!..

This is the way of salvation: to die with Christ, and be buried with Him in baptism and He will accept you... ; to be anointed with the Holy Spirit, and He will accept you.. ; To partake of His flesh and blood in order to abide in Him, and He will accept you ... , to confess your sins, and He will accept you.. This is the practical way through which the Lord may accept you.. It is improper to ask Him to accept you without going along the way planned by Him.

The same may be said likewise regarding the words, 'Submit your life to Jesus' ... How easy it is for a person to utter such words, but how difficult for him to carry out..! Do you think that submission of one's life is a slight matter?! All our spiritual striving is summed up in these words "submission of one's life" ... They mean that a person submits his will to the Lord, submits his heart and his affections, his intentions and his thoughts ... that is to do works meet for repentance. Talk about the sacrament of Eucharist must be preceded by talk about the sacrament of repentance.

THE SACRAMENT OF REPENTANCE

Is repentance necessary for salvation? Yes, to the extent that without repentance there would be no salvation. You may ask 'how can this be? I have accepted faith; I have been baptized and am already justified. 'It is true that you had been baptized and are delivered of the original sin. But

what about your actual sins, those which you commit every day? Where can you escape from them? And how?

Do faith and baptism prevent you from sinning afterwards?! Certainly not, for St. John the Apostle declares, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1Jn. 1:8). It is because, *"No one is good but One, that is, God "* (Mt.19:17), and, *"For we all stumble in many things"* (Jas.3:2) We say also in the "litany of the departed" *"No one is free from sin even though his life on earth be one single day"*.. What can we say about all these sins? How can one be saved of them? Can't this be through repentance?

Someone may whisper to you saying, 'Just believe; *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"*... !! (Acts 16:31). My beloved brother, this verse is said before, previous to baptism, but as for your sins after being baptized, you have the advice of St. John the Apostle. He says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1Jn. 1:9). The Holy Bible says also, *"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"* (Prov. 28:13). So, the holy church set up for us the sacrament of Repentance. Since a believer is apt to fall and perish due to his sins in spite of his being in faith; and since man is in a continuous battle against sin and every day he stumbles, and falls, so, God gave us repentance through which we may be renewed and cleansed and our sins washed out.

No Protestant denies repentance and its importance and necessity. Repentance includes regret, mourning, confessing and deciding to forsake sin, all of which are works. However, I do not say that a person can be saved through repentance alone for repentance without the blood of Christ is of no avail. But, I say that repentance makes one worthy of being washed off and cleansed by the blood of Christ and thus am saved.

The blood of Christ is like a great treasure which we can only approach through repentance. Then we take it and get enriched. On the other hand if we do not repent, the treasure retains its value but we remain far from it, in poverty, perishing of hunger. The compassion of the Father is there, the best robe and the fatted calf are prepared, but the lost son has to come to the Father in repentance in order to have all this. Let us admit then that *«God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life"* (Acts 11:18).

The importance of repentance is further indicated in the words of the Lord Christ, glory be to Him - for He says, *"unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Lk. 13:3). This verse shows that repentance is a means for salvation that saves from perdition. It shows also that without repentance, a sinner perishes and *"These times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30). Not only does God command people to repent, but also to *"do works befitting repentance"* (Acts 26:20).

This repentance is preached by the holy apostles as a means for salvation from the perdition set for sinners. St. Peter the Apostle for example says that God; *"His longsuffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet. 3:9).

Here is a contrast between repentance and perdition, which means that whoever repents will be saved and escapes perdition and vice versa, St. Paul the Apostle also shows the wrath awaiting those who do not repent and are subject to the just condemnation of God. He says, *"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the*

goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:4-6).

God did not require repentance from the gentiles and non-believers only, but He required it also in the Revelation from the angels of the seven churches in Asia. He says to the angel of the Church of Ephesus, *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent" (Rev. 2:5).* God required repentance also from the angel of the church in Pergamos (Rev.2:16). To the angel of the church in Sardis God said, *"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (Rev. 3:3).* And to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans He said, *"Be Zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19).*

My brother, do not think that Adam's sin alone deserves death, but in general the wages of sin is death. Any sin you commit after being baptized may lead to your perdition - unless you repent. The sacrament of Repentance is also known in Church as the Sacrament of Confession, for you need to come to the priest and confess your sins in order to have absolution from him and have them forgiven... The sacrament of Repentance had been practised by the holy church since the beginning.. The Holy Bible states that in the epoch of the apostles, *"Many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds" (Acts 19:18).*

Even before this epoch, the Bible tells about John the Baptist that many *"were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mt. 3:6).* Along the way of your salvation, I wish you would benefit of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples when He said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn. 20:22,23).*

4- GOOD WORKS

We have already talked about salvation through the blood of Christ and how one needs faith, baptism, the sacrament of the Holy Unction, the sacrament of Repentance and the sacrament of Eucharist in order to benefit from the deserts of the blood of Christ. Now, we have to talk about works and their importance for salvation. This we shall do in a separate chapter due to its importance...

STRIVING AND GRACE

Since works are necessary for salvation, will a person be saved by his works or by the grace of the Holy Spirit working in him? Many went far in defending either of them and were mistaken. So, we shall try here to give an answer to such an important question i.e. how is man saved? Is it by striving? By grace? Or by both together?

Striving and grace together:

A person cannot be saved by his striving alone, for the Lord Jesus Christ - glory be to Him - says, "*Without Me you can do nothing*" (In. 15:5). You cannot be saved then, by your own human arm (power) alone without God supporting you. Whatever striving or labor you may have. But grace would not save you by itself unless your will responds to it•• How beautiful the words of St. John Chrysostom in this regard are, he says, "God does not want us to lie down on our backs and He gives us the Kingdom, for grace does not do everything alone". Grace is not a cause for laziness, carelessness and slackening.

Do not stay then in laziness, without any striving in your life and unwisely say, 'I submit myself to grace to do whatever it wants for me!!' The work of grace within you, brother, does not mean that you sleep and slacken in performing your duties.

The example of Joshua and Moses:

Joshua the son of Nun led the army and fought Amalek, while Moses stood on the top of the hill holding up his hands in prayer (Ex. 17: 11).

Did the people defeat Amalek through the fighting of Joshua's army or through the prayer of Moses? Concentrating on one of them and neglecting the other would be a mistake, because Joshua alone, however hard had he fought, without the prayer of Moses, or in other words without God's help, would have never defeated. However, the prayer of Moses did not mean at all encouraging the army to slacken before the enemy depending on that prayer! Fighting and prayer went together, side by side. One was striving in the war and the other holding up his hands in prayer, both were inseparable.

The communion of the Holy Spirit:

There is a beautiful verse which if well-understood would make us understand more about grace and striving, it is the apostolic benediction which says, «*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all*» (2Cor. 13: 14).

It is a communion between two, working together: the Holy Spirit and man. The Holy Spirit is able to save and redeem you, but He would not do it alone. He wants you to participate with Him in managing your own life. This is the communion of the Holy Spirit. You may argue saying, 'How is that! Is not the Holy Spirit-alone-able to save me? Nay, He is able... but He does not want ... It is not God's dispensation to force you to do well, because you would not be rewarded for an action done without your discretion. Again, we say if it is the Holy Spirit who works alone, why then are there righteous people and evil ones? If the matter is confined to the work of the Holy Spirit alone, there would be no single sinner on the earth.

The Holy Spirit can make a sinner repent, but He does not want to do so unless the sinner's will agrees with Him ... It is a communion. The mere existence of just one sinner in the world not willing to repent is a sure evidence that grace, alone, does not do everything.

Does the work of grace mean abolishing of personal freedom?

No, for you still have your discretion and your will. You can respond to the work of the Holy Spirit within you, to participate in work with Him and be led by Him ... But you can also stop the work of the Holy Spirit within you if you wish to. So, the Holy Bible warns us saying, "*Do not quench the Spirit*" (1Thess. 5:19), and also, "*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*" (Eph. 4:30).

Grace is standing knocking at the door, as the Lord says; "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*" (Rev. 3:20).

But what if he does not open? He has full discretion to determine his own destiny as he wishes... Grace offers you help...and you have the option to accept or refuse, to work or not... If you do participate with the Holy Spirit in action, for your own sake, you will-with the grace of the Holy Spirit-attain perfect holiness according to the extent of your response and submission ... But if you refuse to participate, grace will never force you to do good. Many people go far in interpreting the word "striving" as to consider it including a heresy? As if it were something against faith, and against God's help! All this is wrong.

Grace is just a weapon offered you.. You have the option: either to fight with it and conquer, or neglect it and meet the adversary disarmed and be defeated.. In both cases, you are free to carry out your own will, but it is for your own good to make use of the weapon offered you for your own salvation. Take as an example for this, the soldiers who receive from their leadership during war, tanks, guns, bombs, and weapons to fight with. In case they conquer, is their victory due to their own bravery or to the weapons?.

Their bravery alone, without weapons, would not be sufficient at all to bring them victory because fighting needs weapons.. Likewise, weapons alone without stilled soldiers to use them can do nothing. The same applies to spiritual wars in which man's will participates in work with the spiritual weapons.

The necessity of striving:

Many indeed are the holy texts which confirm the necessity of striving from among these texts we cite the words of the apostle. "*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*" (Reb. 12:1). Then he rebukes the Hebrews saying, "*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin*" (Heb. 12:4)

It behoves us, then, to strive, not the ordinary striving, but striving to bloodshed against sin. Would anyone ask, 'Until when? We say, 'Until the end of one's life as the Holy Bible says, "*he who endures to the end will be saved*" (Mt. 10:22).

The apostle who strove much and spoke of striving explains to us how his life was supported by grace, he says, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day*" (2 Jim. 4:7, 8).

It is a striving, but not a personal one separate from God's work.. It is rather a combination of both matters, as the apostle says about his preaching, *"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily"* (Col. 1:29).

It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs: Some people go far in talking about the role of grace as to belittle the role of striving depending on the verse which says, *"So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."* (Rom. 9:16).

What does this mean? Does it mean that God's mercy grants us free salvation and transfers us to the Kingdom of heavens without any effort or good will on our side?! Does it mean that a person relaxes lazily and runs not towards good nor even wishes it depending on God's mercy to have compassion upon him in spite of his slackness?

This can never be the meaning. It is impossible to say that the apostle meant this by his words *"not of him who runs"* which in another place he says, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race"* He who says, *"not of him who runs"*, he himself has finished the race and attained the crown of righteousness as a reward for his running and his good fight. The same person who said, *"not of him who runs"* said also about himself, *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me-Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of god in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:12-14).

St. Paul himself pressed on that he might lay hold. Is this just a personal experience which St. Paul had? Certainly not. It is for everyone. So, St. Paul goes on saying, *"Therefore let us, as many as are mature (perfect), have this mind"* (Phil. 3:15). Then, if you are mature (perfect), you have to press on so that you may apprehend. St. Paul himself calls us all to this running and this striving; he says, *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it"* (1 Cor. 9:24).

What is it that you require us to do, great apostle? Why should we run since it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs? what is the use of running and striving then? Suffice us to stand still where we are and wait for God's grace to come and transfer us from death to life and bring us into the Kingdom of heavens freely without our willing or running.. ! But St. Paul proceeds saying, *"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Therefore I run thus. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified"* (1Cor. 9:25-27).

This running and striving then, is not only for us, the weak believers, but also for the apostles. As we see from the verses, St. Paul himself ran and pressed on. Though he was filled with the Holy Spirit and grace worked in him more than in the others. Yet he was in need to run, to pass on, to finish the race and to fight the good fight, He calls us to do as he did in order that we may attain. This great saint disciplined his body and brought it into subjection in order not to become disqualified! If St. Paul himself strove and was afraid lest he should be refused... What ought we to do then?

What then is the meaning of the words, *"It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"*. The meaning is that you cannot attain the Kingdom just by your willing

or striving, without God's work within you, without the help of His grace, and without the communion of the Holy Spirit. The main action in this regard is by God who shows mercy... So, whoever depends on his own will and his own striving is actually in the wrong way... But the right thing is that I press on, and God shows mercy... and when God blesses my labor I ascribe the result to God, not to my own labor. It is true that it is not of him, who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. But towards whom does God show mercy? One of the saints said, God shows mercy towards them who will and who run. This reminds me of another verse said by St. Paul also, "*SO then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*" (1 Cor. 3:7).

True indeed, it is God who gives the increase; but to what? To the plant which is planted and watered. Then, we must not abstain from planting and watering saying to ourselves that neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, and wait foolishly for God to give the increase!! The right thing is to plant and water yet say that neither he who plants is anything nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. It is the same as we said before that we have to will and to run yet say that it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

The spiritual war:

Let us meditate on St. Paul's description of the spiritual war in his Epistle to the Ephesians; he says, "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication...*" (Eph. 6:10-18).

Here, we find wrestling, spiritual fight and striving, while the weapon is the whole armor of God. This does not mean that you do not strive, but you ought to strive, yet depend on God in your striving. Do not be like one given God's spiritual weapons but he stands still not using them, nor fighting with them. The weapons are available but one must fight.

God's weapons have their power but unless you use, them, you will be defeated, there are some persons whom St. Paul mentions even weeping in (Phil. 3:18), those could have used such weapons but because they neglected them, deviated towards sin and submitted to it, they perished in their sins. We notice here also that among such spiritual weapons are righteousness, truth, the word of God, prayer and supplication, being watchful... which are all works. St. Peter the apostle also speaks about this spiritual war; he says, "*Be Sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith,*" (1 Pet. 5:8,9). The devil, our adversary is like a roaring lion: What should we do, then? St. Peter says, "*Resist him*" i.e. strive, be firm and be brave but do not depend on your human arm (power). You ought rather to "*resist him steadfast in the faith*". This verse includes both sides: striving in resisting the devil, and grace upon which depends the one who strives through faith. It is the striving which St. Paul the Apostle calls for while rebuking the Hebrews, for he says, "*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin*" (Heb.12:4).

Here, striving and resistance are required but we should resist by God's whole armor, not by our own power and we should be steadfast in the faith. Thus, St. Paul the Apostle says to his disciple St. Timothy, *"Fight the good fight of faith"* (1 Tim. 6:11). Here, he requires both matters; striving and faith and both go together. St. Paul speaks again about his own striving; he says, *"We were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict"* (1Thess.1:1), and in his Epistle to the Colossians, he says, *"For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you"*.

The example of David and Goliath:

How did David defeat Goliath? Was this through God's grace and help? Certainly, yes. David depended wholly on God, so he said to Goliath, *"You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts", "This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you ... Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands"* (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

The greatness of David in this battle appears in that he brought God into the field of the battle. Before David came, there had been no mention of God, only talk about the man who had come up, the valiant who defied the army and about the prize of the king to the person who would kill that man (1 Sam. 17:25).

David brought the Lord's name into the battle as we see from his words, *"I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts... This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands ... the Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion... the battle is the Lord's... etc."* But, was David satisfied with introducing the name of the Lord, into the battlefield? Did he depend on that saying "through faith I shall kill Goliath, without labor or striving. The battle is the Lord's and He will give him into our hands. No, but David, *"chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine. "* (1 Sam. 17:40)... Then as Goliath drew near to meet David, it was so that, *"David hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it"* (1 Sam. 17:48-51).

It is true indeed that the battle is the Lord's. In this example, it was the Lord who delivered Goliath into the band of David. But David had to fight, to hasten and run toward the army, to choose certain stones, to put the stones in the sling and to strike skilfully. He had also to draw his sword of its sheath and prevail over the Philistine and kill him. All these steps are works.

However, we ascribe this victory to God, not to David, because the stone might have missed the deadly point and Goliath might have not died by it. So, although David fought very skilfully and conquered, yet we say along with St. Paul the Apostle, *"It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"* (Rom. 9:16). There must be striving and labor but at the end victory is to be ascribed to God.

Faith and works together: The same is to be said of the spiritual striving...Undoubtedly, it is a battle likewise. You fight with all your power, but the power you have is God's power. You fight

with every weapon you have, but this weapon is God's whole armor. On the other hand, do not say 'I shall sleep and dream; for in my dreams I see God's grace saving me...?'

God does not save the sluggard, and the grace does not encourage slackness and permissiveness. Suppose that a pupil does not study, but he goes to the priest asking his prayers for him to succeed, trusting in the power of prayers. What do you say of that? ...

The rule is "Faith without works is dead".. A pupil has to study, and to ask for prayers.. Thus faith and works go together in unity. Some would say that striving represents the human arm (Power) while it is said, "*Cursed is the man who... makes flesh his strength*" (Jer. 17:5).

In fact striving becomes a human power if a person depends on himself alone, in other words if he thinks that he can be saved by his own striving without the work of grace! At this point he is faced with the words of the Lord, "*Without Me you can do nothing*" (In. 15:5).

Fighting can never be without a weapon... and a weapon by itself without fighting, and without a person to use it skilfully, cannot bring victory. Both are inseparable as St. Paul the Apostle says, "*If anyone competes..., he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules*" (2Tim.2:5).

Thus, you have to strive, and your striving be according to the rules so that you may be saved.

The striving of the Apostles and pastors:

Did not the apostles strive and labor for faith? Nay, for St. Paul the apostle himself says, "*I labored more abundantly than they all*" (1 Cor. 15:10). All the apostles labored and St. Paul labored more. He even recorded his labors in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11: 23-33). If it were merely a question of grace, why then would St. Paul labor? What would be the necessity of evangelizing, preaching, giving advices, serving the word of God, pastoral work and labor as long as grace was to do everything!! Why should a pastor labor, perform his pastoral duties look after people and strive? Is not God able to speak in the hearts of people and save them alone? What need is there for apostles, pastors and preachers?! What need is there for any striving? Do we call all this human power (arm)?

Would grace do everything alone, a priest then might sleep and pray in his heart to the Lord saying; "O Lord, it is You who look after your people and take care of them. Who am I to strive and look after them?! It is neither of him who wills nor of him who runs but of You who care for the people!! As for preachers also, why should a preacher give a sermon? He can lie resting at home and say; "O Lord, it is Your grace that speaks in the hearts of the people, guide them and saves them!!" You also, why do you labor in your life whether in prayers, in fasting or striving.. Rest then depending on grace to do everything!

Working with God:

We say all this because many people were lost because they followed a wrong counsel said by others, which is: "Do not strive". Why should you strive? God will not begin to work for you except when you stop working! Stop working then so that God may work. What strange deadly words are these? How can it be that you stop work in order to let God work! Why do you not work with God so He works with you, works within you, and works through you, as St. Paul Said about himself and Apollos, "*For we are God's fellow workers*" (1 Cor. 3:9).

Why do we separate our work from God's work? Why do we not be fellow workers with Him, to work with Him, and He with us. So, St. John the Apostle speaks about the Lord and the "fellowship with Him" (1 Jn.1:6), and St. Paul speaks about *the community of the Holy Spirit...*

God, with His grace, with His power, and with His Holy Spirit says to you, 'I want to work with you to save you. If you accept to work with Me, you will be saved, but if you do not accept, you will deprive yourself of such salvation.. I stand knocking at the door, offering My grace, My love, My strength, My help and all the powers necessary for the salvation of the soul at which door I am knocking ... But, if anyone opens for Me, if he accepts to work with Me, if he gives up Himself to Me to work in, if he submits to My work, then I shall co-work with him and He with Me'.

The extravagant point of view:

The worst of what I read throughout my life concerning extravagance in denying the value of works was what F.B. Mayer wrote in his book entitled, (Saved and Preserved)... Even the most fanatic Protestants, who fight striving, say that a person has to strive in one field only i.e. striving in prayers •• But F.B. Mayer fights even this striving in prayers.

Under the title "When I stopped my efforts", he says; "You have to realize a fact: that as long as you wrestle with God, you will lose the most valuable blessings! Jacob wrestled with God all the night until the breaking of day but did not advance even one step ... But when he became no more able to wrestle because the socket of his hip was out of joint and was about to fall, he received the blessing that made him head!! (Gen.32:24-29).

Mayer goes on saying, 'You have moaned and struggled and implored but in vain. Now you have to stop and keep silent!! Your tremendous efforts complicated your affairs more'!! This Protestant writer goes on fighting prayers, striving, imploring and wrestling with God till he says, 'Know that God is able to save you ... He was waiting all this long time to save you ... and when you stop your labor, He will begin'!! In this way, he calls people to stop running and working. In another chapter entitled "we do not seek but we receive", he says, 'You will not get the blessing you long for by struggling and striving, by your cries and prayers, nor by your determination and attempts but rather by calming yourself down before God and accepting grace.

He gives an example of the ineffectiveness of striving in prayers, the story of a person who struggled for two years raising prayers to God to grant him power to overcome a certain temptation. It seemed that the prayers were not accepted and he became very desperate.

But when he stopped prayers, God began to work. Does this teaching satisfy anyone's conscience? The Holy Bible itself in all the scriptures calls us to strive in prayers, to pray unceasingly and to keep watch and pray... But it is the Protestant extra Vance that denies the value of striving even in prayers!!

Spiritual exercises:

The Protestants and any others like them who fight striving and works, fight also spiritual exercises as if these also mean dependence on human arm (power). But we say that only if a person proceeds with his spiritual exercises depending on his own power, he will certainly be mistaken. It is good for a person to practise but he should depend on God's power and say along with St. Paul the Apostle, *HI can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).*

Also, speaking about his own exercises, St. Paul the Apostle says, *"This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men"* (Acts 24:16). And in his Epistle to the Philippians, he says; *"Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need"* (Phil. 4:12). He had become trained and had his senses exercised (Heb. 5:14).

It is good then for a believer to have spiritual exercises and can even pray God saying, *"Lead me in Your truth and teach me"* (Ps. 25:5). But, in all these exercises he has to depend on God's power which gives him help; and in every success he has to ascribe the merit to God not to his own courage or self-control.

WHEN SHALL WE ATTAIN SALVATION

Since a believer is liable to fall and perish, and since some people have begun in the Spirit but were made perfect by the flesh ... when can we say, then, that a person is completely saved? We can only say this when he completes the days of his sojourning on earth peacefully.. That is because we are in a fight and struggle as long as we are in the flesh (Eph. 6:10).

We are in a war which result is not yet known. A person may win the first battle and lose the twelfth one, who can be sure of the result? A person who is fighting in a war cannot say he has won except after the end of the war, i.e. after one puts off the flesh, So, the apostle says, *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Phil. 2:12), and also, *"considering the outcome of their conduct"* (Heb. 13:7).

Holy texts on our waited for salvation: St. Paul says, *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body"* (Phil. 3:20).

This is the true salvation, when we put off this mortal body and put on the glorious body, which matter will take place after the second coming of Christ and the general resurrection. He says also, *"So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation"* (Reb. 9:28).

Here also, the apostle is speaking about the final salvation which will take place after the second coming of Christ. St. Peter the Apostle also says; *"you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet. 1:5).

The same fact is declared by St. Paul when he ordered that the Corinthian sinner should be delivered to Satan, *"For the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Cor. 5:5).

Referring to this coming salvation, St. Paul says to the Romans, *"For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed"* (Rom. 13:11).

And to his disciple 81. Timothy the Bishop, St. Paul says, *"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save yourself and those who hear you"* (1Tim. 4:16). Even that saint needed to take heed to himself, to his ministry and to continue in that in order to be saved.

Regarding the waited for salvation, St. Peter the Apostle says, *"If the righteous one is scarcely saved" (1 Pet. 4:18).*

And St. Paul says about the angels, *"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Reb. 1:14).*

This last salvation requires patience and striving so that we may attain it with glory as St. Paul says; *"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2Tim. 2:10).*

It is obvious then, that the elect did not obtain that salvation which is accompanied by eternal glory though they obtained salvation through the blood of Christ in baptism.. It is just a guarantee (Eph. 1:14) which we may lose if we stop striving or if our will deviates...But how can we attain such final salvation? The apostle gives the answer; he says, *"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1)* for he who endures to the end shall be saved (Mt. 24:13).

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DOGMATIC THEOLOGY V

WILL OUR BODIES ASCEND? - WEB LINK:
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THE HOLY TRADITIONS

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian teaching is based on three sources:

1. The Holy Scriptures.
2. The Holy Tradition
3. The Ecumenical Councils.

The Holy Bible (New and Old Testament) is the word of God. It is the first source. Then comes the teachings, the statutes, and the dogmas that have been handed over from generation to generation. The last source is the canons of the ecumenical councils in regards to the Christian dogmas and other matters. These three sources must be consistent so that the Christian ecclesiastical teaching may be truthful.

DEFINITION OF THE TRADITION:

The western writers view the tradition as blind obedience, or mere mechanical and barren transfer of information without modification (modernization). In the Greek language, the tradition is called “Paradosis” which means “handing over”. In the Hebrew language, it is called “Masar” which also means “handing over”.

Thus, the Coptic Orthodox church views the tradition as handing over an inner life whereby the believers live from generation to generation with these feelings, beliefs and actions. So, it is not just old practices from the past.

One of the fathers defined Christianity as a spirit and life, which is transferred from heart through tradition. Also, St. Jude the apostle speaks of “the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude 1:3.

Consequently, the holy tradition is closely related to the unity of the faith that is established in the church. The same principle applies to the Holy Scriptures and the ecumenical councils. We do not accept any tradition unless we verify its source. We accept the tradition that is kept by the holy church, which is proven to be handed over by the fathers. Naturally, this tradition agrees with the unity of the faith and spirit, which is established in the church (i.e. the hearts of the believers), which is manifested in the Holy Scriptures and the canons of the ecumenical councils.

THE HOLY TRADITION PRIOR TO THE WRITTEN LAW:

From the beginning, the whole creation; lived a life that depended on the verbal tradition in regards to its knowledge of God and His commandments. Adam, our father, received it and delivered it to his descendants from generation to generation. How did Abel learn of the idea of the altar and the sacrifice that he offered as an acceptable offering to God? He had no written law. Doubtlessly, he learned it from Adam his father. Adam received the idea from God Himself. Before the law there were heroes of the faith like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and others. Whence they had such a strong faith? They had no written law, but they received this life from God Himself and delivered it to the next generations. Likewise, they learned of the altar.

Abraham used to build a tent and an altar. The altar and the sacrifice indicate their faith in redemption as the only path to salvation. All these generations awaited the coming of Christ the Savior. He saves His people from their sins through the great redemption. The verbal tradition continued thousands of years. Its effect grew weaker with time in many nations due to the depravity of the human soul, its inclination towards evil, and the crookedness of thoughts. Thus, it was a must that the written law was to be given by God in order to clarify the characteristics of the natural divine law that is engraved in the hearts of men. Thereby, the written law corresponds to the verbal tradition. The important question now is: did the tradition cease when the law was given? No, it did not. The proof is that many incidents are mentioned in the New Testament while they are not mentioned in the Old Testament. Hence, they were taken from tradition.

EXAMPLES:

The incident of the body of Moses in the epistle of St. Jude: “Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation but said the Lord rebuke you!” Jude 1:9

Jannes and Jambres who are mentioned in the second epistle of St. Paul to Timothy. They are not mentioned in the Old Testament yet known through the verbal tradition: “Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith.” 2 Tim. 3:8

THE TRADITION IN THE PREACHING OF THE LORD CHRIST:

Our Lord Jesus Christ chose His disciples. They followed Him and witnessed His words, teachings, miracles, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. They lived with Him approximately three years. The Lord Christ did not give His disciples a written gospel or written commandments. He instilled in their heart a deep love.

In Galilee, the Lord Christ was preaching the gospel saying: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.” Mk 1:15. What gospel was that? Was it not His verbal preaching and teaching? Therefore, St. John the evangelist says: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.” 1 Jn. 1:1.

Likewise, St. Luke begins his gospel: “In as much as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus..” Lk. 1:1-3. Then, St. Luke received, followed, and wrote the Gospel being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

After the Lord Jesus delivered the Christian new life to His disciples, He said to them: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” Mat. 28:19-20.

What about St. Paul the apostle who preached more than all the apostles? He received from the Lord Christ as he declares: “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ,

and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)” Gal. 1:1. Again he says: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the [same] night in which he was betrayed took bread” 1Cor. 11:23. St. Paul did not see the Lord Christ during His incarnation on earth, but he met with Him on his way to Damascus. The Lord called him: “Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me?” Ac. 9:4. Then St. Paul speaks about the tradition saying: “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” Phil 4:9.

Therefore, the apostles lived with the Lord Christ three years and went about preaching the crucifixion, resurrection, and the ascension. Despite the difficulty of believing such facts without having a written message from the Lord Christ, they continued in this way for almost thirty years. The first written gospel is the gospel of St. Mark. He wrote it in Alexandria in 63 A.D. Then the gospel of St. Matthew was written in India, followed by the gospel of St. Luke which was written in Europe. The last was the gospel of St. John which was written in Asia Minor.

Did the Lord Christ deny the tradition when He talked to the scribes and Pharisees saying: “But he answered and said unto them, why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” Mat. 15:3. He did not criticize the tradition in general, but He repudiated them for their own traditions that were man-made. These traditions were instituted by the scribes and Pharisees to serve their own purpose and to benefit them. For example, they gave permission concerning the commandment of “Honour your father and your mother” so that the disobedient son can deny his parents any honour. Neither does he have to care for them financially. This is done by saying to them “Korban” which indicates that what he was supposed to give them, he is going to offer it to the temple (obviously, this will profit the scribes and the Pharisees despite the fact that it is disobedience to the commandment of God to honour father and mother). Likewise, the washing and external purification which reveal hypocritical appearances rather than purification of heart by repentance which is found in Mt. 15:1-12.

THE TRADITION IN THE PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES:

The holy apostles received the Christian life, being the love of God and the enjoyment of the richness of His abundant grace, through the work of the Holy Trinity in their lives. They used the same principle in their preaching. They went out and were filled with the Holy Spirit: “Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” Rom. 10:18. They preached by their words and deeds. Thus, their light shone forth before people and dispersed the darkness of sin. Seeing them or hearing their speech used to leave an impression in the hearts. One sermon for St. Peter the apostle caused 3000 souls to believe.

The book of Acts says: “*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*” Act. 2:47. What was the aim of the apostles in preaching the gospel? Their only aim was to preach Christ and to introduce Him, living through them. They had no personal goal nor worldly glory or fame. They wanted to show people the image of Christ, His sweet savour, and His heavenly love that they may go to Him with fervour. They did not aim at writing anything at all. This was not out of insufficiency, but out of their knowledge of the fundamental way of preaching that is the handing over of a way of life from generation to generation, i.e. “the tradition”. Out of the twelve apostles, only Matthew and John wrote gospels. James the apostle wrote a short epistle, Jude the apostle also wrote a short epistle. Peter the apostle wrote two short epistles. As for Andrew, Bartholomew, Thomas, Philip, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Cananite and Thaddeus, they did not write. St. Mark is the only one of the seventy who wrote a gospel.

We notice that the apostles wrote for the following reasons:

To keep record of the main points and not everything, lest they may be forgotten with time. “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.” Jn. 21:25.

To refute some heresies, like St. John the evangelist who wrote his gospel around the year 98 to manifest the divinity of the Lord Christ. Hence, the apostles taught verbally, and then some of them recorded in writing. But what they wrote was not sufficient in itself without the verbal teaching. Why? Because the verbal teaching is the true life filled with feelings that cannot be expressed or communicated through pen and ink. “Having many things to write unto you, I would not [write] with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.” 2Jn. 12 and “I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace [be] to thee. [Our] friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.” 3 Jn. 13-14. Also, St. Paul the apostle addresses the Corinthians saying:” And the rest will I set in order when I come” 1 Cor. 11:34. He commanded the Philippians saying:” Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you”. Phi. 4:9. Furthermore, he commanded his disciple Timothy saying: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. 1:13.

HOW DID THE HOLY TRADITION REACH US WITHOUT ANY IMPURITY?

- A) The church, through its leaders and teachers, greatly guarded the divine oracles which once were delivered to the saints. The patriarchs, the metropolitans, the bishops, the priests, and the deacons rejected every foreign teaching or idea that turned aside from the apostolic spirit, which they received from generation to generation.
- B) The apostolic teachings and the sayings of the holy fathers of the church are greatly honoured. They record the teachings of the Lord Himself as He delivered them to His holy apostles. Also, the apostolic fathers of the first and the second century and the fathers of the third, fourth and fifth century.
- C) The historians of the early church: The writings of the historians of the early church are valuable as a treasure. These historians, like Eusebius, were diligent to record the details of the life of the early church.
- D) The canons of the ecumenical councils: These are the councils held in the first four centuries. The three ecumenical councils were held to refute some heresies and to investigate certain problems.

- E) The liturgies and the rituals of the church: The Coptic Orthodox Church practices its prayers according to a definite system of rituals established by and received from the fathers of the church generation after generation. These liturgies and rituals kept for the church are a great and valuable treasure of the ecclesiastical tradition. For example, the divine liturgy of the Eucharist, the seven sacraments, the harmony of the readings with the church seasons, and its feasts which provide the believers with a rich spiritual meal and deep message to all.

SOME OF THE RITUALS AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES:

- 1) Facing the east during prayer that we may remember that every man will give account of his deeds in the second coming of Christ, who will come from the east.
- 2) The sign of the cross, to receive a blessing from the holy cross and to cast out evil spirits which fear the sign of the cross.
- 3) The sanctification of Sunday. Sunday is the new Sabbath that is rest for God and for man through the resurrection of the Lord of glory Jesus; His victory over death.
- 4) The fasts are profitable spiritually and helpful in overcoming the slavery to materialism and passions of the world.
- 5) The feasts are occasions for spiritual joy and for tasting the sweetness of communion with God.
- 6) Details in the rituals of the sacraments of the church: for example, in the sacrament of baptism there is a liturgy of sanctifying the baptismal water. There are prayers to prepare the person for baptism, where the baptized renounce the devil facing the west, then confess his faith in the Holy Trinity facing the east. Then, it is followed by sacrament of confirmation; its ritual consists of anointing the baptized 36 times with the holy Myron (oil) signifying that the baptized has become a vessel for the Holy Spirit who dwells in him/her.
- 7) The ritual of the funeral prayer signifies the entreaty of the church on behalf of the departed that the Lord may accept them in his paradise. Also the prayer is a live and effective sermon to those who attend the funeral prayer.

THE SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF KEEPING THE HOLY TRADITION:

One of the most important benefits of keeping the holy traditions is delivering to the next generation the true faith lest the church be wiped out. Thus, the Sunday school teacher in the Coptic Orthodox church must reflect a living image of Christ Jesus through his manner of speech and his spirit. In the family, the children see in their parents a living image of the gospel. Therefore, they will have no difficulty in following the bible; they see it in the behaviour and thoughts of their family.

Thus, the church warns of the foreign teachings, ideas, and writings. Meanwhile, the church adheres totally to the life, writings, opinions, and the spirit of its saints, and the holy men and women throughout the generations. Then, what shall we say to someone who wishes to shorten the Divine Liturgy? His argument is based on the fact that it is too long, and that the western churches hold shorter liturgies. We answer that this is the Divine Liturgy we received from our ancestors; we cherish it and value it as a very precious jewel. Its effect is not a weak spiritual touch, but a rich, satisfying spiritual meal. It resembles a trip to heaven.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: TRADITION AND ORTHODOXY – WEB LINK
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THE CHURCH HISTORY

THE HISTORY OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA. A BRIEF SYNOPSIS.

A. THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IN EGYPT

The Only place that Our Lord Jesus Christ visited, outside the area of Palestine, was the land of Egypt. That was not a coincidence, because the flight of the Holy Family from King Herod could have been to any nearer place. It was not necessary to cross all this distance from the land of the Jews to the land of Egypt. His entry into Egypt had a very important reason, which was the establishing of the Christian Church in Egypt, so that it becomes a powerful centre for Christianity in the whole world.

More than 700 years before the coming of Christ, Isaiah the prophet said, “The burden against Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at his prescience, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.” Isaiah 19:1.

He goes on talking about the church in Egypt saying, “In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.” Isaiah 19:19.

He concluded by saying, “Blessed is Egypt my People.” Isaiah 19:25.

Therefore, when Our Lord Jesus Christ visited Egypt and spent his childhood in it, Egypt was privileged with a special blessing.

St. Mark as born to a Jewish family in the city of Cyrene in Libya. He immigrated with his family to Palestine shortly before the birth of Jesus Christ. The Lord chose him to be one of the 70 Apostles and his home was a resting place for the Lord and his disciples. Many important events took place in his house, like the washing of the disciples' feet, and the Last Supper. In the same house, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on Pentecost.

St. Mark came to Alexandria between the years 48 to A.D. 55. He established the Christian Coptic (the word Coptic means Egyptian) Orthodox Church (The word Orthodox means straight) based on the faith he received from Our Lord Jesus Christ.

During his journey, while St. Mark was walking in the streets of Alexandria preaching, his shoes were torn. He went to a shoemaker named Anianus to repair it. As he repaired it, the needle pierced his hand and he started bleeding. The man cried out “IS THOAS” meaning “The One God”. St. Mark healed him with the power of the Lord Jesus who used to support the preachers. Their relationship grew as he taught him all about the salvation through Christ and baptized him and his household. When St. Mark was crowned with martyrdom in the year A.D. 68. in Alexandria, Anianus was the Pope of all the churches of Egypt. The church has a solid foundation of the true faith passed from the Lord Jesus to the saints.

St. Mark established the first Catechistic school in the world. As the years went by, this school became an international centre of faith and written interpretations of the true Christian life. Some great theologians graduated from the school of Alexandria, like Clement, Origen, Cyril, Athanasius and others.

The route of Christianity in Egypt was very rough. The Copts suffered persecution in all ages. The church of Alexandria sacrificed a lot of martyrs in order to keep the faith. The persecution was at its worst at the time of Diocletian. The Copts considered the year 284 to be the new era and called it the year of martyrs.

What does this martyrdom mean through the ages?. It is a sign of strong faith. It is a sign of the connection of the heart with heaven. It is a sign of not fearing those who can kill the body. It is a sign of holding on to the faith. It is a sign of a longing to the heavenly crowns more than anything else. Those martyrs such as St. Mina , St. Demiana and many others watered the land of Egypt with their blood and kept the faith.

B. THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA

Although we will write a special book focusing on the main features of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, we would like to briefly mention the following points:

The foundation of the Coptic Orthodox Church is built upon the teachings of the Holy Bible, both New and Old Testaments. Moreover, it is built upon the traditions that were received from the Apostles and their disciples. These were passed down unchanged from generation to generation to the present time.

The Church believes that God is one without any partner. He has 3 hypostases, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. These 3 hypostases are in the One God.

The church believes that our Lord Jesus Christ as a person has one nature based on the unity of the divinity and humanity without mingling or mixing or changing and not separating for a single moment nor blink of an eye.

The Holy Spirit is emanating from the Father only as the Lord Christ said: “but the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all the things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you,” John 14:26.

The Holy Virgin Mary is the mother of God (Theotokos) the Logos. She was born of Anna and Joachim naturally. She is a great saint above all the heavenly hosts because she gave birth to the Eternal Logos. She is the Mother of the Saviour. After her death, her body was taken to heaven and the disciples witnessed this revolution.

The Church believes in the work of the Holy Spirit through the seven sacraments that the Lord Jesus had founded. The sacraments are way for the faithful to receive the exuberance of the Holy blessings: Baptism, Anointment with Holy Chrism, Holy Communion, Repentance and confession, Priesthood, Marriage, and Anointment of the sick.

The church believes that a person receives salvation through his faith and by his deeds. This means through his faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.

The system of worship in church is based upon the elevation of the heart towards heaven without missing the actual human and daily life. It is a contemporary apostolic church. It supplies the person with the Apostolic life without any misinterpretation. So he will find a life in it and the depth, tenderness and spirituality built on unceasing prayers and lots of fasting.

This Holy universal Apostolic Church lived throughout the ages and will continue to the end of time. Though it endured heresies and persecutions yet, “no weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgement you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me, says the Lord,” Isaiah 54:11-17.

Therefore, it is the true Mother Church, but many have deviated and were distanced from the true faith. Of those, St. John says, “they went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us,” I John 2:19.

Let us now concentrate on the historical side for all these deviations that occurred in the churches of the world when they were far from the Orthodox way and the faith of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria.

C. THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA IN HISTORY

1 THE FIRST CENTURY A.D.

It was one church and one faith. Four main centres were established for the church. In Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome and Alexandria. In this century St. Peter the Apostle was martyred and so was St. Paul, St. Mark and St. James and many of the disciples. The church suffered persecution in every place by the Roman Empire and the Jewish nation.

2 THE SECOND CENTURY A.D.

After the martyrdom of the Apostles in the first century, their disciples, who were called, the Apostolic Fathers preserved the same faith. During this century the school of Alexandria flourished and led the whole world.

3 THE THIRD CENTURY A.D.

The Romans enforced the persecutions in all the countries they occupied, especially Alexandria for it was the strongest in the Christian faith. As already mentioned the era of Diocletian and the Coptic reformation and the year of the martyrs 284.

4 THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

After Diocletian, who caused a lot of sufferings to the church, came King Constantine. He saw the sign of the cross in the sky and heard a voice saying “with this you will win.” He remained Christian and his mother was St. Helena. In 313 A.D. King Constantine declared the victory of Christianity over Heathenism and the end of the epoch of martyrdom. In addition, the heathen temples were converted into Christian churches. In 381 A.D. Christianity became the official religion in the roman government itself. What is this great diversion? The gates of Hell will not have power over the church.

As the era of martyrdom ended, monarchism started. All the monarchism system in the world started in Egypt. The programme of the Coptic Church became known internationally as the way of prayer, worship, devoutness and solitude for the sake of God.

In 325 A.D. the Ecumenical Council was held in the city of Nicaea in Asia Minor to deal with Arian heresy. Arian heresy stated that Christ was created not born and that God the Father was greater than God the Son. Emperor Constantine invited to this council 318 Bishops from all over the world. Pope Alexandros attended on behalf of the church of Alexandria. He was presiding over the council together with 20 bishops and the deacon Athanasius who was the hero of that council and he dumbfounded Arius and his followers.

The results of this council was the excommunication of Arius and his followers and the issuing of the first part of the Creed: “ We believe in one God, God the Father the Pantocrator, who created heaven and earth and all things, seen and unseen. We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ, and the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, True God of True God; begotten, not created; of One essence with the Father; by whom all things were made; Who , for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. And he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried; and on the third day he rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures; ascended unto the heaven; He sits at the right hand of His Father; and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit.”

After the death of Pope Alexandros, Pope Athanasius succeeded him as the 20th Pope. He kept the faith safe and if it was not for him it could have been effaced. For this reason the church named him “The Apostolic.”

In 381 A.D. the second Ecumenical Council was held in the city of Constantinople. The Emperor Theodosius the Great invited about 150 bishops from all over the world. This Council was held to deal with the Macedonian heresy by which the divinity of the Holy Spirit was denied. Pope Timothaous of Alexandria was presiding over this council. This council resulted in the excommunication of Macedonius and his followers and the publishing of the second part of the Creed. “Yes we believe in the Holy Spirit; the Lord, the Giver of Life; who comes forth from the Father, Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified.”

5 THE FIFTH CENTURY A.D

In 431 the third Ecumenical Council was held in Ephesus with the invitation of King Theodosius the Junior, 200 Bishops attended. St. Cyril the Great, who was called the Pillar of Religion, presided over this council. It was held because of the heresy of Nestorius, who divided Christ into two separate personalities, the Son of God and the Son of Man. He also said that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of the physical part of Christ so she should not be called the Mother of God. He was excommunicated by the Council and the introduction of the Creed was written: “We exalt you, the Mother of the True Light. We glorify you, O Saint and Mother of God.”

Note that the church of Alexandria had the leadership of the world in the three universal councils, in spite of Egypt's weak political position under the ruling of the Roman.

In 451 A.D. the Chalcedonic Assembly met. Before this meeting the church was one and the presidency of the church in the universal assemblies was the Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria. Pope Leo the first wanted to take the leadership of the Christian world from Pope Dioscorus of

Alexandria. To achieve that, he accused Pope Dioscorus of harshness in his letters and insulted him; the latter did not respond to the accusations or utter a negative word.

Apparently, the Chalcedonic Assembly was held to deal with Eutyches, who said that Christ had one nature which is the divine one and that it swallowed His humanity. But in fact, this assembly was held without the presence of Pope Dioscorus and its aim was to destroy the leadership of the church of Alexandria. The Council rejected the heresy of Eutyches. The council stated that Christ had two natures united; they called themselves the “Diophysites”.

However, the church of Alexandria, together with four other churches; Syria, Armenia, India and Ethiopia, kept the original faith which says that Christ has one nature (Meaphysite) of two unmingled, unmixed, unchanged and inseparable natures.

A dissention from the original church took place. The group of Rome and Constantinople, who adopted the idea of Christ’s nature being of two united natures, went out of the true faith. The Orthodox Church held its original belief that Christ, the Logos, has one nature consisting of two natures.

6 THE SEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

The Arabs invaded the land of Egypt in 640 A.D. and took it by force. The Coptic people continued their belief in our Lord Jesus Christ and on their tradition and true faith. What was the positive side of the Arabic ruling in Egypt?. It was the isolation of Egypt from the rest of the Christian world which made the people conserve their faith as it was received from the Apostles without any change; while the other Christians started to divide, and to be distant from the basic faith, as we will see further on.

7 FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY TO THE TENTH CENTURY A.D.

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria continued on with the true faith and the churches of Rome and Constantinople were together since they deviated from the true faith in the Chalcedonic Council in 451 A.D.

8 THE ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

The Church of Rome accepted the principle of the Holy Spirit coming forth from the Father and the Son and not only from the Father. It added this to the Creed in both the Nicea and Constantinople Councils. This led to another division in 1054 A.D. between the Church of Rome, known as the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Constantinople, known as the Greek Orthodox Church together with the rest of the Orthodox Churches of the Chalcedonic Council.

9 THE ELEVENTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

There were 3 groups: the group of the Coptic Orthodox church continuing on with the true faith, the group of the Greek Orthodox churches with the Russian and Yugoslavian church and the Roman Catholic Church and its followers.

10 THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D

In 1517 there was a division in the Church of Rome because of Martin Luther King. He started by rejecting Priesthood and many beliefs of the Roman Church, that the Pope of Rome was the Pope of the world; the deeds of forgiveness and many others. The Protestant sect was formed and it was too deviated from the original faith and this spread into many other sects each with its own beliefs.

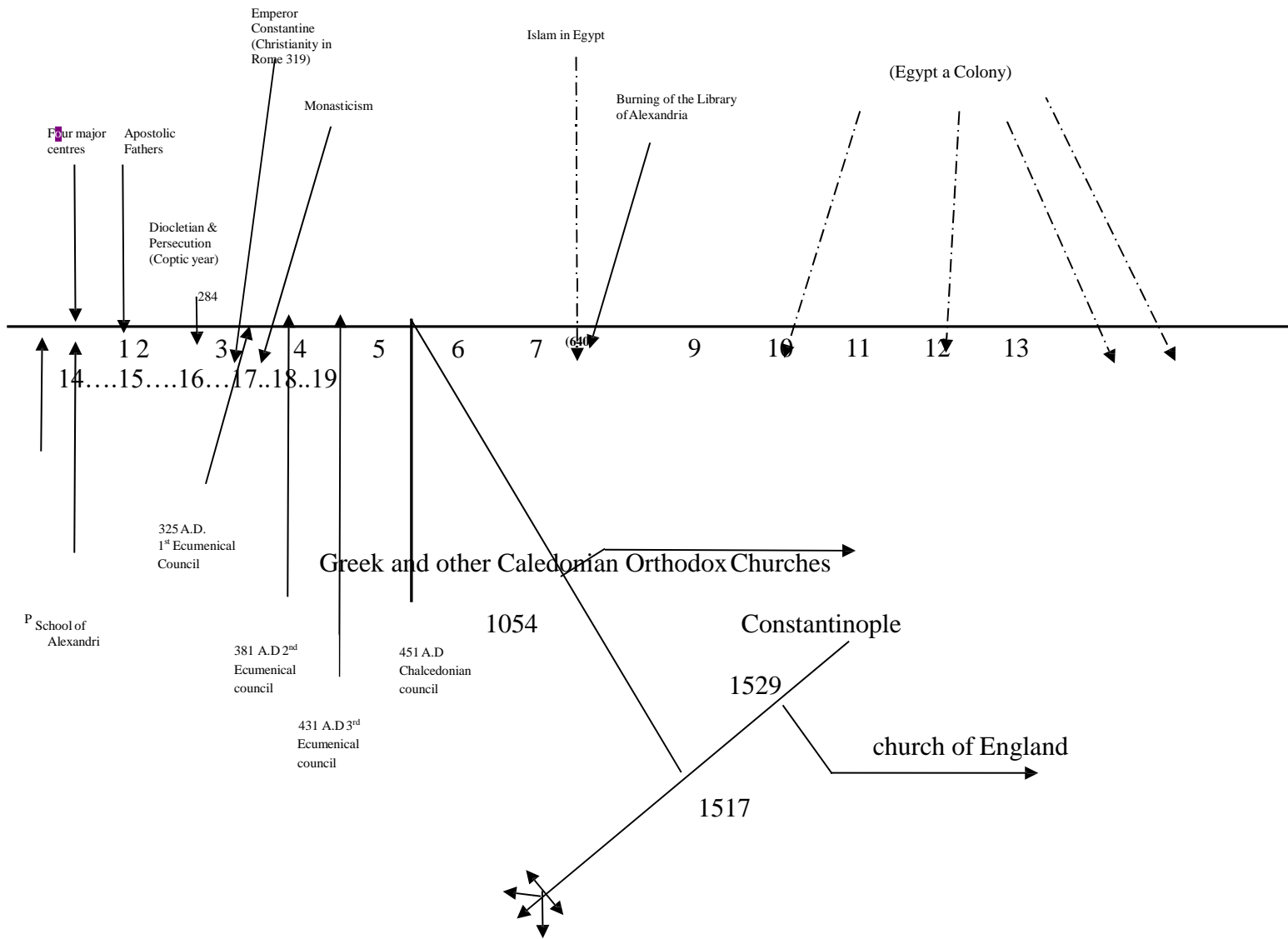
In 1529 the Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic Church and it was then known as the Anglican Church. The reason was because the latter asked to be the head of the world and also because discrepancy in the belief.

11 THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D. UP TONOW

There are around 2600 Christian groups but the churches could be divided as follows:

1. The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and with it four churches, Syria, Armenia, Ethiopia and India. These are called the Eastern Church group, the Non-Chalcedonian. Those of the one nature.
2. The Greek Orthodox Church with the churches of Russia and Yugoslavia, known as the Orthodox Chalcedonic Churches, those of the two natures.
3. The Roman Catholic Church with the Pope of Rome as a Head, followed by many Catholics in the world.
4. The Protestant group followed by hundreds of derivative groups.

OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH



THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

The resemblance between Adam's creation and the new creation:

- The old creation took place when God created Adam, He took mud and blew His breath in it and created Adam. How did all the living organs become created in the mud block?

The Lord's breath was not a regular one but a power that entered into the mud and created life in it. The human being was created according to the likeness of God in the freedom, the holiness and eternity “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good...” (Genesis 1:31).

After that, Adam and Eve were just two souls that the Holy breath has worked in and they have multiplied and filled the whole earth with humans. But, what kind of life did these human live?

The death of man by his sin meant that the spirit of life has left his heart! Then, what would be left in the heart after losing the spirit of life? Nothing will be left except for the heart which will be like a stone after it was a normal human heart. “Hearing the sound of the LORD God” (Genesis 3:8). This stiff heart cannot feel :

- ❖ The movement of God towards it and as a consequence cannot feel the presence of God.
- ❖ The ability of any love or closeness movement towards its brother. As a result, the command was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” since human without the spirit of life cannot do better than that.
- The new creation in the New Testament took place on the Pentecost day with a great resemblance to the creation of Adam in the Old Testament as follows:

The day of the Pentecost is the day of the new creation. We can consider the disciples as a block of mud and the Holy Spirit descended on them as tongues of fire. The voice and the fire-like nature got combined together at the time of the descending of the Holy Spirit to show us that the descending of the Holy Spirit on the disciples was not normal, but rather an internal reaction that resulted in all the internal movement that took place and they were newly created again.

In as much as we found a resemblance between the creation of Adam with God's breath and the recreation of man with the descending of the Holy Spirit, we similarly find a resemblance between the human reproduction and the spiritual reproduction. In St. John's Revelation “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes..... ” (Revelation 7:9-11)

Where would heaven get these people whom are clothed by the Holy Spirit's work? Didn't the Church consist of only 120 people at the time of the descending of the Holy Spirit?

That means that Adam and Eve were only two souls that Gods' breath has worked in and they reproduced and filled the whole earth with human beings. The Church as well consisted of

few people only. The breath of life was given to her (the Holy Spirit) and resided in her and so the Church produced spiritual generations that filled Heaven.

“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied” (Acts 9:31)

And the Lord God has seen the Church to be very beautiful and she looked white as snow to the extent that the Lord God admired her and said a lot about her in the book of Songs of Songs. The Church was shining in front of Him on top of appearing very beautiful so the Lord said about her “Who is she who looks forth as the morning, Fair as the moon, Clear as the sun, Awesome as an army with banners?” (Songs of Songs 6:10). And the command was on that level “Love your enemy”

- The Lord God has then created only once from mud, although He has the ability to recreate from mud at any time. However, He has put into Adam the power of rebirth.

Similarly, that is why the Holy Spirit has come upon the people as tongues of fire – one time – and created the Church in a new way and He had put into the Church the power of rebirth. The rebirth by the Spirit is a power that the Lord God has put into the Church.

We take upon us the grace of the Holy Spirit from the Church’s baptism and Holy oil and inflame His work in us by the Holy Sacraments and prayer.

To explain the similarity between the creation in the Old Testament and the creation in the New Testament with the Holy Spirit, we will cover the following points:

1. The Jewish feast of the weeks (50th Day).
2. The events of the day of the Pentecost.
3. The descending of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church.
4. The celebration of the Church with the Day of the Pentecost.
5. Conclusion

1. **The Jewish feast of the weeks (50th Day)**

The fest of the 50th day (also known as the Feast of the Weeks) was one of the three biggest feasts for the Jews (Leviticus 23) . The three feasts are:

- The feast of the Passover: In which the Jews sacrifice the lamb of the Passover to remember the crossing of the Israelites through the Red Sea from the land of slavery with the Power of God.
- The Feast of the Tabernacles: In which the Lord Christ has said to the people “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me” and “Whoever wants, let him take the living water freely”. The feast of the Tabernacles acts as a memorial of the water that came out from the rock in the mountain of Horeb which the Jews have drunk from for forty years.
- The feast of the Harvest (First fruits): or “the feast of the Weeks” and it is at the end of the seven weeks after the first day of the Passover and at the “50th” day after the first day of the Passover. This feast is known as the “Pentecost” which is a Greek word that means the “Fiftieth (50th)” and it was called the feast of the 50th. It is a commemoration of the Moses' commandments that the Lord had given to Moses on the day that fell on the 50th

day after the Passover which was a day full of lightning, thunder and earthquake. In the year of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Christ, this feast fell on the 50th day after the resurrection of the Lord Christ. On the same day, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples as tongues of fire and the Church call this day the feast of the Pentecostal.

This feast is originally considered to be a feast for the Jewish Pilgrims. The loyal Jew would always make sure to attend the celebration of this feast at Jerusalem wherever his homeland would be on the Earth. That is why we read in Acts about the Day of the Pentecost “And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). And so we see that many people from different nationalities would come together to Jerusalem on the day of the Pentecost which is the feast of the Weeks.

Let us meditate here on how the Lord arranges for the events to take place together:

The Lord Christ was crucified during the Passover feast, which is the day that all the Jews come together as pilgrims from all the nations as it is one of the feasts of the Jewish pilgrim. The Lord also has chosen the Pentecost day, which is also another Jewish feast where the Jews come as pilgrims to Israel, to be the day on which the Holy Spirit has descended on His disciples so that all the people can witness that day and be a reason for many to repent.

The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the day of the Pentecost during which many people from different nationalities were in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit gave to the disciples the gift of Speaking with tongues so that the people can understand them.

2. The events of the day of the Pentecost

The Lord Christ has promised His disciples after appearing for forty days to stay in Jerusalem till they receive the Holy Spirit. The chronicle events are as follows:

- a) “.... He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1;3)
- b) “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now”” (Acts 1:4-5)
- c) “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?”

This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olive, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of

Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” (Acts 1:9-14)

- d) “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitudes came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marvelled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?” (Acts 2:1-8)

Note that in the Old Testament, the Lord has come on Mount Sinai “Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.” (Exodus 19:16-18). On the day of the Pentecost, many unnatural phenomena took place to express about the Lord’s presence. A blowing wind sound came out from heaven and tongues of fire appeared and came upon the disciples who got filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit filled them all and the disciples got baptized in His running river, which resulted in the Holy Spirit giving them all the required gifts to preach. The first gift of the Holy Spirit was the “Speaking with tongues”. This is aside from the additional and many gifts of the Holy Spirit such as the gifts of the healing of the sick, the casting out of the devils, the gift of giving sermons, the gift of teaching, the gift of management and the gift of prophecy. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God. That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18)

After St. Peter’s sermon, the Holy Spirit cut through many of the people’s hearts and they accepted St. Peter’s words with happiness and believed. It was a great day and the disciple baptized 3,000 people in one day and the happiness was on the face of all the apostles and the new believers.

3. The descending of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church

A) The human being without God is very poor:

He is created on the image of God, and the human's soul always longs to and finds its peace in God. God is life itself, and going astray from Him is death as a natural result to sin. God did not leave man in the Old Testament in his fear and defeat, but God sent to the people the prophets and led them with the pillars of cloud and fire. When they used to leave God, He used to leave them so that they feel strange and fearful which threatened their peace. All of this describes the status of death and corruption that the people would feel when they are away from God. The people's scream in the Old Testament was to God so that He pulls them out from the corruption and renew their nature again. The Church in the Old Testament was continuously asking for "The Living God" which was fulfilled in the fullness of time.

B) In The Fullness of Time:

The Lord Christ renewed the human nature from its corrupted one through uniting the Divine triune "The LOGOS" with our human nature that He took from our mother St. Mary. His existence was as a result physically felt as He was called Emmanuel which means "God is with us". The Lord came in the fullness of time and said "I live among you and will not leave you forever", "you are My children and I give you from My Spirit to dwell in you and will not leave you forever", "you are the members of My body", "I am the head of the church and you are the church's body and the head does not get separated from the body forever", and He said "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20).

The Lord gave with His blood salvation and forgiveness of sin on top of causing the soul, the body and the spirit to become Holy. "With death He defeated death". All of these gifts, the Lord has given to us through the dwelling of His Holy Spirit in us that gave us the spirit of the new life. That is, the life in the presence of God as well as God living in us.

In that sense, the church is not from this Earth and not merely a religion of many ones, and not a cult as one of the cults that many of the philosophers call for. Instead, it raises people from living an earthly life so that they have a heavenly house. Therefore, they were given – in advanced – a down payment by the dwelling of Holy Spirit in them. The Church is a Godly and heavenly Church that the Spirit of the Lord dwells in.

C) Our Sonship to God:

The Church is the house of God where God gives His Spirit to His sons and daughters. On the day of the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwelled on the disciples only and that does not mean the twelve Apostles only, but rather the 120 persons who were selected at that time. The world did not feel the descending of Holy Spirit but the disciples did. The disciples heard wind blowing that filled the upper room that filled their hearts; meanwhile, the world felt nothing. The world heard the disciples' speaking in tongues, but never knew what was going on.

And how would the world feel the Holy Spirit and He is given only to His Children?

Just as the Lord Christ has elected those who have been promised to receive the Holy Spirit, so does the Church elect those who deserve to get the washing of the second birth.

The Church prays for the catechumen “those who are being prepared to get baptized” so that “at the right time they are deserved to get washed in the second birth through baptism...” Just as the Holy Spirit dwelled in the shape of fire, our lives in the Church starts with the baptism since it is the washing process and the new birth as the Lord said to Nicodemus “Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5). The fire then was an indication of baptism. Baptism burns all the old weaknesses with the Holy Spirit and recreates a new human that is prepared for the Lord to dwell in.

This Sonship is what prepares the human to receive the grace and effect of the Holy blood and then prepares him to receive the grace of salvation and entering to heavens.

The Holy baptism then becomes the gate to enter heaven.

You send forth Your Spirit and create:

- 1 The creation got close to death and corruption when the Lord God hid His face from it because of sin. This is what David the prophet said: “You hide Your face, they (The Creation) are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.’ (Psalm 104:29).
- 2 On the day of the Pentecostal, the creation took on a new Spirit and so the earth got renewed once again as David says: “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; May the LORD rejoice in His works.” (Psalm 104:30-31).

The day of the Pentecost is the day of the new creation and a day on which the earth got renewed again, and as a result, the Spirit of the Lord dwells in the Church with His Glory.

This new creation can be resembled with the chemical reactions when a high acting substances is added to a low acting one that results in a new substance coming from uniting both substances. When the chemical substances react together to form a new one, both heat and sound come out of that reaction.

When the Holy Spirit came on as tongues of fire, both the sound got untied with the fire nature at the time of the descending of the Holy Spirit to state to us that the descending of the Holy Spirit on the disciples was not a normal one but rather an internal reaction that His work was to create a new creation.

However, the uniting here is different as it is not between a high acting substance and a low action one. Instead it is a uniting between the source of life “The Holy Spirit” with our creation that got corrupted and was worth nothing and went back to its origin “a block of mud” on which the Holy Spirit came and all the internal movement took place resulting in a new creation.

4. **The Church’s celebration of the Day of the Pentecost**

The feast in the Church is not just to memorize an event or history as the work in the Church is alive and evident in the Church’s body. Therefore, when the Church celebrates the descending of the Holy Spirit, it leads its children to go deeper into the feast through the ongoing living unity with the Holy Spirit.

The preparation of the believers to celebrate the Pentecostal feast we cannot separate this feast from the other feasts and fasts. After living in the Church a journey of repentance and purity throughout the holy lent and entered into the depth of the cross during the Holy Passion week, we also enjoyed the resurrection of the Lord Christ and lived the resurrection in the forty days after that and sat with our Lord in heavens as a result of His glorified ascension. After all that, the Holy Spirit comes to complete for us the gift of the heavenly Father to save and purify us. In the period between the feast of the resurrection and the feast of the Pentecost, the Liturgies and their readings concentrate on the Holy Spirit resulting in the church leading everyone to a living unity with the Holy Spirit.

The Liturgy of the Pentecost and the Prayers of the Worship Service the readings of that feast revolve around the work of the Holy Spirit in us and our unity with Him. The Liturgy ends with the Communion by taking the Lord's body and blood Who is the source of all spiritual gifts in the Church. On Sunday night of the feast of Pentecost, the Church raises the prayers of the Worship service, which is meant as a memorial of the descending of the Holy Spirit through tongues of fire. This service consists of three worships. These worships carry the meaning of humility and repentance towards God and the renewal of the promises with Him so that the Holy Spirit can work in us. In it as well we remember our brethren who have left us but celebrate the feast with us in their heavenly house.

5. **Conclusion:**

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He is the triune of life and creation in the Holy Trinity.
- When God created Adam, He took mud and blew in it the Spirit of life through His breath. This breath was not normal but a Godly one. The breath has a Godly power that entered in the mud and created all the human living parts. This power also had the power of reproduction and the earth became filled with human from that starting point and the human reproduction started from this point in time. The whole creation came from Adam and Eve even though God had the power to create every single human being from mud once more but He didn't do that.
- Also on the 50th day following the resurrection of the Lord Christ from the dead, the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples as they were with "one spirit" in the upper room. The Church was born from that one spirit. The Lord has installed in the Church the power of the spiritual birth through the Holy Spirit. We take on the gift of the Holy Spirit from the Church through baptism and the Holy Myron Oil and nourish His work in us with the Holy Sacraments and prayer.
- The descending of the Holy Spirit on the disciples was not normal but it was an internal reaction and as a result of that all the internal movement moved in them and they were newly created. Through them (i.e. the new church) the Lord God worked to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to the others as well.
- In the first church, the disciples were the people who give the Holy Spirit through the placing of their hands as they did to the people of Samaria who accepted the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17) and the people of Ephesus (Acts 19:6). Also, through the placing of their hands, the Holy Spirit grace used to come in the Sacrament of the Priesthood (2 Thessalonians 1:6).

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

“Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:9)

INTRODUCTION:

The injured feelings I met a deeply saddened woman whose feelings were so badly hurt. When I asked her for the reason behind her sadness, she answered and said that it was because of the current events that the Egyptian Copts are going through endlessly. Starting from the wounded and the dead passing by those who are attacked, and those who are jobless, plus the attacks and burning of churches. How can she be comforted? One of the things that added to her sadness was her continuous follow up on the news and media that exaggerated and repeated the issues. I said to her give me some time to speak about the “persecution” subject because it has different angles, and if we equip ourselves with faith and with the knowledge of these angles of this subject then our feelings would calm down and these feelings would then be changed to holy feelings not bitter or fearful ones, but rather ones that hold steadfast that “we know that all things work together for good to those who love God” Romans 8:28. For us “For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord” Romans 14:7-8

We spoke about the different angles of the persecution and her soul calmed and she said to me: I pray for not only the persecuted in Egypt, but for all the persecuted in the whole world and those who persecute them. Let me mention some of the angles that we spoke of:

Persecutions existed from the beginning of creation. They are directed by Satan and his followers towards the people of God Pain benefit the person and contribute to his development. God does not allow us to be trialed beyond our limit. The person, who endures the persecutions with thankfulness, carries the cross and will be glorified with Christ.

The murdered are martyrs. The blood of martyrs screams out and God avenges them. What is our role in persecution that is directed towards us?

1. Persecutions exist since the beginning of creation. They are directed by Satan and his followers towards the people of God

The book of revelation tells us that at the moment that the devil fell from heaven, persecutions started immediately against the people of God. “Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.” Revelation 12:12-13

The devil descended from heaven to earth with great wrath and persecuted the sons of God. In Psalm 143: 3-4 He says “For the enemy has persecuted my soul; He has crushed my life to the ground; He has made me dwell in darkness, Like those who have long been dead. Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; My heart within me is distressed” ... at the end of this psalm He says “In Your mercy cut off my enemies, And destroy all those who afflict my soul; For I *am* Your servant.”

The people of Israel were in Egypt for a very long time, from the reign of Joseph up to the time of Moses—more than 350 years, the people of Israel were under slavery and death. Yet, we find that God says I have seen the oppression of My people in Egypt. This is what happens today.

God sees the oppression of His people in Egypt and as He descended and saved His people at the time of Moses, He will save His people now as well.

Therefore, the people of God are persecuted by the devil and his helpers “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” John 15:20. Therefore, the persecution was against the Lord Christ Himself and all the apostles and these persecutions extend to **all** the sons of God. “who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men” (1 Thessalonians 2:15), and “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?” Acts 7:52. Noting that the person who persecutes the sons of God, persecutes God Himself “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Acts 9:4... He said to him “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.” Acts 22:8

What are the signs that the sons of God have? They are persecuted from the devil and his helpers. This persecution is towards God Himself. Ever since the first church as it is mentioned in Acts 8:1 “At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles”

2. **Pain benefits the person and develops him**

Taking responsibility and enduring pain makes the person stronger and makes him gain the patience virtue to face obstacles with open mind to overcome the obstacles so that he will not collapse. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2-4

A person might think that entertainment and enjoyment is beneficial for him. However, the opposite is true. Enduring pain and problems benefit the human being. It was said about St. John the Baptist who lived in the wilderness “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.

This is *he* of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Luke 7:24-28

Every day we see youth that are irresponsible and raised in a spoiled environment where one would believe that such person would not be able to face life, but rather fall under any pressure nor he can take responsibilities. On the other hand, the child or youth who is raised in a somewhat rough environment will be able to take responsibilities from his young years and will be able to face life when he grows up.

Therefore, do not pain or suffering because it benefits the person and does not hurt him if it is permitted by God rather than as a result of sin.

3. God does not allow us to be trialed beyond our limit

God would limit your trials to not exceed your faith and will not test you beyond your strength or capability, giving you a reason for improvement rather than disaster. “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16: 33. Also “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4.

He did not allow the furnace of fire that is seven times hotter than normal to hurt Daniel’s three friends. God also did not allow the lions to touch Daniel in the lion’s den. God did not allow all the persecutions from the Jews, Romans or other hurt the expansion and prosperity of the Church. “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Acts 9:31

Joseph the righteous was persecuted from his brothers because of the colourful shirt that his dad Jacob had given him. Joseph endured a lot and was put in jail because of his honesty and his persistence to not touch the wife of Potiphar. God did not allow pain to destroy Joseph, but instead he was blessed throughout his journey including his time in jail. Finally, God moved Joseph from jail to the palace and he became the second man in Egypt after the Pharaoh Joseph was the primary reason for Egypt escaping the great famine.

4. The person who endures persecutions with thankfulness carries the cross and will be glorified with Christ

Throughout the ages, Christians endured persecutions with thankfulness. They carried the cross with Christ and tasted with Him how tasteful is resurrection.

Persecutions are symbols for the Christians that are full of love and giving. When St. Peter asked Jesus Christ saying “See, we have left all and **followed You.**” Mark 10:28. Jesus then answered him saying “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.” Mark 10:29-30.

Therefore, the persecution that a Christian person endures is the same road to Christ. It is the cross road, the resurrection road, the glory road, the victory road and the road to eternal life. St. Pauls life follows the same path as Christ: persecuted from the devil and all his helpers. In St. Paul to his disciple Timothy he says “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:10-12

It is a great irony. The church is persecuted yet in peace and is enduring it. The church is persecuted, yet very strong. The church is crucified, yet withstanding. St. Paul explains this irony and says “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. *We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

It is such a great irony that the Christian person passes through during persecutions. Then, St. Paul explains how this irony takes place and says that it takes place through Godly work during which Jesus Christ endures the pain instead of the persecuted person and gives him a happy heavenly life instead of pain while the person is still on earth. St. Paul says “always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh” 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Romans 8:35

When he wanted to explain to the Thessalonians that they are in tough situation due to their endurance to the persecutions that they are under “so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;” 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5

5. **The murdered are martyrs. The blood of martyrs screams out and God avenges for them**

The murdered in any of the attacks that take place on churches, whether in Egypt or any other place, are martyrs who were killed because they are Christians.

The martyrs’ blood is so precious to God. We may forget about them but God never forgets. In Psalm 94 He says “O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!”. One of God’s names is the Vengeance God which means that He is just in spite of His love, tenderness, meekness, and humility. Then, the psalm says “Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud. LORD, how long will the wicked. How long will the wicked triumph? They utter speech, *and* speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.

They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, And afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, “The LORD does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob understand.” Psalm 94:2-7

Sometimes we look and see that God is standing still against those who kill and destroy. We think to ourselves that He will not do anything to them. If we speak out and say God exists. They answer and say where is He? At the end of this Psalm, it says “They gather together against the life of the righteous, And condemn innocent blood. But the LORD has been my defense, And my God is the rock of my refuge.

He has brought on them their own iniquity, And shall cut them off in their own wickedness; The LORD our God shall cut them off.” Psalm 94:21-23. He also says in another place in the Bible “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,* says the Lord” Hebrews 10:30. We have the right to scream to Him says come God of Vengeance. Why do You stand still? Where is Your power and domination? You have forbidden us from paying back the evil with the same no matter how much they attack us and You are responsible for your children. We are awaiting Your promise to be filled.

1. The blood cries

- a) In beginning of History, Abel's blood was the first to be shed. In Genesis chapter 4, He says the cries of this blood "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." Genesis 4:10. Here we find that the blood has a crying voice. What do we feel? This makes us feel safe given the fact that the bloods of the martyrs cry towards God. What would God do? He will avenge to the blood of the martyrs.
- b) Another example about the cries of the blood is the story about Naboth the Jezreelite when Ahab greedily desired the land of this poor person, Jezebel was able to create a deception and accused Naboth of infidelity and blasphemy against God so that she permitted his killing unfairly.

This incident did not pass easily in front of God as He sent Elijah and said to Ahab "Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?" And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.'" 1 Kings 21:19. We notice that no one tried to defend Naboth in front of Ahab and Jezebel. Yet the Lord does not need someone to move Him to avenge the blood of those who died.

- c) Another example about God's vengeance. In Acts chapter 12 when Herod stretched his hand on the church and killed James the brother of John. Herod found that this pleases the Jews which is very similar to many situations in today's life where things are done to please some of the groups or to calm down some other ones. God is not satisfied with injustice. Further to James killing, Herod seized Peter as well. Although God allowed for James martyrdom, God did not allow for Peter's death at that point except for a specific wisdom that God has. Towards the end of the same chapter, Herod puts on his royal apparel and sits on his throne. At that point the people shouts at Herod saying "The voice of a god and not of a man Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died." Act 12:21-23. Therefore, God, to whom glory is, hears and sees as well as knows. He serves justice and He will act in perfect time. When the Lord Christ spoke to the Jews about their unjust he said "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth" Matthew 23:35. Meaning that the blood of a righteous person who was put under unjust will not pass by God easily, but rather is accounted for very precisely. Then He continues and says "from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar." Matthew 23:35

Therefore, no one should feel insignificant and we should not be upset from God and say to Him why You are silent?! Yet at the same time we love those attackers and pray for them. We do not wish any harm to them nor do we feel happy if we see them being harshly punished from God! It is such a strange matter

In the book of Melachi, when the persecutions increased against His people, they screamed to God. The Bible says that a remembrance book was written before God. This means that God does not forget anything. He also wants to reassure us

that everything is written before Him so that no one thinks to himself that God forgets as everything is still before God. St. Peter says that God is not slow to fulfill His promise, but He takes time to respond to us. Why? Maybe because we did not repent as we should. Maybe because we did not pray as we should. He also takes His time when it comes to the evil people as maybe one of them will repent as we ask for repentance and forgiveness to them. God does not wish for the sinner to die.

And about the cries of the blood, the book of revelation says “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.” Revelation 6:9-11

2. God’s vengeance and punishment to those who persecute His children

God hears the blood cries of the martyrs. He also hears those who are in pain because of the persecutions of their brothers to them. He is patient as maybe the sinner will repent. However, after that He punishes the evil people who follow the devil. He punishes them severely on earth and after that. Let us mention some examples:

- a) After the tenth plague, the Pharaoh allowed God’s persecuted people in Egypt to leave. They traveled and crossed the red sea and it was divided with a Godly power and so the people of Israel were saved. At that point, the Pharaoh wanted to catch up with the people of Israel to kill them or bring them back to slavery in Egypt. The Lord said enough and the red sea went back to its place closing on Pharaoh and all his army and all of them died in a dreadful manner.
- b) During the time of Hezekiah the king (Isaiah 36-37) that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. He also insulted the Lord and threatened to burn all the cities killing everyone. When King Hezekiah heard *it*, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. He took the letters of threat and placed them before God and prayed a lot. So the Lord said about the kin of Assyria that He shall not come into this city, Nor shoot an arrow there, Nor come before it with shield, Nor build a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, By the same shall he return; And he shall not come into this city. The Lord also sent an angel and killed 185 thousand soldiers from the Assyrian army and Sennacherib returned back and was killed himself.
- c) In Acts 12 – about Herod the king who killed James and seized Peter and had the intention to kill Peter. God sent an angel who struck Herod and was eaten by worms and died awfully.
- d) During the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:1-24) the kind of Judah, a great multitude from the people of Moab and the people of Ammon came to the boarders prepared for a great attack. So Jehoshaphat sat himself to seek the Lord

and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah “nor do we know what to do, but our eyes *are* upon You.” 2 Chronicles 20:12. Then he said tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD *is* with you. Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established. Then he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness. So the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy *them*. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another. So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there *were* their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. (2 Chronicles 20:22-24). Therefore, the enemies killed themselves because the Lord saw the praise of His children and their dependence on Him.

- e) Also, in our current life and history, we say without any delight, criticism, or hate to any person, that what happened after the major unjust that took place against Christians and churches in the recent years, God has prepared for those leaders to be brought down and jailed as well as lose everything. And of course, hades and eternal suffering awaits them “And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Revelation 20:10

6. What is our role in the persecution that is directed towards us?

- a. Pray with tears and depth and ask God to intervene and protect His children and all those who pray for Him asking for kindness:
- b. Repent is when the person realizes all his sins that allowed for all the persecutions to take place. Just as the time of Nehemiah when he prayed so that God lift up the persecution from the people of Israel and said “please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father’s house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.” Nehemiah 1:6-7
- c. To help the poor and needy from our persecuted brothers so that they are not in distress from all directions. The least thing we can do is to send them an ongoing monetary assistance.
- d. Encourage our brothers and sisters who are passing through persecutions and remind them that God does not forget their tears and every single drop of blood they lose is very precious to Him.
- e. St. Paul has appealed his case to Caesar. Also, during Queen Esther’s time, the persecuted Jews from Haman raised their appeal to the king through the help of Esther and the matter ended up by Haman’s death.

Therefore, there should not be a problem to defend righteousness and fairness and act on it, (just as lifting the stone from Lazarus' tomb) then the Lord intervene and performs the major part after which peace and quietness come over the church (as raising Lazarus after 4 days). Hence, the human effort is important and must be done with all methods.

CONCLUSIONS:

- + We should not look at any matter from one angle or perspective. The subject of the persecutions of the children of God has many angles and must be considered so that the person does not lose his faith.
- + The devil and his helpers are behind the persecutions of the children of God.
- + The persecutions of God's children exist in all ages and can be traced back to the beginning of time.
- + God does not allow the evil people's hand rest on the righteous ones but rather God protects His children and does not allow them to be trialed more what they can endure.
- + The persecutions against the children of God and the church result in the church's growth, development and strengths its faith "But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew" Exodus 1:12
- + Enduring the suffering and not enjoying life is what benefits the person and makes him and strong, patient and faithful person.
- + The persecution that the person passes through is the cross road and with it comes the glory and resurrection.
- + The church has an amazing irony. Persecuted, but in peace! Persecuted but is peaceful and very strong! Persecuted but does not lose hope, nor it is left out or ignored. This is done through a Godly and heavenly interference. The Lord Jesus Christ takes from the persecuted person his pain and gives him inner heavenly joy.

That is why we find the martyrs happy during harms that are targeted towards them. Why? Because an exchange takes place: Christ takes the suffering instead of them and gives them inner happiness and strength in a miraculous way. That is why we find in the martyrs stories unbearable sufferings that a normal human cannot endure. Do you ever think what does crushing with a pressure machine that is sharp from all sides mean?
- + The murdered people are martyrs due to the fact that they faced death because of their Christian faith.
- + The martyrs' blood is very precious before God and it cries before God.

- + Although God is Loving, he is also Just and avenges from the killers of the martyrs here on earth and eternally.
- + When God wants to punish the evil people who persecute the church, He has many ways. Either through natural power (such as the red sea closing over the Pharaoh) or by sending an angel that fatal (as in Sennacherib army) or through wars (as in Herod the king) or let the evil people kill each other (As in Jehoshaphat the king).

FROM THE CHURCH'S PRAYERS

- a) “All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men, and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, take them away from us, and from all Your people, and from this holy place that is Yours.”
- b) “The worship of idols, utterly uproot from the world. Satan and all his evil powers, trample and humiliate under our feet speedily. All offenses and their instigators, abolish. May all dissension of corrupt heresies cease. The enemies of Your holy Church, O Lord, as at all times, now also humiliate. Strip their vanity, show them their weakness speedily. Bring to naught their envy, their intrigues, their madness, their wickedness, and their slander which they commit against us; O Lord, bring them all to no avail, disperse their counsel, O God, Who dispersed the counsel of Ahithopel.”
- c) “That which exists from one end of the world to the other. All peoples and all flocks, bless. The heavenly peace, send down into all our hearts. Even the peace of this life, graciously grant to us. The leader (king), the armies, the chiefs, the counselors, the multitudes, our neighbors, our coming in and our going out, adorn them with all peace. O King of Peace grant us Your peace”
- d) “The leader (king) of our land, Your servant... Keep him in peace, truth, and strength. Subject under him all the barbarians, the nations that desire war against all our fertile lands. Speak to his heart concerning the peace of Your one, only, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Grant to him that he may think peaceably towards us and towards Your holy name. That we too may lead a quiet and peaceful life, and may be found in all godliness and all chastity in You. “we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of mankind, Remember, O Lord, the peace of Your One, only, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE FIRST CENTURY

WHY DO WE STUDY THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH?

When we study the history of the church, we are actually studying the Kingdom of God on earth; the establishing of this kingdom, its widespread, and the salvation of mankind.

1. The history of the Church is a continuous explanation to the parable of the mustard seed or the yeast, which affected a whole lot of bread, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”* (Matthew 13:31-33.)
2. The history of the Church shows the strength of God against all the forces of the devil and that the kingdom of light is much stronger than the kingdom of darkness.
3. The history of the Church is the best explanation for Christianity itself because it shows the continuous religious progression of the human race and God’s plan of salvation.
4. The history of the Church is a source of encouragement and comfort to every Christian. *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”.* (Hebrews 12:1.)
5. Our church is historical. We have roots that go back many generations. We have to be connected with our roots to stay strong.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING CHURCH HISTORY IN THE FIRST CENTURY:

The Apostolic era is the main source for the Christian Church. It is the era in which the Holy Spirit governed all the actions of the Apostles, and all the Apostolic explanations affected all the eras that followed.

The Apostolic era shows us a faithful picture to the effectiveness of Christianity and its purity.

It offers us a strong proof that Christianity, as a religion, is God’s work, which is above human beings’ work.

It shows the actions of various leading personalities as good examples for us: Peter, Paul, Mark, John, etc.

Historical sources for information about the church in the first century:

- A) The books of the New Testament, and in particular the Book of Acts.
- B) The teaching books and the laws of the Apostles. For example: “The book of teaching of the 12 Apostles” called Didacha and the book of Didascalia.

- C) The writings of the Apostolic Fathers (who were the disciples of the Apostles), for example Klimantous the Roman, Agnatius and Porlikarbos.
- D) Jewish sources, for example the writing of Philo and Josephus.
- E) The writings of the Fathers in the second century (i.e. The second generation of the Apostles), for example Youstinous, Erianous and Hegesippus.

THE LORD CHRIST ESTABLISHED HIS CHURCH:

The most important part of the establishment of the Christian church is that God Himself establishes it. The roots of Christianity goes back to the Old Testament through the prophets, the promises of God and all the world has been waiting for Christ the Son of God to come and save the world from the snare of the devil.

Then came the Lord Jesus in the fullness of time. He came and He was born from St. Mary the Virgin without a man-woman relationship. As a unique Personality with His Divinity and Humanity, the two natures in One. He changed everything and we have the New Testament.

He did not write a bible, His life and His actions were enough to deliver faith to His Disciples to preach Christianity all over the world.

He taught them, showed them so many miracles, gave them power to do miracles themselves, showed them the true love, manifested Himself on the Transfiguration mountain, gave them peace in the midst of troubles, opened their minds to understand the scriptures to tie the Old and the New Testaments together, showed them a new measure in the greatness for humanity that is different from all the measures before. He was born in a manger from a very poor girl and ultimately died on the cross for them and the whole world to save the whole world and to pay the price of the sin of the whole world and He resurrected in the third day and showed Himself for 40 days to them until he ascended into Heavens. Not only this but He established the church by sending the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father through the Cross and Sacrifice of the Son. On the Pentecost the Disciples accepted the Power of the Holy Spirit and started the Apostolic Era of the Church. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and thus the church was born.

THE WORLD IN WHICH CHRISTIANITY WAS BORN

1. THE JEWS

1) Their political status

Since the Romans defeated Jerusalem in 63 B.C., the Jews became politically under the powers of the Romans; the Romans appointed a Jewish governor under a Roman representative.

2) Their economic and social status:

It was very bad. The majority of the Jews were poor.

3) Their religious status:

They abided by the law of Moses, without the spirit of it.

4) The Jewish Synagogues:

The Synagogue was the social and religious centre of the Jews. Every city has its own Synagogue. The location was usually close to a river or seashore to facilitate the rites of washing. Jerusalem had about 400 Synagogues for the various sectors of the Jews.

The Synagogue was usually built at the highest point in the city. Every Synagogue had its own president, *“As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid; only believe.”* (Mark 5:36) and a number of elders, readers and translators. There were also various other people who did manual work, collected money and distributed money to the poor.

The worship in the Synagogue was very lengthy: It included songs of Psalms, readings of the books of the Old Testament and explanations. However, the bloody sacrifices and offerings were only to be done in Jerusalem. However, these sacrifices stopped after the destruction of the Altar and after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus who is the true sacrifice.

5) The Jewish sects:

The birth of the Church was accompanied by the presence of various Jewish sects. Three major sects were: The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.

(a) The Pharisees:

The Pharisees i.e. the chosen or selected sector: a very strict Jewish sect, holding the Mosaic Law and their own traditions as binding. See the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. *“Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14).

The Scribes are also mentioned in association with the Pharisees. *“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.’”*

(Matthew 23:2) *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.”* (Luke 11:44.)

The Scribes are not a separate religious sect but they were a sub group of the Pharisees who taught the scriptures. The Scribes as a group started since the days of Ezra, *“And the families of the scribes who dwelt at Jabez were the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Suchathites. These were the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.”* (1 Chronicles 2:55). The Scribes had a great position among the people.

(b) The Sadducees:

They were the aristocratic party of the Jews at the time of Christ. They had authority on the Altar, the taxes that were collected for the Altar and they had a share in the 1/10th offering. As such, they were very rich and concentrated on money and materialistic things and they were enemies of the Pharisees.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection after death, *“Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’ And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, ‘God will strike, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?’ And those who stood by said, ‘Do you revile God’s high priest?’ Then Paul said, ‘I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’ But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose and protested, saying, ‘We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.’”* (Acts 23:1-9) and did not believe in the presence of Angels or Spirits. *“For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”*(Acts 23:8).

(c) The Essenes:

The Essenes were not mentioned in the Book of the New Testament but new studies revealed their effect on the religious life at the time of Christ. It was mentioned that some of Jesus’ disciples were from them.

They were strict about the Jewish laws but not in a word by word manner as the Pharisees. In fact they were against the cosmetic behaviour in religion and they wanted to feel the spirit of the scriptures. They gave themselves the name of “the group of God” or “the group of permanent covenant.”

6) Jewish Council: Sanhedrin (or Sanhedrin)

It is the highest Jewish Council. Our Lord Jesus was judged in front of this Council and also His disciples. It was an aristocratic Council composed of 70 or 72 members from 3 groups: Priests (i.e. leaders of the 24 teams offering the service), Elders (i.e. heads of tribes); and Scribes (i.e. heads of the Pharisees). This Council used to meet in the Altar.

Lessons Benefited:

- (1) The Jews let the opportunity pass by, and the majority of them did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because their worshiping did not come from the heart. Let us not pay attention to the outside appearance, and worship from the heart.
- (2) The Jews at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ were very rigid. They wanted a Messiah who would free them from the Romans and make them rich. When they saw the Lord Jesus performing miracles but not doing what they wanted, they lost sight of the situation and the majority of them did not believe in Him. We must be flexible in our life.
- (3) We are winners when we are flexible.

2. THE GENTILES

This is the part of the world that worshipped the idols and they did not realize the meaning of God, sin, or holiness.

1) The Philosophy of the Gentiles:

The most important schools of philosophy in the first years of Christianity were the Epicurean and Stoic. *“Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this blabber want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.”* (Acts 17:18).

The Epicurean philosophers: attacked all religions and they considered any faith in any religion to be a sin. They believe that no gods ruled the universe. They claimed that their God is somewhere, living in isolation of people and does not care about their life. The majority of the Romans believed in the Epicure’s philosophy.

The Stoic philosophers: believed in One God, One Spirit from which all things came and that every person is a ray from the nature of God. Man has to maintain this ray and keep it light and in good condition. It is considered that the best gift to man from God is the mind.

2) The Characters of the Gentiles:

The best description to that corruption is in Romans 1:18-32, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what*

is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Jewish countries were under the Roman authorities, which were strong and well organized. We read in the Gospel and in the Book of Acts about the Roman authority.

- 1) **Its extension:** It has parts in Europe, Asia and Africa.
- 2) **Its governments:** It was composed of provinces, each of which had a governor appointed by the capital Rome, and they were under the Roman law and taxation system. Egypt was also under the Romans, as it was a Roman province.

It was a rule at this time that the defeated countries became under the ownership of the victorious country but the original defeated people can still live in it by paying money regularly in return. As such, the Romans used to review regularly the number of people under their authority. *“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.”* (Luke 2:1).

The Rights of Roman Citizenship:

This is a special status. “Roman citizens” rights were given to a few people. It was obtainable either by buying it or serving in the army for a long time. The privileges gained were:-

Protection under the laws, no jail without trials and the right to be judged in Rome. *“Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.”* (Acts 22:29), *“But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.’”* (Acts 16:37) *“For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.”* (Acts 25:11)

Lessons Benefited:

- (1) The three elements that Christianity had to face in the first century: The Jews, the Gentiles and the Roman authority. This will help us in our study of the Bible to understand what was involved in the various events.

- (2) Christianity had to face very powerful and well-established opposing forces. But the power of God is more and Christianity overcame all these forces and spread very quickly.
- (3) Christianity was not occupied by trying to fight and oppose all these forces (Jews, Gentiles and authorities). Rather, Christ was to build the faith of the people and the Kingdom of God. Therefore, instead of cursing the darkness, like a candle.
- (4) There are many negative things in the today's society. The Christian way is not to curse them but to focus on the correct and positive things and spread them.

THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE JEWS

“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord...” Acts 5:14 Christianity was spreading through miracles, love and martyrdom.

Four major church centres were formed in the Apostolic Era:

(A) The Church in Jerusalem

The Church was born in Jerusalem in the Pentecost. After Pentecost, the people who believed in Christ in the day of the Pentecost went back to their homeland.

But the spirit of God acted on the Apostles and the number of believers increased from 3,000 to 5,000. *“However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”* (Acts 4:4) The factors of the continuous growth were: performing miracles, and the true Christian life that was full of love and righteousness. *“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”* (Acts 5:14), (Acts 6 & 7) *“Praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”* (Acts 2:47).

As a result of this success, the new Christians went into a tremendous confrontation with the Jews.

1. The persecution of the Christians by the Jews:

The gospels show very clearly the Jewish behaviour against Christ, the Apostles and the new Christians. From the beginning, when they found people following Jesus, they cried saying crucify Him, crucify Him. *“But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabas and destroy Jesus.”* (Matthew 27:20).

Also they hated Stephen and stoned him. *“Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.’”* (Acts 6:9-14)

Moreover, against St. Paul, we can see that in several locations in the Book of Acts. *“Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.”* (Acts 9:23-25), *“But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.”* (Acts 13:50), *“But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harboured them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king – Jesus.’ And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.”* (Acts 17:6-8) *“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.”* (Acts 14:1-6) *“And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet!’ And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’ And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”* (Acts 14:8-19). St. Paul suffered from them a lot as he said in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16, *“who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they do not please God and are contrary to all men. Forbidding us to speak to the gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.”*

St. James was the first martyr among the Apostles. *“Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.”* (Acts 12:1-2) Then St. Peter was jailed after that. We can see in Acts 12 the Spirit of the newly born Church and its spiritual values.

2. **The Fruits of the Persecution:**

All the energies of the Apostles were concentrated in Jerusalem until the persecution reached its peak and the people who were persecuted got dispersed in various cities preaching the word of God at various other locations; *“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”* (Acts 8:4), *“This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”* (Acts 26:10-11)

3. **Preaching in Samaria:**

Samaria was not totally worshipping idols. Please read the origin of the Samaritan in 2 Kings 17:24-34.

Although, preaching Christianity in the cities of Samaria was a step in the right direction, it aggravated the enmity between the Apostles and the Jews who hated the Samaritans for a long time.

The first one to preach in the Samaritan cities was Philip, one of the 7 deacons, and the Lord supported his mission through many miracles. *“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”*(Acts 8:5-8). Then Peter and John also preached in Samaria. *“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 8:15-17) *“So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, grace preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans”* (Acts 8:25).

Christ is preached to an Ethiopian. Please see (Acts 8:26-40).

Christ is preached to the cities by the sea:

Philip went to the cities of Palestinian by the seashore and preached, after he baptized the Ethiopians... *“Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”* (Acts 8:39-40).

Preaching in Galilee:

The indications were that Galilee was preached early. *“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”* (Acts 9:31).

Saul converted in the year A.D. 37. Please read (Acts 9:1-6).

Lessons Benefited:

The light of Christ disperses the darkness of the devil. So Christianity spread all over the world

despite the strong hold of the opposing forces. Similarly, in order to overcome the darkness of sin, let the light of Christ shine in your heart despite the darkness of sin.

THE CHURCH OUTSIDE JERUSALEM

As we have mentioned, Churches were established first in Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, Samaria and some cities on the Mediterranean Sea. The new Churches were confined only to these areas for about 12 years.

Then Christianity started to spread to the rest of the world outside Jerusalem and three major Christian centres have been formed outside Jerusalem: one in Antioch, one in Rome and one in Alexandria, Egypt.

1. The Church in Antioch:

Antioch was a great city in its buildings and geography. It is the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. Antioch was preached in, by the same group who was scattered because of the persecutions which resulted from the killing of Stephen, ***“Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.”***(Acts 11:19-21). Large numbers of Greek people, who were worshipping idols, became Christians. So, Antioch was the first centre for the Gentiles who became Christians.

In the beginning of the formation of the Christian group in Antioch, the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas had a very successful mission, ***“Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.”*** (Acts 11:22).

Then Saul (St. Paul) joined him in Antioch and they served there together for a year, ***“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”*** (Acts 11:26).

The Church in Antioch, in this early stage, had a lot of talents and plenty of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, ***“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”*** (Acts 13:1-3).

Also, Christians in Antioch were totally detached from the Jewish influences and Christianity found its name for the first time in Antioch, ***“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”*** (Acts 11:26).

2. **The church in Rome:**

The Christians were in Rome in good numbers at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Nero, *“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”* (Romans 1:8). Please read (Romans 16:5-15.)

The Christians were exposed to two major persecutions from the Roman government: one under Nero and one under Domitian.

• **The Church of Alexandria:**

Alexandria was the centre of culture and education, philosophy and science. Its population was composed of a mixture of Egyptians, Greek, Romans, Jews, Persian and Syrian. Some Egyptians were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and of course some of them believed and ministered in Egypt. However, the see of Alexandria belonged to its founder, St Mark who was one of the seventy Disciples and founded the Church around A.D. 57-59. The Christian life in Alexandria was characterized by holiness, purity and asceticism.

1. **THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND ITS ALTAR IN THE YEAR A.D. 70**

There was a lot of money in Jerusalem. The main source of this money was the Alter of Jerusalem. Every Jewish male had to pay taxes to the Alter in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus also had to pay, *“Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”* (Matthew 17:27)

The Synagogues outside Jerusalem were only places of prayers and meetings without any offerings. The offerings were only in Jerusalem. So, all the hopes and lives of the Jewish people were tied up in Jerusalem.

• **The Lord Jesus predicted the destruction of the Altar:**

Please read *“...And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”* (Matthew 24:1-2)

• **Introduction to the destruction of Jerusalem:**

For a period of 6 years (Between 64-70 A.D.) in the days of the Roman Emperor Neron, the Emperor increased the pressure and persecution of the Jews and the signs started for Jesus' prediction to be fulfilled. In response, the Jews organized revolutions against the Roman governors. The news reached Rome that the Jews were resisting the Roman rulers.

• **The destruction in A.D. 70:**

In April A.D. 70, the Romans attacked Jerusalem and caused a famine in the city and thousands died. Then it turned into a complete destruction with severe blood splash. Hence, the prophecies were fulfilled about the destruction of Jerusalem and its Altar, *“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”* (Daniel

9:27) and *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),*” (Matthew 24:15)

- **The Fate of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Altar:**

They became very poor, miserable and they totally stopped their offerings from this day on.

- **The effect of destruction of Jerusalem on the Christian Church:**

Four years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Christians who resided in Jerusalem left the city believing that Jesus’ predictions, about the destruction of the city was going to come true, *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),*” (Matthew 24:15).

Since the year 70 A.D. (year of destruction of Jerusalem), the progress and growth of the Christian Church became very significant. Many new Christians who held Jewish traditions and religious residues started to transform their behaviours towards Christianity and away from those Jewish traditions.

Lessons Benefited:

- (1) Every word that our Lord Jesus said must be fulfilled. We may hear many false ideas and heresies, but what the Lord Jesus had said is the only thing that is true.
- (2) Not all people are right. Not all ideas and religions are right. There are many wrong religions around. But all these wrong ideas and religions cannot survive. Darkness cannot prevail. Christ is the true light and Christianity is the true religion.

III. CHRISTIANITY IN THE WHOLE WORLD. FACTORS HELPED THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT

To facilitate describing the spread of Christianity in the whole world we can group the Apostles as follows:

- **First Group:**

It included Peter, Andrew, Matthew and Bartholomew.

- **Peter:** Preached to the locations to which he wrote his Letters, *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ...”* (1 Peter 1:1.)

- **Andrew:** Preached in Skithia (a portion of Russia), the kingdom of Bosphoran east of the Black Sea and in the city of Sinope on the east side of the Black Sea.

- **Matthew:** Preached in the Persian Gulf and was martyred there. He also preached in the kingdom of Bosphoran with Andrew.

- **Bartholomew:** Preached in India and Christians in India consider him their preacher. He also preached with Matthew and Andrew in the kingdom of Bosphoran.

Second Group:

It included Thomas, Thadaeus and Simon the Canaanite. In general this group preached east of the locations preached by the first group.

- **Thomas:** Preached in Edessa, which is a city in the northwest part of El-Pharate River He also preached in India.
- **Thadaeus:** Preached for 5 years between the two rivers. He also preached in Edessa. It is worthwhile mentioning that the Jews in large numbers were living in those areas between the two rivers.
- **Simon the Canaanite:** Preached in Babel and in Syria.

Third Group:

- **John and Philip:** They preached in Asia Minor
- **John:** Preached in Ephesus
- **Philip:** Preached in Ferigia and Herabolis.
- **St. Paul:** He preached more than any of the Apostles. Please read 1 Cor. 15:10 and 2 Cor11:23. He preached in Damascus, Syria, Tarsus, Antacia, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Pessidia, Darba, Listera, Galatia, and Ephesus and the cities in Greece.

● **Factors which helped the spread of Christianity in the old world:**

The main factor, no doubt, is the Lord's support and the divine nature of Christianity as a religion. However, there were existing circumstances that helped to spread Christianity and defeat other religions existing at that time. These circumstances were:

- 1) The dispersion of the Jews:
The Jews were dispersed all over the Roman Empire and they had Synagogues in all the cities. These Synagogues were the first locations to preach Christianity from all over the cities.
- 2) The strength of the Roman government, its influence in the world, and the settled social and economic life in the majority of the countries.
- 3) The presence of so many roads and the facilities to travel by sea.
- 4) Places of preaching:

- The Apostles preached in the Jewish Synagogue, *“Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.”* (Acts 9:20)

- They also preached in homes, *“And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.”* (Acts 18:7) and *“How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to*

you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.” (Acts 20:20.)

- They preached in Ephesus in a school, *“but when some were hardened and did not believe but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”* (Acts 19:9.)
- They preached in the houses of the rulers, *“...who was the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.”* (Acts 13:7.)
- They preached in the markets, *“Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.....And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus,.....”* (Acts 17:17-19.)
- St. Paul preached at the seashore, *“And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.”* (Acts 16:13.)
- The Times of Preaching: They were preaching day and night, *“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”* (Acts 20:31).

• **Relationship between the Church of the Apostles and the government:**

At the beginning, the Romans looked at Christianity as a religion coming out of the Jewish religion. This helped at the beginning to reduce the resistance of the Romans, until they realized that Christianity is a new religion and started to resist it.

• **The persecution under Emperor Nero:**

The cause of the persecution was not initially religious. There was a huge fire on July 18, 64 A.D., which continued for 6 days in Rome and resulted in major destructions. It was historically proven that Nero himself (who was a very bad emperor) initiated the fire so that he can build a new city and give it his name.

However, he claimed that the Christians started the fire, and he used this as a reason to kill massive numbers of Christians.

• **The persecution under Domitian:**

Domitian considered himself “God and Lord”. He considered any Christian his enemy. He killed many Christians including some of his relatives. Domitian was the one who exiled St. John after putting him in jail.

Lessons Benefited:

- (1) The Lord who strengthened the Apostles, who were very small in number to be able to preach to the whole world, can help every one of us. We have to ask Him for help in our prayers.

- (2) Missionary work is not hard even today. We have to start and dedicate some efforts if we are serious about getting others to see the light of Christ and enjoy it as we do.
- (3) Before we open our churches for non-Christians, we have to open our hearts for them with love.

IV. THE WORSHIPPING SYSTEM IN THE APOSTLES' CHURCH

“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God...” (1 Tim 3:15)

Before we go into details of the system of worshipping, let us first talk about the importance of the church to the believer. The church in the Apostolic state of mind is the house of God, *“but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”* (1 Timothy 3:15) The Church is the bride of Christ.

We gain a lot of blessings and grace from the Holy Sacraments practiced by the church. The church in the Apostolic era emphasized the importance of the Sacraments: Please read Acts 9 and Acts 10 for the Baptism of Saul and Kernilius respectively.

(A) The Lord's Day: “Sunday”

Sunday was called the Lord's day because our Lord Jesus arose from the dead on that day. Sunday replaced Saturday that the Jews celebrate. In many locations in the Bible we see Sunday as the day of the week in which the Christians got together to have the Eucharist, *“And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’”* (John 20:26), *“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”* (Acts 20:7), *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”* (1Cor 16:2.)

(B) Meetings of Worship:

- **Locations:**

The meetings of worship were in homes, for example, as the Church was established on Pentecost in the upper room (House of Mary, the mother of St. Mark).

- **The System:**

In the Eucharist, they started with readings of the Gospels and the prophecies of the Old Testament, Sermon, Prayers for church matters, prayers of absolution and the Sacramental prayers and the Holy Communion.

- **The Agape: “Meetings of the believers”**

The Agape are known in the Apostles' Church. The Christians used to get together, sing hymns and eat together. At the beginning the Agape was mixed with the Eucharist. Then

the two were separated completely.

- **The Prayers:**

Men and Women pray together in the same place, each of them taking one half of the room. They used the Lord's prayers, "*In this manner therefore pray 'Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.....but deliver us from the evil one for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen'*" (Matthew 6:9-13) a lot. They used the Psalms also in their prayers, "*How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.*" (1Cor 14:26) and "*...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:19)

- **The Hymns:**

They used to sing hymns a lot, "*...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:19) and "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*" (Colossians 3:16).

- **The Sign of the Cross:**

The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the place of honour and holiness for the Christians since the beginning. They used to Cross themselves with the sign of the Cross to gain the strength of the Cross, to defeat the devil and to remember the Lord's love which manifested on the Cross.

- **The Lent:**

The Lent of Wednesday and Friday:

These two days every week were fasted by the Apostles' Church instead of the Monday and Thursday that the Jews used to fast.

- **The Holy Forty Days Fast:**

It was also practiced for the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ Jesus.

- **The Holy Week:**

Was fasted also since the very beginning.

- **The Christian Feasts:**

There is enough evidence that they celebrated at least two feasts:

The Easter (for the resurrection of the Lord) and the Pentecost (for the Holy Spirit coming to the Church).

- **Prayers for the dead:**

The Church in the Apostles' era practiced praying for the dead. The church believed in the benefits of these prayers to the dead and the people who are attending the prayers. St. John emphasized that these prayers are beneficial for the people who did not do the type of sins that lead to death, "*If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to*

death.” (1 John 5:16), “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior...” (1 Timothy 2:1-3), and “The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day- and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.” (2 Timothy 1:18)

This means that these prayers help the dead who spend a holy life with God but may have done some minor mistakes they were not aware were sins.

Lessons Benefited:

(1) Let us stick to our Apostolic Church. We will hear of many new religions of the world, but must not be attracted to all these false teachings. Our church goes back in history to the days of the Apostles.

(2) How about changes in our system of worship? If we opened up for changes, we cannot maintain the Apostolic system of worship. There are no benefits in introducing changes. It can only hurt. Other Christian denominations lost badly because of these changes. “The Lord Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever.”

V. CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

These are the books in the Holy Bible that we have now:

- 4 Gospels of St. Mathew , St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John
- 1 The book of Acts
- 14 Holy Epistles of St. Paul
- 1 Holy Epistle of St. James
- 2 Holy Epistles of St. Peter
- 3 Holy Epistles of St. John
- 1 Holy Epistle of St. Jude
- 1 The Holy Book of Revelation

Any other book that we hear about is an Apocryphal book and it is not approved by the Apostolic Church.

Heresies in the first century:

There were many heresies during the first century. We encourage you to research those and see by yourself that the Apostles were very careful to preserve the faith for us and to stand firm against these heresies. One of the famous heresies is that of Simon the Sorcerer who wanted to get the gifts of the Holy Spirit by paying money (Acts 8: 9-21). Another heresy is about keeping the tradition of the Old Testament to the Christianity of the New Testament, e.g. Circumcision (Acts 15). We see that the church has the first counsel to face heresy and stopped it. But there are many heresies you can research and read about. They do not make any sense and they are the work of the devil.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HISTORY IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

SERVANTS' SUMMARY:

There are 3 major aspects to cover in the 2nd and 3rd centuries:

(a) The Apostolic Fathers:

The Apostolic Fathers were the disciples of the Lord's disciples. They had the duty of delivering their Christian faith and doctrine to the world. There were three famous Apostolic Fathers: St. Clement the Bishop of Rome, St. Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch and St. Polycarp the bishop of Izmir. Please read further the details about their lives, their writings and the problems they have faced.

(b) The Theological School of Alexandria:

This school was established by St. Mary the Apostle. The school gave a solid foundation in Alexandria for multiple cultures, philosophies and religious. This school became the most famous theological school in the whole world and produced the most famous theologians. For example, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Athanasius the Apostolic. Please read further about this important school, what difficulties it faced and its very famous graduates.

(c) Diocletian Era and the Coptic Calendar:

This is the era of intensified persecution of the Coptic Church at the hands of Emperor Diocletian (284-305). Christians understood martyrdom as a celebrations of the Christians that are going to heaven for the sake of maintaining the Christian faith. This is why we pray with the joyful tune from El-Nayrouz feast to the Cross feast. Also, this is how the establishment of) the Coptic Calendar took place, although the Coptic year was known for Thousands of years beforehand. Please read further to know about martyrdom, some of the martyrs and lessons obtained from their lives.

I. Introduction (Summary of the first century history):

In the previous section we have covered the history of the Christian Church in the first century. We are now going to summarize the main events and the highlights of that century as follows:

General Chronology of events in the New Testament

- A) 2-6 B.C. The Birth of The Lord Jesus
- B) 1 B.C. The Death of Herod
- C) 28-29 John the Baptist begins his ministry
- D) 29-30 The Lord Jesus begins His ministry
- E) 33 Crucifixion/Resurrection
- F) 36 Paul's escape from Damascus
- G) 49-50 The First missionary journey
- H) 50 Council of Jerusalem
- I) 50-52 The Second missionary journey
- J) 52-57 The Third missionary journey
- K) 57 Paul's arrest in Jerusalem
- L) 57-59 Paul imprisonment in Caesarea
- M) 60-62 Paul imprisonment in Rome

- N) 62 The Execution of James the brother of the Lord Jesus
- O) 64 The Burning of Rome (July 18-19)
- P) 66-70 The Roman-Judean War
- Q) 68 The Death of Nero (June)
- R) 70 The Destruction of Jerusalem

So what was the world like when Christ was on earth?

+ Romans-Political system

+ Greeks-philosophy, science, Judaism-the religion in Israel (Judea-southern region of modern day Israel-and Galilee northern region)

Where do we receive our Sacraments/traditions/practices?

1. All Sacraments can be traced to something that Lord Jesus did. For example, The Last Supper=Communion etc...

All current practices have their roots in the First century – stems from the Diskalia (or Didiscalia)

All traditions stem from oral traditions.

WHO WERE THE JEWS COMPOSED OF?

Pharisees (mainly relied on interpretation of the Scripture)

Scribes Sadducees (mainly priests)

Essenes (these are a broad grouping of the Jewish factions at that time)

So what happened after Pentecost?

The Birth of the Church on the Pentecost

-what happened? The Church Started to teach Christianity throughout the world

Conversion of Saul to Paul (Acts 9:3-9)

The Apostles wrote books! (Gospels/Letters etc...)

General Chronology of the New Testament Books (although debated by scholars)

Letter of James written

General timeline for Gospels and letters; Galatians, Titus, Mark, Matthew, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Romans, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, Gospel of Luke, Acts (Written by Luke), 1 Timothy, 1 Peter, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, John 1,2 & 3 John, Revelations

Independent, non-Christian writings about Lord Jesus

Josephus (late First century) wrote about the Lord Jesus but from the perspective of a Jew, namely, Pliny the younger, who executed many Christians and explained that Christians were “problematic” (from a Roman view)

Where did the Apostles go?

St. Paul and St. Peter, at the end of their journey went to Rome

St. Mark went to Egypt

St. Andrew to Greece

St. James remained in Jerusalem

St. Jude to Persia (modern day Iran)

St. Thomas to India
St. Philip to Asia Minor (modern day Turkey)
St. Nathanael to Armenia
St. Matthew to Ethiopia
St. Simon to Persia
St Paul- three main journeys (you can read more about it in Acts, or you can see a map online)

Some Major Events

Council of Jerusalem - Acts (15)
Four Centers of the Churches Established:
Jerusalem
Alexandria
Rome
Antioch

(II) THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Introduction:

Historical review

The Lord's disciples are from the generation of the people who saw and were taught by the Lord Christ himself. Then, right after that first generation of disciples came the generation of the disciples of the Lord's disciples whom are known as "Apostolic fathers".

At that time the church was not only in one spot of the world, but there were churches in the east and the west. Those churches had one faith, one hope, one love, one prayer, one understanding and one liturgy. We can therefore say that there were not many churches but one Apostolic church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THERE WERE THREE STAGES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH:

- 1) Between 95 to 150 A.D. – The era of the "Apostolic Fathers" of the church. In this stage the church was still in the beginning, trying to comprehend faith and doctrine and trying to respond to the action of the Holy Spirit in her. The "Apostolic Fathers" were the first ones to express not only the knowledge and comprehension of Christianity, which they inherited from the Apostles themselves, but they were also the first to express the pure life that they have inherited from the Lord Jesus.
- 2) Between 120 to 220 A.D. – the church Fathers were defending the Church throughout the challenges that they were faced with.
- 3) Between 180 to 325 A.D. – the church Fathers were standing against the heresies that appeared during that time. We call them the "Fathers of the Ecumenical Council".

(B) Who are the Apostolic Fathers?

They are the fathers who were contemporary with the apostles and were their disciples.

They had the duty to deliver to the world their faith and their doctrine through their daily service and writings.

Not everyone who lived at the time of the Apostolic Fathers and had some writings is

considered to be an apostolic father. But we can say that there were three Apostolic Fathers:

1. St. Clement the bishop of Rome who helped St. Paul in his preaching.
2. St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, the bearer of the divine.
3. St. Polycarp the bishop of Izmir, who was a disciple of St. John.

Those heroes (i.e. the Apostolic Fathers) were saints who living in a very simple way leading a righteous life and consecrated all their efforts for the One whom they loved from all their hearts (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ).

(C)The problems at the time of the Apostolic Fathers:

- The church at the time of the Apostolic Fathers was still close to her beginning. There were two different cultures and philosophies surrounding Christianity at that time:

The Greek
The Jewish

Both had great effects on the thinking and the behaviour of the people of the world at that time. How can Christianity, at its early stage overcome such a huge opposing power with social, political, economical implications that were coupled with many heresies? The fact is that Christianity was able to overcome all these powers with very few people because they were strong people that were supported by God Himself.

(D) Some of the writing of the Apostolic Fathers and their characteristics:

- The writings of the Apostolic Fathers had two objectives in mind:
- Maintain the unity of the Church and her peace in the midst of many opinions, divisions and heresies.
- Maintain the faith pure from all foreign ideas coming from either the Greeks or the Jews.
- The writings of the Apostolic Fathers came in the form of short epistles.
- Some examples of their writings:
- The Epistle of St. Clement to deal with the division in the Church of the Corinthians
- The Epistle of St. Ignatius, which dealt with faith, doctrines of the Church, and answering to the heresies, which arose at that time.
- St. Polycarp's letter, which addressed the subject of the depth of the faith and the position of the church toward Martyrdom.

One of the clear characteristic of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers was the “eschatological character” i.e. they were talking, writing and living in joy waiting for the second coming of Christ.

(E) An overview of the life of St. Ignatius, and his writings:

St. Ignatius was the second bishop to Antioch. He started his service as a bishop around 70 A.D. He is called “The bearer of the Divine”.

It is said that when he was a child the Lord Jesus put him in the midst of the Disciples as a model of meekness “Matt. 18:1”. When Ignatius grew up, his love for the Lord Jesus, his faith, and zeal

grew. He preached the name of Christ. The apostles appointed him bishop of the church of Antioch.

He wrote letters to encourage the church to stand firm in the Christian faith. He was able through his good reputation to attract many heathens to the Christian faith.

Some of his sayings: “let your conduct be a teaching to the hypocrite and the wicked. With love and justice you can overcome their hatred and injustice and through patience and prayers you can overcome their slander. By being firm in faith you can overcome their unrighteousness. For Christ’s sake you should endure every loss and insult. Remember me in your prayer, so that I may live in the bare minimum and gain comfort in the House of Grace.” Close to his martyrdom, he said, “I am tied in chains for my love for Jesus. I do not want your love for me to cause me harm. I don’t like you to save me from death. If I am deprived from martyrdom now because of your love, gaining martyrdom later may be difficult. I desire Martyrdom to show myself a Christian not in words but in action. Let me be food for the beasts and wild animals. I pray to God and plead that these wild animals will leave nothing of me on the ground, so that the remaining parts of my body may not cause suffering to anyone”.

A key lesson which can be learned from the Apostolic Fathers is that the church at their time was going under very difficult conditions because of the Jews and the Greeks. Yet the church came out victorious because of the strong faith of the Apostolic Fathers and God’s support for them. We also are living in a difficult society today that is filled with wrong ideas, heresies and materialism; however, we can also become victorious over all these powers by sticking to God’s commandments.

(III) The Theological School of Alexandria

School of Alexandria

- * St. Mark, inspired by the Holy Spirit, established Catechism as the only way to give the new religion a firm foundation in this city of multiple cultures, multiple philosophies, and many powerful schools. Thus Christianity penetrated the School of Alexandria turning it to Catechetical school.
- * It became the oldest centre for sacred sciences in the history of Christianity. In it, the first system of Christian Theology was formed and the Allegorical (symbolic) method of Biblical exegesis was devised.
- * “The most renowned intellectual institution in the early Christian world was undoubtedly the Catechetical School Didaskaleion of Alexandria. Its primary concern was the study of Bible, giving its name to an influential tradition of spiritual interpretation. The preoccupation of this school of exegesis was to discover everywhere the spiritual sense underlying the written word of the Scripture.” Dom. D. Rees
- * Its program was not limited to theology, but was encyclopaedic.
- * Produced numerous spiritual and well known Church leaders along the years. Many of them were fit for the throne of St. Mark.

Church Fathers - School of Alexandria

Name	Time Frame	Achievement	Writings
1. Athanaghoras - Apologist	Converted to Christianity in 176	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studied the Scriptures to criticize Christianity but ended up defending it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Presvia" or intercession, defending Christians against false acquisitions. A treatise on the resurrection of the dead, using philosophical arguments to rove the dogma. He interpreted the whole Bible, but nothing remained from his writings except for the few excerpts mentioned in St. Clement's books
2. Pantaeus - Philosopher	Dean: 181	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coptic Alphabet Bible translation to Coptic. Preached in India, Ethiopia, Arabia and Yemen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trilogy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protrepticus - Exhortation to the Greeks (attack on paganism and invitation to salvation) Paedagogus - The Tutor / Instructor (practical instructions for the Christian conduct) Stromata - Miscellaneous Studies (Christian faith vs. Greek philosophy) A treatise on the salvation of the rich person. Commentaries on passages of the Old and New Testaments.
3. Clement of Alexandria - Gnosis (Knowledge)	Born: 150 Dean: 190 Died: 215	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confronted the ideas of his time with Christian doctrine. Christianity offers the perfect knowledge (Gnosis) and truth in Christ. Supremacy of Christian anosis: contemplation; carrying out the commandments; instructions by righteous men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> translations. Interpretations of the Five Books of Moses, the Song of Songs, Job, the Major and Minor Prophets, Joshua and Psalms. "The Principles" contained the majority of the flaws attributed to him. On prayer: part on the prayer in general; part on the Lord's Prayer (Ancient Christian Writers). On the Resurrection (Easter)
4. Origen	185-254	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Epiphanius (315-403) stated that Origen had 6,000 manuscripts. His friends and admirers described him as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince of the Bible Interpreters. The Prince of Christian Philosophy. The Teacher of Bishops. There is no human mind that can absorb all what he wrote. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> translations. Interpretations of the Five Books of Moses, the Song of Songs, Job, the Major and Minor Prophets, Joshua and Psalms. "The Principles" contained the majority of the flaws attributed to him. On prayer: part on the prayer in general; part on the Lord's Prayer (Ancient Christian Writers). On the Resurrection (Easter)
5. Heraclas	Dean: Pope: 232-249	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student of Origen. His people loved him so much and called him "Papa" in Coptic, or Pope, which means "Father". 	

6. St. Dionysius	Born: 190 Dean: 232-249 Pope: 249-270	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Athanasius called him "Teacher of the Universal Church". • Faced issues of persecutions, baptism by heretics, and the earthly kingdom (millennium). • Athanasius appealed to his writings in the struggle against Arianism. • Jerome called him "Origen Junior". • He suffered during the persecution of Diocletian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Nature: refutes the Epicurean materialism view of the universe. • Apology: on the Trinitarian doctrine • Letters: quoted frequently by Eusebius
7. Theognostus		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athanasius appealed to his writings in the struggle against Arianism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogmatic work "Hypotyposes" in seven books followed the doctrine of Origen. • On the Prophet Hosea • Logio (concerning the Logos) • On the Gospel of St. Luke • On the Mother of God • The Life of St. Pamphilus, martyred 309
8. Pterius		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He suffered during the persecution of Diocletian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly Paschal and other letters as well as some quotations preserved in the proceeding of the Council of Ephesus and in other manuscripts.
9. St. Peter, the Seal of Martyrs	Pope: 293-303	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He faced persecution as well as heresies (Arius) and divisions within the Church. • He faced persecution as well as heresies (Arius) and divisions within the Church. • He faced persecution as well as heresies (Arius) and divisions within the Church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologetic: Against Arians; Apology to Constantius; Defense of the Nicene Council and of His Flight. • Dogmatic: On the Incarnation; Doctrinal Letters. • Letters: Festal or Easter Letters; Personal Letters; Episcopal Letters. • Ascetic: Life of Anthony; Life of Syncretica; Treatises on Virginity. • Exegetical: Commentary on Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Genesis and Luke.
10. St. Athanasius, the Apostolic	Born: 297 Pope: 326-372	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Nicea in 325. Severe persecution (303 - 311). Frumentius (Abbot Salama) as the first bishop of Ethiopia in 330. Exiled 5 times because of his opposition to Arianism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exegetical work: he interpreted many books of the Bible; a large number of quotations from his work still existing. He followed Origen in the allegorical method of interpretation and textual criticism. • On the Trinity: 3 books written between 381 and 392; still existing. • On the Holy Spirit: the Greek original lost; the Latin translation still existing. • Contra Manie: still existing in 18 short articles. • Other works: quoted in his and other's writings.
11. St. Didymus	Born: 313 Dean: 346-398	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost his sight at age 4. Invented the engraved writing. Attracted people only by his teachings but also by his asceticism. Visited by St. Anthony several times and by Palladius four times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost his sight at age 4. Invented the engraved writing. Attracted people only by his teachings but also by his asceticism. Visited by St. Anthony several times and by Palladius four times.

1. Athenagoras – Apologist

He read the Holy Scriptures to criticize Christianity, but he was so powerfully seized by the Holy Spirit that he became a defender of the faith.

He was converted to Christianity in 176 A.D. and wrote a plea (Called “Presiva” or intercession) on behalf of Christians in 177 A. D.

He defended Christians against the false accusation of atheism. Cannibalism and Oedipedeian incest. He drew the attention to their faith in God and to their peaceful and blameless life.

He also wrote a treatise on the resurrection of the dead. It is the first attempt made to prove this dogma using philosophical arguments. He states that the resurrection of the dead is proved by God’s omnipotence and is based on: man as a rational being is destined for eternal survival; necessity of retribution; eternal bliss cannot be found on earth.

2. Pantaeenus – Philosopher

He embraced Christianity at the hands of Athenagoras and succeeded him as dean of the Theological School in 181 A.D.

He introduced philosophy and sciences into the school to gain the heretics and educated pagans.

He introduced the Coptic Alphabet by using the Greek Alphabet and adding 7 letters from the ancient Demotic language. The Holy Bible was translated to Coptic under his guidance.

In 190 A.D., pope Demetrius sent him on a mission to preach in India.

He also preached in Ethiopia, Arabia and Yemen. According to the traditions, he brought back the Hebrew original of St. Matthew’s Gospel.

He interpreted the whole Bible, but nothing remained from his writings except for the few excerpts mentioned in Saint Clement’s books.

3. Clement of Alexandria – Gnosis (Knowledge)

He was born in 150 A.D. and traveled extensively to seek instructions from the most famous Christian teachers.

Attracted by the lectures of Pantaeenus, he settled in Alexandria and was ordained a priest, then a dean of the School in 190 A.D.

He had to leave Egypt in 202 A.D. due to the persecution by Septimius Severus, and departed in 215 A.D. (probably in Palestine or Syria).

He was the first Christian writer to confront the ideas of his time with Christian doctrine. He believed that there was no enmity between Christianity and philosophy. The ancient philosophy, in his view, was unable to achieve more than glimpses of the truth, while Christianity offers the

perfect knowledge and truth in Christ.

Throughout the first two centuries, a heresy appeared under the title “Gnostics” in various forms. The word “gnosis: in Greek means “knowledge”. A fundamental Gnostic claim was that the soul can reach the Supreme God through knowledge rather than faith.

St. Clement showed the supremacy of Christian gnosis: contemplation; carrying out the commandments; instructions by righteous men.

His main work was the Trilogy:

- Protrepticus – Exhortation to the Greeks (attack on paganism and invitation to salvation) – Paedagogus – The Tutor/instructor (9 practical instructions for the Christian conduct).

- Stromata – Miscellaneous Studies (Christian faith vs. Greek philosophy).

This Trilogy outlines his theological system that the Word of God, the Logos, invites mankind to abandon paganism through faith, then He reforms their lives by the commandments, and finally, He elevates them to the perfect knowledge of divine things. In short, the Logos converts, disciplines, and instructs.

This concept of the Divine plan for our salvation influenced the program in the school of Alexandria. It focused first on conversion to Christianity, then on commandment practicing, and finally on instructing Christians to attain perfect knowledge of the doctrine.

He had several other writings; e.g. a treatise on the salvation of the rich person and commentaries on passages of the Old and New Testaments.

4. Origen

His friends and admirers described him as:

- The Prince of the Bible Interpreters.
- The Prince of Christian Philosophy.
- The Teacher of Bishops.
- There is no human mind that can absorb all what he wrote.

He lived from 185 to 254 AD; i.e. 69 years: Pope Demetrius (12), 191 AD; Pope Heraculus (13), 224 AD; Pope Dionysius (14), 241 AD.

He was born to a righteous Christian family. His father, Leonides, was a righteous, scholar and saintly man who was martyred for his Christian faith during the persecution of Septimius Severus, 202AD. While his father was in jail, Origen wrote encouraging him to face martyrdom.

He used to rent libraries overnight to read their books. St. Jerome praised his love of reading and said that Origen read while eating, walking, resting, etc. Thus his knowledge extended beyond measures and his intellectual superiority was undisputed. He worked in teaching.

When Pope Demetrius (12) heard of his fame, he appointed him dean of the School of Alexandria. He increased its fame and thinking and became a teacher of many bishops and priests, as well as many men, women, young and old. First, he rented halls to hold the school, but

when he was chased from one place to another, he held his lectures outdoors (in the open or beside the river).

He was famous in allegorical interpretation. Example, his interpretation of the Song of Songs. Distinguished from St. Basil's school of literal interpretation.)

He was imprisoned and tortured for his Christian faith. He was courageous, ascetic and a man of fasting and prayer. He exaggerated in his asceticism by castrating himself (defended his action by saying that he was protecting his chastity).

His Writings

- a) St. Epiphanius (315-403) stated that Origen had 6,000 manuscripts. He wrote in Greek (Petrologia Grika). Some of his writings were translated to Latin during his life and some were translated after his death; e.g. Rufinus' translation which contained many flaws.
- b) Mainly intellectual: textual criticism, exegetic, apologetic, dogmatic, and practical.
- c) "Hexapla": 28-year study of the Bible manuscripts and translation; 6 columns:
 1. The Hebrew text of the Bible.
 2. The Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew text.
 3. The Septuagint (c. 250 AD)
 4. Simakhos' translation (end of 2nd century).
 5. Aquilla's translation (c. 128 AD)
 6. Theodore's translation (c. 180 AD).
 7. Interpretations of the Five Books of Moses, the Song of Songs, Job, the Major and Minor Prophets, Joshua and Psalms.
 8. Against Celsus the heretic: "Contra Celsus".
 9. "The Principles" contained the majority of the flaws attributed to him.
 10. Exhortation to encourage martyrdom.
 11. On prayer: part on the prayer in general; part on the Lord's Prayer (Ancient Christian Writers).
 12. On the resurrection (Easter).

DISPUTE WITH THE CHURCH

1. Pope Demetrius held a council that excommunicated Origen due to his theological mistakes and because he accepted ordination in Palestine by other than his bishop.
2. Some accused St. Demetrius of jealousy due to Origen's fame. This can be refuted based on the facts that:
 - a. Pope Demetrius is generally accepted as a Church saint.
 - b. Pope Demetrius was the one that appointed him a dean based on his fame.
 - c. Judgment was done through a council (not alone) and later confirmed by others.
 - d. There are clear theologian's mistakes in Origen's writings.

- e. He spent the rest of his life in Palestine where he established a famous & significant theological school. He led a Gnostic man named Improsius to the correct faith.

THEOLOGICAL MISTAKES (ORIGENISM)

1. He was affected by the Greek philosophy; e.g. Plato in some of his mistakes.
2. Exaggerating the allegorical interpretation; e.g. Adam's sin.
3. The salvation of Satan. The salvation of evil doers after their death.
4. Spirits created before the bodies then sent down to unite with the bodies (Plato).
5. Christ's soul united with His Divinity before uniting with the body in St. Mary's womb.
6. Redemption was made to satisfy the devil.
7. Resurrection: in new spiritual bodies, not the original earthly body.
8. The righteous people will turn to stars.
9. God created other world before and after our own.

DEFENSE BY HIS PROPONENTS

1. Mistakes were due to dictation /transcription.
2. He had other writings contrary to the sited flaws.

HIS OPPONENTS

- * Pope Demetrius (12th Pope of Alexandria)
- * Pope Theophilus (23rd Pope) – Dispute with John Chrysostom; “The Tall Brothers”
- * St. Epiphanius (Bishop of Cyprus) – End of 4th and beginning of 5th century: managed to convince Jerome but could not convince Cyril of Jerusalem.
- * St. Jerome – Dispute with Cyril (Book against Cyril) and Rufinus
- * Mephopius (Bishop of Olumpa, Cilicia) – beginning of the 4th century' book against origin
- * St. Augustine in the 5th century

HIS PROPONENTS

- Gregory the Wonder Maker
- St. John Chrysostom – “The Tall Brothers”
- Gregory of Nyssa, 4th century (brother of basil the Great)
- Pamphilus, priest and martyr (309 A.D.)
- Rufinus – Translated some of Origen's works
- Dionysius (14th Pope of Alexandria) – It was said that he defended Origen and requested him to return to the Church of Alexandria.

5. HERACLAS

- He was a student of Origen and succeeded him as the dean of the School of Alexandria.
- He loved philosophy and studied the Greek books as much as he could.
- When Abba Demetrius discovered his spiritual abilities and knowledge, he ordained him as priest and used him for preaching. He attracted many unbelievers to the faith.
- He was chosen to succeed Abba Demetrius as Bishop of Alexandria in 224. His people loved him so much and called "Papa" in Coptic, or Pope, which means "Father".

6. ST. DIONYSIUS

- St. Athanasius called him "Teacher of the Universal Church"
- He was born in Alexandria in about 190 from pagan parents. He was not Christian until an old Christian woman sold him some scripts of St. Paul's letters. After reading them, he came back for more and she led him to the Church where he learned about and converted to Christianity.
- He succeeded Heraclas as the dean of the School of Alexandria (231-246)
- He was chosen as the Pope of Alexandria in 247
- He faced the challenge of preserving his Church in the midst of persecutions: Decian 250 and Valrian in 257. He showed leniency to heretics or apostates who repented.
- Issue of those who were baptized by heretics - Cyprian of Corthage vs. Stephen of Rome.
- Issue of earthly kingdom (millennium) - Nepos, Bishop of Arsinoe (in Fayoum).

HIS WRITINGS

- On nature: refutes the Epicurean materialism view of the universe.
- Apology: on the Trinitarian doctrine
- Letters: quoted frequently by Eusebius.

7. THEOGNOSTUS

- Little is known about him except through quotations in the writings of Photius, Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa.
- His dogmatic work "Hypotyposes" in seven books followed the doctrine of Origen. Athanasius appealed to his writings in the struggle against Arianism.

8. PIERIUS

- Jerome called him "Origen Junior"
- He suffered during the persecution of Diocletian.
- His work is mentioned by others:
 - On the Prophet Hosea
 - Logio (concerning the Logos)
 - On the Gospel of St. Luke
 - On the Mother of God

(IV) Diocletian Era and the Coptic calendar

The age of martyrdom: “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29).

The establishment of Christianity in Egypt was not an easy task. But it came to be as a result of many Christians who gave up their earthly lives in return for the crown of martyrdom in heaven with Jesus, whom they loved more than their lives.

Martyrdom started when idolaters attacked the church in Alexandria in 68A.D. and killed St. Mark the Apostle. This was followed by persecutions and sufferings of Christianity all over Egypt. They faced all these tortures with joy and courage ever since.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ROMANS AND THE COPTS:

Since the first century, the conflict between the Romans and the Copts started because of a conflict between two religions: Christianity and paganism. The majority of the Egyptians were Christians while the roman rulers and their followers were pagans. The roman emperors became enemies of the Christians who love God more than anything else and adhered firmly to Christianity.

When Christianity was spread among the Romans themselves, the rulers and the emperors, the conflict continued because these new Christians had a different belief than the Copts of Egypt. They continued to persecute the Copts.

Therefore, we can classify two periods of persecutions that the Copts in Egypt were exposed to:

(A) Persecution at the hands of the gentile Emperors:

The roman emperors viewed Christians in general as a threat to them. So, they persecuted Christians everywhere but particularly the Copts of Egypt. Because of their solid faith, the Copts were exposed to the most severe torture in the Christian world at that time.

The years of Diocletian:

The persecution of Christians reached its peak in the years of Diocletian (284-305 A.D.) in the year 302 A.D., he ordered the destruction of all churches, the burning of all church books and the confiscation of all the possessions of the Christians. When the Christians rejected these unfair laws, they were jailed, tortured and killed. The Copts showed the depth of their faith, love of the Lord Jesus and love of heavenly life. They were joyful to be worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus. Because of the severity of the persecution in the years of Diocletian, the Copts considered the year 284 (when Diocletian took over the government) as the beginning of the Coptic calendar. The church celebrates the martyrs' feast (el nairouz) annually.

(B) Persecution at the hands of the Christian Emperors:

The Roman emperor were not able to face the spread of Christianity and a lot of them because of Christians. Emperor Constantine the great became a Christian and his reign was a quiet period for the Christians. Yet, it did not last long. The roman emperors took sides and accepted the several heresies that the church in Egypt rejected. Then they started to persecute the Copts. For example, in the years of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the Romans tried to impose the Arian

principles. The Pope and the people after him rejected the Arians. St. Athanasius was exiled five times from his position as a Pope.

The Christians Romans continued to persecute the Copts until the Arabs invaded Egypt in 641 A.D. A new era and a new trouble started.

The faith that we have now has reached us through the bloodshed of our ancestors. They believed that heavenly life is more important than the earthly life: "It is better for me to depart and be with Jesus." Many people would like to reach Christ through easy ways. This is impossible. We must exert effort and suffer a lot for the sake of the Lord Jesus, we must carry the cross as our ancestors did and then succeeded through the narrow road.

The feelings and Characteristics of a Martyr

A person could be filled with zeal which might make the person fall in one of many sins, such as: abusing and defaming, hurting and bashing, or rebelling and ruining. Such a person changes into a tool of destruction, ruining whatever stands in his way in a non-spiritual manner. This can also be considered a kind of jealousy which is not according to knowledge because the person does not know the right spiritual way to express his zeal. It happened that forty Jewish persons vowed not to eat and drink till they kill Paul... There is an example of a wrong zeal which is mixed with selfishness and bias...

An example of this is Joshua's zeal for the sake of Moses. When he saw two persons prophesying, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets..." (Num 11:29) Please read the following articles by our Father the late His Holiness Pope Shenouda the III entitled "WHY DID THEY LOVE MARTYRDOM?"

[Our fathers the martyrs received martyrdom, not only in tolerance and satisfaction, but mostly with joy. Thousands of the faithful traveled from Damanhore to Alexandria to be martyred. Along the way, they sang chants joyfully.

It was also said about the twelve Apostles that when they were flogged and thrown in prison, "*They departed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*" (Acts 5:41).

St. Abu Pham the soldier, when he was called for martyrdom, he dressed up in his best attire saying, "This is my wedding day."

Why were our fathers joyful about martyrdom?

They considered martyrdom the shortest way leading to the joys of heaven. It is a matter of moments or hours, then one will be in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the assembly of the saints.

Therefore, in the story of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius of Antioch, when the people of Rome wanted to kidnap him to save him from death, he sent them a message to stop them from doing that, saying "My beloved, I am afraid that your love will do me harm and after I reach my destination, I'll turn back my life- journey all over again."

They also looked at martyrdom as means of sharing in Christ's passion, in His death and subsequently in His glory. They used to look at the Bible's saying, "*If indeed we suffer with Him, we may also be glorified together.*" (Rom. 8:17).

Some of them personally saw the crowns that they were striving to receive.

Or saw the crowns of those who were martyred before them. And without seeing anything, they were confident through faith, of what God has prepared for those who love His Holy name, those who accept suffering for His sake.

They also used to look at martyrdom as the best way to express their love for God and the truth of their faith. And as it says in the Bible, "*Greater love has no one than this, to lay down His life for His friends.*" (John 15:13). How much more deserving then for faith.

They loved martyrdom because they were certain of being strangers in this world. They also loved eternity in a way that took hold over their hearts and they never looked at death except as a release from the prison of the body.]

"THE GLORY OF PIAN" By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

St Paul, the Apostle, says in his Epistle to the Romans, "*If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*" (Rom 8:17)

And so, suffering for the Lord becomes a measure of the glory that awaits the faithful in the eternal Kingdom. **Therefore the Church places the martyrs above all Saints.**

They are mentioned in the Church's prayers before the spirit-borne and the solitary fathers, who filled the wilderness with prayers and contemplation. They are also mentioned before our fathers the Patriarchs and Bishops, with all their services in spreading the Word. This is all because of the sufferings they endured for the sake of God.

Even in service, the measure of suffering is also obvious, as the Apostle says, "*... and each will receive his own reward according to his own labour.*" (1 Cor 3:8)

Therefore, the Lord says in his letter to the Angel of the Church at Ephesus, "*I know your works, your labour, your patience... and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for my name's sake and have not become weary.*" (Rev 2:2-3), putting labour at the beginning. It is also said in the Bible that, "*God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love...*" (Heb 6:10)

Love expresses its existence by labouring for the Beloved one, as the Apostle says, "*... Let us not love in word or in tongue.*" (1 Jn 3:18). The depth of love also shows in suffering, when the level of love is raised up to sacrifice and redemption.

Therefore, God's love was shown to us in its deepest form when the Lord was on the Cross, sacrificing himself for our redemption, the just for the unjust, **Christ was at the peak of His glory when He was in His deepest passion.**

For this reason, He said about his crucifixion, "*Now the Son of Man is glorified.*" (Jn 13:13) The picture of His crucifixion is the picture of His glory...

St. Paul, the Apostle, considers suffering as a gift from God. In this, he says, "*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for his sake.*" (Phil 1:29)

St. Peter, the Apostle, also talked about suffering saying, "*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.*" (1 Pet 2:21)

ST. ARIANUS

St. Arianus, the governor of Ansena, was martyred. When he ordered to shoot St. Apollonius with arrows, one of the arrows glanced back and struck his eye and destroyed it. As it is mentioned in the seventh day of Baramhat, one of the believers told him: "If you take some of his blood and smear your eye with it, you will regain your sight." The governor took some of his blood, smeared his eye, and immediately he was able to see. Arianus believed in the Lord Christ, and he regretted all the evil things which he had done to the holy martyrs and the severity with which he tortured them. Then he rose up, destroyed his idols, and stopped torturing the believers.

When Diocletian heard the report of Arianus, he brought him, and asked him why he had forsaken the worship of his idols. Arianus told him about the signs and wonders which God was working through the hands of the holy martyrs, and how, in spite of the tortures which he had inflicted upon them and the mutilation of their bodies, they rose up again in one piece. The emperor became furious with him because of what he said, and ordered him to be tortured severely, cast him into a pit and to cover it until he died.

The Lord Christ sent his angel, who brought him out from the pit, and took him by the bed of the emperor. The emperor woke up from his sleep, and when he saw and recognized Arianus, he was amazed and terrified. Diocletian again ordered him to be placed into a hair sack, and cast it into the sea.

Arianus the martyr delivered up his soul while he was in the hair sack. The saint had told his kinsfolk, when he bid them farewell, that the Lord had told him in a vision of the night that he would take care of his body, and return it to his town. He also told him that they could find it on the shore of Alexandria.

The Lord ordered a sea creature, which carried the saint, and brought him to the city of Alexandria, where it casted him on the shore. His men took his body, brought it to Ansena, and laid it with the bodies of St. Philemon and Apollonius, thus, he finished his good fight and received the heavenly crown.

May his prayers be with us and Glory be to God forever. Amen.

HERASISE AND ATTACKS ON THE UNIFIED CHURCH

What does the word heresy mean?

It comes from the Greek word Aieo- which means "to Choose"

So what were heretics? They were the People who chose what they believed in. There was an implication of malice, that is, heretics knew what they were saying was incorrect.

The church was constantly being attacked by heretics and in many different ways.

1) Forget writings-2 reasons this existed

a. Innocent purpose-people would attribute their innovations to their teachers (ex. Pythagoras)

b. Malicious reasons-in order to try and show dissention within Christianity (ex. Writing fake gospels which they attempted to attribute to various individuals who were close to Christ)

2) Philosophy-They would attack the church through philosophical ideologies. Ex. They would challenge the church in terms of its teaching and how it could be right in terms of their theology

3) Physically-Christians were still being persecuted

HOW WOULD THE CHURCH DEFEND ITSELF?

Through strong unity-this was seen through the church's hierarchy and unity. This was exemplified when some of these Gnostic gospels were brought to the Bishops. The Bishops would reject them for the same reasons, even if geographically, they were far apart. They would argue with philosophers who challenged church theology-through being students in the School of Alexandria

Emerging Heresy in the 2nd century

Division of Gnosticism-(from “Gnosis”, meaning knowledge)- many forms. One form was: Docetism – which is a belief that Christ was a phantom, not 100% God and 100% Human.

Bishop Serapion of Antioch who discovered this doctrine when the gospel of Peter was shown to him rejected this idea. why? Because the Gospel of John stated “and the Word became flesh”

Thus, the concept of Jesus being a phantom (i.e. body but not flesh) was said to be incorrect. It was also later rejected once again in the Nicene council.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HISTORY IN THE FOURTH CENTURY AND BEYOND

INTRODUCTION:

There are 3 major aspects to cover the 4th century and beyond:

+ The three Ecumenical Councils.

In the history of our church there were only three Ecumenical Councils: The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D, which dealt with the heresy of Arius that Jesus is created not born and that God the Father is greater than the Son, the second council at Constantinople in 381 A.D, which dealt with the heresy of Macedonius who denied the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, and last the Council at Ephesus in 431 A.D, which dealt with the heresy of Nestorius who said that Christ had two separate persons, one divine and one human, and that St. Mary was the Mother of the human part only.

+ Monasticism

It is the life of prayer, contemplation, solitude, worship and purity of heart.

+ The Chalcedonian Assembly in 451 was not attended by the Coptic Orthodox Church. In this assembly, they claimed that the Divine Nature of Christ is united with human nature. Our Coptic Orthodox church believes that Christ has One Nature containing Divinity and Humanity together. Please read further for details of these three subjects and more.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HISTORY IN 4TH & 5TH CENTURY A.D. AND BEYOND

(I) THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

After Diocletian, who caused a lot of sufferings to the church, came King Constantine. He saw the sign of the cross in the sky and heard a voice saying, “with this you will win”. He remained Christian and his mother was St. Helena. In 313 A.D. King Constantine declared the victory of Christianity over heathenism and the end of the epoch of martyrdom. The heathen temples were converted into Christian churches. In 381 A.D. Christianity became the official religion of the Roman government itself. What is this great diversion? The gates of Hell will not have power over the church.

As the era of martyrdom came to an end, Monasticism began. The Monastic system of the world started in Egypt. The program of the Coptic Church became known internationally as the way of prayer, worship, devotion and solitude for the sake of God.

In 325 A.D. the Ecumenical Council was held in the city of Nicea in Asia Minor to deal with the Arian heresy, which stated that Christ was created, not born, and that God the Father was greater than God the Son. Emperor Constantine invited 318 Bishops from all over the world to this council.

Pope Alexandros attended on behalf of the Church of Alexandria, and presided over the council together with 20 bishops and the deacon Athanasius. Athanasius was the hero of that council who dumbfounded Arius and his followers. The results of this council was the excommunication of

Arius and his followers and the issuing of the first part of the Creed “We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Who created heaven and earth and all things, seen and unseen. We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, True God of True God; begotten, not created; of One essence with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried; and on the third day He rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures; ascended unto the heaven; He sits at the right hand of His Father; and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit.”

After the death of Pope Alexandros, Pope Athanasius succeeded him as the 20th Pope. He kept the faith safe and if it wasn't for him, it could have been effaced. That was why the church named him “The Apostolic”.

In 381 A.D. the second Ecumenical Council was held in the city of Constantinople. The Emperor Theodosius the Great invited about 150 bishops from all over the world. This Council was held to deal with the Macedonian heresy by which the divinity of the Holy Spirit was denied. Pope Timothaous of Alexandria was presiding over this council. The result of this council was the excommunication of Macedonius and his followers and the publishing of the second part of the Creed. “Yes we believe in the Holy Spirit; the Lord, the Giver of Life; who comes forth from the Father, Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshiped and glorified.”

THE GREAT ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

The Bishops Assembled in the Council of Nicea:

Before describing what took place in the ever memorable Council of Nicea, let us pause for a moment in the presence of the principal prelates who assembled there and ponder some of the deeds of the great host – the King of Kings. Among the three hundred and eighteen trained servants of the Most High, were men who carried within their bodies the scars of their fearless Confessions during the persecutions; men in whom all the Apostolic gifts still dwelt in their pristine vigour; men who not only had the power of binding and loosening in Heaven, but of healing the diseased, and raising the dead on earth. They gathered from every province to bear witness to the Truth of the same Holy Spirit Who spoke by all, that they may invest traditional Faith with infallible words, and raise an everlasting bulwark between the Church and heresy.

They assembled for the Verity of the Creed, and the Glory of the Co-essential or Consubstantial. Among others were St. Macanus of Jerusalem, illustrious for many miracles; St. Eustathius of Antioch, who had raised a dead man to life; St. Leontius of Caesarean, in Cappadocia, 'the equal of the angels'; St. Hypatius of Gangra, who years later attained the crown of martyrdom himself, and breathed out his spirit in a petition for his murderers; St. Paul of Neocaesarea, who had been mutilated in the persecutions of Licinius; St. Achilleus of Larissa, St. Athanasius and St. Alexander, at whose supplication Divine Vengeance overwhelmed Arius in late years.

The Council of Nicea was outstandingly universal. It counted among its members bishops from as far as Spain to the West; from Persia, Scythia and all churches of the East.

POPE ALEXANDROS AND HIS DELEGATION:

To this reverent company came St. Alexandros, Pope of Alexandria with twenty of his bishops, among them were St. Potamon of Heracla, who was martyred some years later by the Arians, and St. Paphnuti from the Thebaid, renowned for his confession and his sanctity.

The most outstanding and most formidable personality to come from the ancient land of the Nile was Athanasius. He was only twenty-five years old and a deacon, two reasons which instigated his antagonists to protest against his presence. Soon, however, Athanasius displayed such deep learning, such acquaintance with the Scriptures and power of argument, and such eloquence of speech, that his friends rejoiced and his opponents were aghast. His talent and assets immediately made him the target of the Arians' implacable hatred, which pursued him to the end of his days. But he withstood and overcame all, and at the end, his spiritual and moral victory was total.

EMPEROR CONSTANTINE'S INVITATION:

Eusebius of Caesarea says that "The Emperor requested the bishops of all countries to assemble promptly at Nicea, by very respectful letters"; while Rufinus says that the Emperor invited Arius also. Constantine the Great expended every effort to facilitate the voyage of the Council members to Nicea and to make their stay memorable for them.

COUNCIL'S INAUGURAL SESSION:

The Council was solemnly inaugurated on June 20th when Constantine arrived after celebrating the anniversary of his victories in Nicodemia. While the Bishops were awaiting the Emperor's arrival, they met and debated together, with clergy and laymen participating in their debates. All the ancient writers are witnesses to this fact affirming that Arius was given a chance to expose his doctrine freely (in spite of all the ill-will he had already shown). A number of his friends were with him, and they, too, were listened to patiently while they stoutly defended him.

ELECTION OF HOSIUS OF CORDOVA TO PRESIDE OVER THE COUNCIL:

When the Emperor arrived, all members gathered in the building designated for the meetings, and each sat in the place assigned to him. The Council was formally declared opened, and its first order of business was to elect the presiding Bishop. The choice fell on Hosius of Cordova who was elected both for his age and his sanctity.

PATIENCE THRASHING OF THE ARIAN HERESY:

After an exchange of courteous speeches, the Council proceeded with its order of business, the first of which was to deliberate on the Arian heresy. According to Rufinus, the Council held daily sessions for the members wanted to give such a grave and weighty matter full study and consideration before passing their final judgement. Arius was often called in and his doctrine seriously questioned – and counter-questioned. Finally the overwhelming majority, including all the Confessors, after thrashing the subject thoroughly, decided that the Arian doctrine was a heresy, and that – to preserve the Christian faith as it had been handed down to them by the Apostolic Church Founders, they had to sum up its elements and give them a crystal clear definition.

Thus was born the idea of the Creed, and it was this Council of venerable Christian Fathers that formulated the Nicene Creed, the first in history of Christianity. To this day this is the Creed which is still used either in its entirety or its main basis in many churches, both in the East and the West. Only six of the three hundred and eighteen members of the Council were from the West. The Creed is, therefore, the Legacy of the Orient given to the Church Universal.

THE CAREFUL WORDING OF THE CREED:

When the Council members discussed the need for the creed, its wording and its contents, they all agreed that it had to be worded with extreme care and precision, and to be free from any ambiguous terms. For they knew that the Greek language – which they all used and in which it as to be written – lent itself easily to subtle nuances. For example, Arius had declared that Christ, the Son, was of like substance to the Father’s – “Homeiousios”- but the Orthodox clergymen affirmed that He was of the Father’s Very Substance or essence “Homeiousious”.

The Council, then, selected three members to word the Creed, and they were Alexandros, Pope of Alexandria, his deacon Athanasius who had distinguished himself, and Leontius, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia: namely two Egyptians and the third a Syrian.

The three agreed that the Creed must affirm the divinity of the Son, so as to be the basis of the true Christian faith of the Church Universal for all time. To increase its forcefulness, they appended to it a statement of anathema that would constitute a warning to those who digressed from the established principles of the Faith, as Arius had done.

The text worded by the three is as follows:

“WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, AND OF ALL THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.

WE BELIEVE IN ONE LORD, JESUS THE CHRIST, THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD; BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER BEFORE ALL AGES; LIGHT OUT OF LIGHT; TRUE GOD OUT OF TRUE GOD; BEGOTTEN NOT MADE; OF ONE ESSENCE WITH THE FATHER; BY WHOM ALL THINGS WERE MADE; WHO, FOR US MEN AND FOR OUR SALVATION, CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, AND WAS INCARNATE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND OF THE VIRGIN MARY, AND BECAME MAN. HE WAS CRUCIFIED FOR US UNDER PONTIUS PILATE; HE SUFFERED, WAS BURIED, AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES.

HE ASCENDED UP TO HEAVEN AND SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF HIS FATHER. HE SHALL COME AGAIN IN HIS GLORY TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, FOR WHOSE KINGDOM THERE IS NO END. WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

A Statement of Anathema Appended to the Creed:

The statement of Anathema was worded as follows: - “And as for them that say concerning the Son of God, there was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was produced, and He was produced from things that are not, and He is of another substance or essence, or created, or subject to conversion or mutation, the Universal-Apostolic Church Saith: let them be anathema.”

The Creed Receives Unanimous Approval:

When the Creed, and its appended statement, was presented to the council, all members with the exception of three approved and signed it. The three were Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognius of Nicea, and Mans of Chalcedon. The zeal of the Emperor was so kindled, however, that he declared that whoever refuses to sign will be deposed and exiled. This firm resolve of the Emperor led the three to change their attitudes. The former two signed the Creed but not the ‘anathema’; the third signed both, in spite of his reluctance to do so. Thus the creed was signed unanimously.

Emperor Banishes Arius and Orders his Writings to be Burned:

Emperor Constantine considered the Creed as a revelation of the Holy Spirit speaking through the saints. To put it into immediate effect, he issued a decree banishing Arius to Illyria. He also ordered that all his writings be consigned to the flames, menacing those who hid any of them with death.

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS –(II)

The Council of Constantinople:

Another heresy was being proclaimed by Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, who had announced his denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. One hundred and fifty Bishops attended this council.

The council condemned the new heresy and emphasized the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. They added a new part in the creed related to the Holy Spirit as an addition to the older part prepared in Nicea. The new part reads “Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.”

The Council of Ephesus:

Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople came up with a new heresy that Christ was of two separated persons: the one divine and beyond the reach of human frailty and the other is the human which is susceptible to all the fragility of the flesh. The divine Christ could neither suffer nor die, and therefore, on the Cross, it was the human Christ alone who suffered and died apart from the divine Christ.

Pope Cyril of Alexandria did not accept this interpretation. He declared our orthodox doctrine of the indivisible union of the divine and human natures of Christ and how this was the faith that was taught both by the scriptures and the Nicene Fathers and to which all true believers should adhere.

One of the metaphors Cyril used to illustrate his defense was that of iron molten in an extremely high degree of heat. In that state the iron and the heat were united into one, and though their substances were two, their union was complete without mixing, nor fusion nor change. No one could either separate or divide them. Thus were the two natures of the Son of God.

A further point made by Nestorius and strongly contested by Cyril related to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Nestorius had spoken out against calling Her “Theotokos” or “Mother of God”. St. Cyril made his stand crystal clear: If Jesus Christ is God, it follows that his mother is the “Mother” who

bore him, forever.

When the controversy became so heated, the Emperor called for the third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus. Two Hundred bishops from all over the world attended the council. St. Cyril and the rest of the bishops were against Nestorius and declared that Jesus' divine nature was never separated from His human nature and that the Virgin Mary is the "Mother of God". For his indefatigable efforts, St. Cyril was called "The Pillar of Faith".

The Second Ecumenical Council

Timotheos, a Priest of Alexandria, Succeeds St. Peter II:

When the Chair of Alexandria became vacant at the death of St. Peter II, Timotheos, another disciple of Athanasius and an illustrious priest and teacher was elected to fill it. He had distinguished himself as one of those who had been sent to Constantinople to help in rehabilitating its Church. For his various faithful services he was consecrated the twenty-second successor of St. Mark the Apostle.

Second Ecumenical Council Convoked at Constantinople:

At that time another heresy was being proclaimed by Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, who had announced his denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The Bishops of the Orthodox Faith, who considered themselves trustees of the Apostolic legacy, exchanged views on this subject, and came to the conclusion that another ecumenical council was imperative.

Emperor Theodosius himself shared their view concerning the need for calling such an assembly and hence issued an invitation to all Bishops to convene in Constantinople in May of the year A.D. 381. One hundred and fifty of them responded to his invitation, and their meeting together constituted the second ecumenical council. Emperor Theodosius attended the inaugural session and gave an address in which he welcomed the members and expressed his joy at their assembly.

The Council Condemns Heresy and Adds to the Nicene Creed:

The council of Constantinople discussed a number of matters of interest to all churches, top priority being given to the examination of the Macedonian heresy. After a thorough consideration it was unanimously condemned, and in consequence, the Council expanded the Nicene Creed by adding to it the clause concerning the Holy Spirit, and thus putting it in the form still upheld to the present day by all Orthodox Churches.

The expansion included also the affirmation of the faith in the Church Universal, the oneness of baptism and awaiting the resurrection of the dead and life eternal.

THE THIRD ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

The Rise of the Nestorian Heresy:

One of the main causes that motivated St. Cyril to do so much writing was the rise, during his times, of a new interpretation of the mystery of Incarnation which, in the light of the Nicene Creed and of the Orthodox faith, was a heresy. The promulgator of this interpretation was Nestorius,

Bishop of Constantinople. According to the Nestorian concept, Christ was of two separate persons, the one divine and beyond the reach of human frailty, and the other human and susceptible to all the fragility of the flesh. The divine Christ could neither suffer nor die, and therefore, on the Cross, it was the human Christ alone who suffered and died apart from the divine Christ.

St. Cyril could neither accept this interpretation nor keep quiet about it. In his Paschal letters, special epistles to his own as well as other churches, and in full-length books, he expounded the Orthodox doctrine of the indivisible union of the divine and human natures of Christ, and how this was the faith that was taught both by the scriptures and the Nicene Fathers, and to which all true believers should adhere. One of the metaphors St. Cyril used to illustrate his defense was that of the iron molten in an excessively high degree of heat. In that state the iron and the heat were united into one, and although there two substances, their union was complete without mixing, nor fusion nor change. No one could either separate or divide them. Such were the two natures of the Son of God, which were united in one nature.

A further point made by Nestorius and strongly contested by St. Cyril related to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Orthodox believers glorified and honored her by calling her the "Theotokos" or "Mother-of-God." Nestorius had spoken out against this title, and here, again, St. Cyril made his stand crystal clear. "I am astounded," he said in one of his letters, "that some can hesitate to call the Blessed Virgin "Theotokos." If Jesus Christ is God, it follows that His mother is the "Mother" who bore Him forever. This is what the Apostles taught us and the doctrine of our Fathers.

Not that the nature of the Word originated with Mary - but because within her was formed the sacred Body to which the Word was hypostatically united we exclaim with John the Evangelist, "the Word was made flesh." And just as the human mother, has no share in creating the soul of her child, yet is considered the mother of the whole person, and not merely the mother of his physical nature; so it is with Mary who is the Mother of Christ in His entirety and hence is indeed the Mother of God."

On the other hand, St. Cyril convoked a second council at Alexandria. This second Alexandrine council again resolved to try to convince Nestorius of his error. A decision was taken to write to him another letter, the first part of which was to be an exposition of the Nicene Creed, and the second part an affirmation of the true faith, followed by twelve anathemas. It read thus:

"Conforming to the Faith of the Fathers, we declare that the unique Logos of God has taken flesh of the Virgin, has made this flesh His very own, submitted Himself to human birth, passed out of the Virgin's womb as a child without ceasing to be what He is and remaining in the body as He is – namely Very God by nature. The flesh was not changed into the nature of the divine, just as the divine Logos was not changed into the nature of the flesh for It was not submitted to any change.

Being yet a child and even while in the womb of His Mother, the Logos filled the entire world, He governed it conjointly with His Father and the Holy Spirit – for Divinity knows no limit. The Logos is united to the flesh hypostatically. We therefore believe in One Single Son and Lord Jesus Christ; we separate not the man from the God; we do not believe that He is simply united under the semblance of dignity and power; these are new words alien to the Faith.

If we, too, say, as did St. Paul (in Col. 2:9) that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, we perceive that God dwells not in Him as He dwells in His saints, but that the divine and the human were united in Christ in the fashion that the soul is united to the body in a human

being. There is therefore, One Christ, One Son, One Lord." If he were really 'Orthodox' as he had claimed, Nestorius was asked to prove it by signing both the letter and the anathemas. Thus he would vindicate himself and clarify his attitude before all believers."

Emperor Convoles Third Ecumenical Council:

Besides, the Nestorian controversy had already involved so many people and aroused so much reaction among both the high and the lowly that it could not be resolved by just an imperial letter carrying a threat to St. Cyril. More decisive action on an ecumenical scale had to be taken, and the Emperor himself realized when the people of Constantinople themselves urged him to call a Council of all the bishops to deal with this subject, he responded to their plea and issued an invitation to the Bishops of all Churches, to attend its convocation at the city of Ephesus in June of the year A.D. 431, St. Cyril was invited on the authority of his own dignity but the attitudes of the Emperor and of Nestorius towards him had not changed.

When the letter of convocation reached the bishops of Africa, they decided by common consent to entrust St. Cyril to the responsibility of representing them. In this decision they declared that he was the organ of Orthodoxy. Celestinus had also said to him, "the power of our See is with you." Thus he united in his person three authorities: the authority of his own See, as well as that of the Sees of Africa and of Rome. Nonetheless, the Bishop of Rome sent his delegates to the Council to represent his Church and his person.

St. Cyril received the Emperor's invitation as soon as he made plans to sail for Ephesus, even though he had heard of the letter that Nestorius had sent to Celestinus telling him that should "the proud Pharaoh" set foot in Ephesus, he will have to give a strict account of his deeds and his words, Being one of the most intrepid men of all times, he disregarded all danger and threats to his own person in his fiery zeal to defend the faith. When he sailed, he took with him a strong delegation of Coptic ecclesiastics which included his outstanding contemporary Abba Shenouda of Akhmim. Upon arrival, Memnon Bishop of Ephesus, an Egyptian by birth, met them with warm cordiality and a fraternal welcome.

Celestinus, Bishop of Rome, sent three delegates: the Bishops Arcadius and Projectus to represent the Roman council, and the priest Philip to represent him personally.

As the date fixed for the council drew near, the Bishops gradually joined each other: two hundred of them hastened to stand and once more defend the faith and prove themselves indeed the worthy successors of the Nicene Fathers.

Desirous to intimidate the august Bishops, Nestorius came to Ephesus as a man going to battle, surrounded by forty partisans and a big number of armed men. One of his companions was Irenaeus, an influential nobleman of Constantinople. In addition, Candidianus the imperial commissioner representing Emperor Theodosius at the council, waived aside his neutrality and stood by Nestorius even though he had been only commissioned to see that order prevailed. Instead of keeping his strict impartiality, however, he allowed his troops to stand sentinels round the houses of Nestorius.

Unanimous Condemnation of Nestorius:

The following morning the Fathers met for the third session. The delegates of the West asked to hear the minutes of the first session. On hearing them, they readily signed the excommunication of Nestorius. A letter was sent to Emperor Theodosius in which he was informed that the church,

in the East and the West, agreed on excommunicating Nestorius. All those present signed the letter, and also requested the Emperor to withdraw his annulment and to permit them to go back to their respective Sees.

Monasticism

(1) Introduction about monastic life:

Monastic life is different from marriage life. Each one of them is a gift from God. See the memory verse. *“He who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord – how he may please the Lord, but he is who married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife,” (1 Cor. 7:32)*

Monastic life is very respectable in our church. Monasticism began first in Egypt. The first monk in the world was St. Anthony. He was a Copt born in Upper Egypt.

The first rules of the monastic life were composed by St. Pachomius, another Copt from Upper Egypt. At first, monks lived in caves in the hills and mountains of Egypt, in complete solitude. Then the monasteries were established. St. Pachomius was the first Abbot in the world who established monasteries.

In the 4th and 5th centuries, the Coptic monasteries increased. They became hundreds. Many great writers came to Egypt from various countries in the east and west to see the blessed monks, and they recorded their words and their holy deeds in books. Among those we can mention Palladius, and Jerome.

Some monasteries were ruined. Others were covered with sand underground. Others are used as rural churches. Our church is also trying to restore and reconstruct some of our ancient monasteries.

(2) How does a monk spend his day?

1. His day starts from very early morning. He sings hymns for the Psalmody, prays the first hour prayers, and attends a divine liturgy.
2. After that he starts to carry out his duties in the monastery. It may be cleaning, cooking, planting, repairs, writing books, translating, recording hymns, teaching new priests or young deacons, meditations and prayers, serving the church outside the monastery for a while, reading the Bible... etc. So a monk has a busy day, but he is busy doing God’s work. A monk is very intimate with God at all times; even when he works in the monastery. He mixes his work with prayer.
3. In the evening, he holds evening prayers either with the rest of the monks or alone by himself. Then he spends the nights in prayers and hymns.
4. According to Coptic tradition, El- Natroun, the desert of Scete, has a Christian history that goes back as far as the visit of the holy family to Egypt. The holy Virgin Mary blessed the mountains of El-Natroun, predicting the angelic services that would be rendered there.
5. The second settlement, frequently referred to by the ancient authorities, was called Cellia, situated northeast of Scets, the present Wadi El-Natroun. According to Palladius, this was the habitation of St. Macarius of Alexandria.

6. Dair Al-Baramous or the monastery of the Romans: This monastery is the northern most of the four remaining monasteries of Wadi El-Natroun. Dair Al-Baramous is the earliest settlement in Wadi El-Natroun.

The History of its foundation is ultimately related to the lives of the two Romans, St. Maximus and Domadius. According to tradition, these two young Roman princes, sons of the Roman emperor Valentine, arrived in Wadi El-Natroun after having visited the Christians holy places of Nicea and Palestine. There they met St. Macarius, who served as the priest of the desert.

At first, St. Macarius tried to dissuade them; but after a while, the “two little strangers” as they were called, had established themselves in their cells. The older brother had attained “perfection” before he died. Three days later, the younger brother also died. A year after their departure, St. Macarius consecrated the cell of those two Roman princes and said, “Call this place the cell of the Romans.” Dair Al Baramous has lately restored its previous importance by his holiness Pope Shenouda III

7. Of the monasteries, which are presently inhabited by monks, there are four in the Wadi El-Natroun which lies to the west of the Delta. They are Dair (i.e. monastery) Abu Maquar (St. Macarius), Dair Anba Bishoy (St. Bishoy), Dair Al Baramous (i.e. the Romans and Dair Al-Syrians (of the Syrians).
8. In the Fayum area there is one monastery, namely that of Anba Samuel (St. Samuel) and on the west bank the Nile, to the north of Asyout, there is Dair-of Al-Mahark.
9. In the eastern desert, boarding the red sea, there are two monasteries, namely Dair Anba Antonius (St. Anthony) and Dair of Anba Paula (St. Paul).
10. In the recent times, the monastery of Abba Mina (i.e. St. Mina) and Mareotis (Maryut) has been re-established close to the ancient shrine of St. Mina by Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria H.H. Pope Cyril VI.
11. There are also many convents, in our homeland Egypt. These convents also have many nuns who live a righteous life filled with joy in Christ. Details of these convents deserve another lesson.

(3) A brief history of Coptic Monasticism

Abba Antony the Great (c. 254-356)

The most famous of all early monks is Abba Antony the Great, who is widely regarded as the founder of monasticism. He was raised in a Christian family in a village along the Nile River.

Abba Antony's parents died when he was approximately 18 or 20 years old, leaving him a considerable fortune. One day, he heard a passage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew in the church: “If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Matt. 19:21.) Immediately, he gave away all of his earthly possessions and fled to the desert. There, he practiced a rigorous life, both spiritually and physically. Indeed, the word “asceticism” is derived from the Greek word *ascēsis*, which means “exercise regimen.” The word was applied to Abba Antony's life, which included manual labour, vigils, and incessant prayer.

We know of Abba Antony and his life through Saint Athanasius the Apostolic (c. 296-373), the twentieth Patriarch of Alexandria, who authored a work entitled “Life of Antony”. This work is based on both firsthand encounters with Abba Antony while Saint Athanasius fled Roman persecution in the deserts of Egypt and recollections of Abba Antony’s disciples. It is replete with stories of miracles, wisdom, and a lifelong struggle against Satan and his demons. The Life of Antony was more than merely the story of a holy monk in the desert, however. In his preface to Life of Antony, Saint Athanasius tells its readers, “Along with marveling at the man, you will want to imitate his purpose, for Antony’s way of life provides monks with a sufficient picture for ascetic practice.” In a short time, the story of Abba Antony’s blessed life spread throughout the known world in several languages. It became the paradigm not only of asceticism, but also of proper Christian living. Some of the notable successors to this heritage are:

Abba Pachomius (c. 292-346)

Born in Thebes (present day Luxor) to pagan parents, he was forced into the military and subsequently captured. He was so touched by the charity and love of local Christians who provided assistance to him while in captivity that he embraced the faith and was baptized in 314. He entered the desert under the guidance of Abba Palamon in 317, imitating the hermitic life of Abba Antony.

A few years later, he heard a divine voice calling him: “Pachomius, Pachomius, struggle, dwell in this place and build a monastery, for many will come to you to become monks with you, and they will profit their souls.” Abba Pachomius heard the calling and established the first cenobitic (i.e., “community”) monastery at Tabennesi. He is therefore credited as the founder of community monasticism, which is prevalent today.

The number of these cenobitic (or “Pachomian”) communities grew at a miraculous rate. By his departure, there were nine monasteries for men and two for women. To deal with the administration of these communities, Abba Pachomius created the Koinonia. This word, which is Greek for “fellowship,” simply describes the federation of these monasteries under a single leader and spiritual order.

In addition to establishing community monasticism and the Koinonia, Abba Pachomius was the first to establish a cohesive body of rules for monks. One biographer of the desert fathers tells us that an angel appeared to Abba Pachomius as he was in his cave and told him to create these Pachomian Rules from what was written on a bronze tablet. The only complete translation of these Rules comes to us from a Latin translation that was completed by Abba Jerome in the beginning of the fifth century.

Abba Macarius the Egyptian (c. 300-390)

Born in Shanshour according to late tradition, he was a contemporary of Abba Antony the Great, from whom he learned much about asceticism. There are many stories of him in the biographies of the desert fathers, and especially, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. He established the monastic settlement of Scetis.

Abba Amoun (c. 290-347)

Born into a wealthy family, but orphaned at a young age. He was forced to marry when he was young, but convinced his wife to accept a celibate life with him. They lived thus for eighteen years until she persuaded him to pursue asceticism publicly. He founded the monastic settlements of Nitria and Kellia, which would become world famous in later years.

Histories of the Desert Fathers and Mothers

It is important to note that the sayings and stories of the desert fathers, although sometimes treated as one cohesive work, are actually several biographies of the desert fathers with unique authors, translations, and dates of authorship. We consider some of them below.

Apophthegmata Patrum

This work, Sayings of the Desert Fathers, is a collection of sayings and stories of desert fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries. There are several versions in Coptic, Greek, Syriac, Latin, Armenian, and Ethiopic.

The History of the Monks in Egypt

This is an anonymous Greek work commonly believed to have been written by several traveling monks from Jerusalem in the late fourth century.

The Lausiaca History

Written by Palladius in the early fifth century, this Greek work contains sayings and stories of several desert fathers that Palladius encountered during his journey throughout the Egyptian deserts in the late 380s. The work is named after its recipient, Lausus, the Roman emperors' chamberlain.

These sources all describe a unique spiritual experience in the desert, a window of heavenly life on earth. Indeed, their authors oftentimes described the sayings and stories as spiritual medicine. Palladius, in his prologue to Lausus, says, "May this account then, be a constant reminder for the good of your soul and a constant medicine against forgetfulness."

"ST. ARSENIUS"

The Teacher of the Sons of Kings

On 13 Bashense our church celebrates the feast day of St. Arsenius, teacher of the sons of kings. He departed from this world in the year 445. In honouring any of the church Saints we see in them good examples for people who benefited from the grace of God and who were able to fulfill God's commandments. Many times the devil may try to deceive us by saying that the commandments as mentioned in the Holy Bible are difficult and we cannot do it. But when we study the life of the Saints, their lives become like signs on the road that the passenger needs to observe in order to reach the destination. These Saints were able to live by God's commandments through doing their best and also through God's grace.

The king (his name was Theodosius the Great) hired St. Arsenius as a teacher for his two sons. He taught them in the king's house.

St. Arsenius said: “Show me O God how to be saved”. After that an angel came to him and told him to go outside the world. As soon as he heard the voice, he hung his clothes and traveled to Alexandria, Egypt, and from there he went alone to the wilderness praying and fasting.

One time he was talking to a new monk. The other monks asked him, “how come you are asking questions to this new monk and you are the one who is full of knowledge?” St. Arsenius told them: “I am learning from his simplicity and I am learning the basic principles of Coptic Orthodox life from him”. This shows us that in spiritual life what counts is not the amount of knowledge, but the depth, the humbleness, and love.

One of his main characteristics was silence. When the people asked him, “Why are you so silent?”, he answered, “Many times I blame myself for what I said, but I never blamed myself for not speaking”

St. Arsenius was very humble. He used to work and produce small things by his hand. Then he used to sell it and give the money to the poor.

He visited Jerusalem and got the blessings of the Holy places there.

At the time of his death, he was very afraid. When the other monks asked him why he was so afraid, he said, “Since I became a monk and this hour of leaving the world is before my eyes”. In the Agpeya book, in the Compline prayers we say. ”Behold I am about to stand before the Just Judge, frightened and terrified of my many sins, for the life that is spent in jollity deserves condemnation. Repent, therefore, O my soul, as long as you dwell on this earth”.

When the King of Constantinople knew that St. Arsenius departed he brought his body and built a church in his name. May his blessings be with us. Amen.

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

St. John Chrysostom was born in 347 AD in Antioch-Syria. He was very well known as a great public speaker. The name “Chrysostom” means the “Golden Mouth.” St. John became the Patriarch of Constantinople. He was exiled many times for his outspoken criticism of the Royal court. He preferred to be exiled rather than to stay on his throne as a patriarch and compromise his values. He always said the truth regardless of the outcome.

He was born to a very rich family. They raised him very well. His parents sent him to Athens which was the most well known place for education. He was brilliant. He left the world and became a monk at an early age. When his father passed away he did not take any of the money that was left for him. He left all the money for the poor.

Remember that we, as children of God, were given our parents to help us to be raised well. But we must listen, cooperate and obey.

He was given a special talent from the Holy Spirit. He wrote many books.

He was ordained a priest by the guidance of an angel to St. Phiabianos, if you go to any school of theology you will find many of his books still being used as text books for graduate and post-graduate students. Some pursue a Masters degree or a Ph. D. to understudy part of his work.

He became Patriarch of Constantinople. He taught his people very well, not only by his writings and sermons but also by his good example in love, sacrifices, and dedication to righteously living with God.

One time Queen Ozeksia (the wife of King Arkadius) took by force a garden that belonged to a poor widow. The widow complained to the Patriarch (St. John) who tried hard to convince the Queen to return the garden. When she refused, he stopped her from entering the church and from taking communion. Then her husband exiled him. The whole congregation came around the palace shouting all night. There was a huge thunderstorm, so all the people including the Queen thought that it was a sign that he must come back from exile. They brought him back.

Remember that the church authorities treat all people the same way regardless of their jobs or their abilities. The people of the church must be fair as Christ was fair. Also, taking communion requires repentance, confession, and humility. The church has the authority to stop an individual from taking communion if he or she has not achieved the requirements for taking communion.

After he returned, the same Queen ordered a big statue for her made of silver to be placed in the largest center of the won. After they placed the statue it became a place of dancing. St. John Chrysostom criticized this action. He was exiled again. This time for a long time until he passed away. Remember what St. John the Baptist did with King Herod who wanted to take the wife of his brother to be his wife.

Please read also (Luke 14:25-35).

God sent his prophets to say the truth and witness to the truth.

We celebrate the Feast day of St. John the Golden month of the 17th Hatour (around November 26) every year.

Saint Athanasius the Apostolic (I) (296 -373)

Please read the attached articles entitled “Saint Athanasius the Apostolic”, “Standing Firm”, and give the lesson with emphasis on the points below.

St. Athanasius was born in Alexandria from Egyptian Pagan parents at about 296 A.D. He was educated in the famous Catechetical School of Alexandria. He learned Christianity in its deepest spiritual form. He was chosen by Pope Alexandros, to be deacon and secretary.

He went to the desert and was a disciple of St. Anthony the Great.

He was given the name “Apostolic” because of his very significant contribution to preserve the faith. How did he do this? He stood very firm.

Arius, an Egyptian priest declared that Jesus is secondary in place to God the Father and he defied all the Biblical and Apostolic teachings of the Church. The Patriarch Alexandros tried to stop him. But Arius continued to spread his false faith to the extent that a need for a council to settle the matter was urgent. In the year 325A.D, at the time of Emperor Constantine, 318 Bishops from all over the world convened. St. Athanasius who was only a deacon, convinced 314 Bishops. They

stated that the Son is of the same substance as the Father, “Homeiousios”.

St. Athanasius was chosen as the 20th Pope of Alexandria after the departure of Pope Alexandros.

Note: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III is the 117th Pope of Alexandria.

He is one of the Heroes of faith, a great theologian and writer.

On May 15th of every year, our Church celebrates the feast of the departure of St. Athanasius.

- He was exiled five times from his see and each time he spared no effort to accomplish a more significant mission. He wrote significant articles, which are the subject of theological studies until now. He chose to be exiled rather than being soft in the faith. He stood very firm.

On the 15th day of May, the Coptic Church celebrates the feast of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, a personality of immortal influence in the history of the Eastern and Western Churches.

Saint Athanasius was born in Alexandria from Egyptian Pagan parents around 296 A.D. Like most of the well educated of his time, he studied and mastered the Greek language. His profound knowledge of that language and the fact that most of his writings were in Greek misled some historians to the error of considering him among the Greek Fathers of the Church. However, St. Athanasius’ well-known treatise “On Celibacy” which was written in eloquent Coptic language proves his pure Egyptian descent.

We will cover the following:

- The era in which St. Athanasius lived.
- St. Athanasius’ Christology and Arianism.
- St. Athanasius famous books
- St. Athanasius in Exile.

- **The Era**

At the time of St. Athanasius, the Church of Alexandria was flourishing with its theological and philosophical studies and Alexandria was the sea of Christian Learning throughout the whole world. The famous Catechetical School of Alexandria furnished its candidates with higher branches of religious and secular learning. It was an international institution that herded students from all over the known world. Among the graduates of that school were those illustrious names such as Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, etc. who laid the Christian doctrines on Philosophical bases.

In that setting, St. Athanasius studied Christianity, accepted it, and was chosen by Patriarch Alexandros as his deacon and secretary.

- **St. Athanasius’ Christology and Arianism**

While St. Athanasius was in his twenties, he was faced by the progress of the universal Arian controversy. Arius (250-336), an Egyptian priest of St. Mark’s Church in Alexandria, relegated Christ to a secondary place to God the Father “homeiousios”. He set his Church ablaze with his unorthodox teachings. The Patriarch, Alexandros, in his attempt to put a stop to that heresy, called a local council of some hundred bishops at Alexandria and condemned Arius, suspended, and excommunicated him.

Arius, free from being tied to one church, began spreading his Christological teachings which he put in hymns to be sung in folkloric tunes.

Very soon the situation became so grave that an Ecumenical Council was summoned at Nicea by Emperor Constantine in 325 A.D. That was the first time when 318 bishops, representing the Western, Eastern, Byzantine and African Churches met together to discuss and settle outstanding dogmatic and doctrinal differences. The Council produced a creed that stood the test of time and is still in use of almost all Christian Churches.

St. Athanasius, who was still a deacon, was responsible for the text of that creed which stated clearly that the Son is of the same Substance of the Father "Homoiousios". The creed was signed by 314 bishops and the Council condemned excommunicated Arius and the four other bishops who refused to sign the Creed.

• **St. Athanasius' famous books:**

1. The Incarnation of the Word.
2. Against the Pagans (Heathen)
3. The Life of St. Anthony.
4. Four Books against Arius.
5. The faith.
6. Letters on the Holy Spirit.
7. Many Articles about the Nicea Council and the Creed.
8. Many Paschal letters.

• **St. Athanasius in Exile**

In 328 A.D., Saint Athanasius succeeded Patriarch Alexandros on the See of St. Mark as the 20th Patriarch after St. Mark. The heat was so strong between Arianism and Christian orthodoxy and St. Athanasius had to sustain the fighting. He was exiled five times from his seat and each time he spared no effort to accomplish a more significant mission. St. Athanasius' first exile was in Trier (336-337) where he wrote most of his famous treatises that gave theologians and scholars working material to this date.

The second (339-346) was in Rome where he resided at curia of Julius I and introduced Coptic monasticism to the Roman Church.

The third and the fourth exiles (356-361 & 362-363) were spent in the Eastern and Western deserts of Egypt where St. Athanasius visited the fathers of the desert and gained the support against Arianism.

The fifth exile (365-366) served to strengthen the faith of the Orthodox Alexandrine population and unify them in their angry demand of the Emperor to uproot Arianism. The emperor had to return St. Athanasius back to his see so that peace could be restored again in his empire.

Until his death, St. Athanasius was the image of a militant churchman who carried the banner of Christian orthodoxy in the midst of the hostile world.

(II) The fifth Century AD:

In 451 the Chalcedonian assembly, Pope Dioscorus was not invited to the assembly. Prior to this meeting, the church was one and the presidency of the church, in the universal assembly was for the Pope of Alexandria.

Pope Leo I, wanted to take the leadership of the Christian World from Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria. To achieve that, he accused Pope Dioscorus of harshness in his letters and insulted him.

The latter (Pope Dioscorus) did not say anything harsh words back to him. Apparently the Chalcedonic assembly was held to deal with Eutychian heresy who said that Christ had one nature which is the divine and that it swallowed his humanity. But in fact, this assembly was held without the presence of Pope Dioscorus. Its aim was to destroy the leadership of the Church of Alexandria. The result was the rejection of Eutychian heresy. The council said that Christ had two natures united. They called themselves the diophysopites. The church of Alexandria together with four other churches, Syria, Armenia, India, and Ethiopia kept the original faith which says that Christ has one nature (meaphysite) of two unmingled, unmixed, unchanged, and inseparable natures.

(III) The Seventh Century A.D.

The Arabs invaded the land of Egypt in 640 A.D. and took it by force. The Coptic people continued their belief in our Lord Jesus Christ and maintained their traditions and true faith.

What was the positive side of the Arabic rule in Egypt? It was the isolation of Egypt from the rest of the Christian world which made the people conserve their faith exactly as it was received from the Apostles without any change; while the other Christians throughout the world started to divide, as we will see further on, and began to be distant from the basic faith.

(IV) FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY TO THE TENTH CENTURY A.D.

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria continued on with the true faith and the churches of Rome and Constantinople were together since they deviated from the true faith in the Chalcedonic Council in 451 A.D.

(V) THE ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

The Church of Rome accepted the principle of the Holy Spirit coming forth from the Father and the Son and not only from the Father. It added this to the Creeds of the councils of both Nicea and Constantinople. This led to another division in 1054 A.D. between the Church of Rome, known as the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Constantinople, known as the Greek Orthodox Church, together with the rest of the Orthodox churches of the Chalcedonic Council.

(VI) THE ELEVENTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

There were 3 groups: the group of the Coptic Orthodox Church continuing on with the true faith, the group of the Greek Orthodox churches with the Russian and Yugoslavian Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and its followers.

(VII) THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

In 1517 there was a division in the Church of Rome because of Martin Luther. He started by rejecting Priesthood and many beliefs of the Roman Church. The Pope of Rome was the Pope of the world, the deeds of forgiveness, and many others. The Protestant sect was formed. It was too deviated from the original faith and continued dividing into many other sects, each with its own

beliefs.

In 1529 the Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic Church and it was then known as the Anglican Church. The reason was because the latter asked to be the head of the world and also because of certain reasons regarding the belief.

(VIII) THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D. TO THE PRESENT

There are around 2600 Christian groups but the churches could be divided as follows:

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria with its four churches, Syria, Armenia, Ethiopia and India. These are called the Eastern Church groups, the Non-Chalcedonian. Those of one nature.

- The Greek Orthodox Church with the churches of Russia and Yugoslavia, known as the Orthodox Chalcedonic churches, those of two natures.

6. The Roman Catholic Church with the Pope of Rome as leader, followed by many Catholics of the world.

- The Protestant group and this was followed by hundreds of derivative groups.

- The Anglican Church and its leadership in England and many Anglicans of the world follow it.

Conclusion:

(A) What Do We Benefit From This Brief Historic View Of The Coptic Orthodox Church?

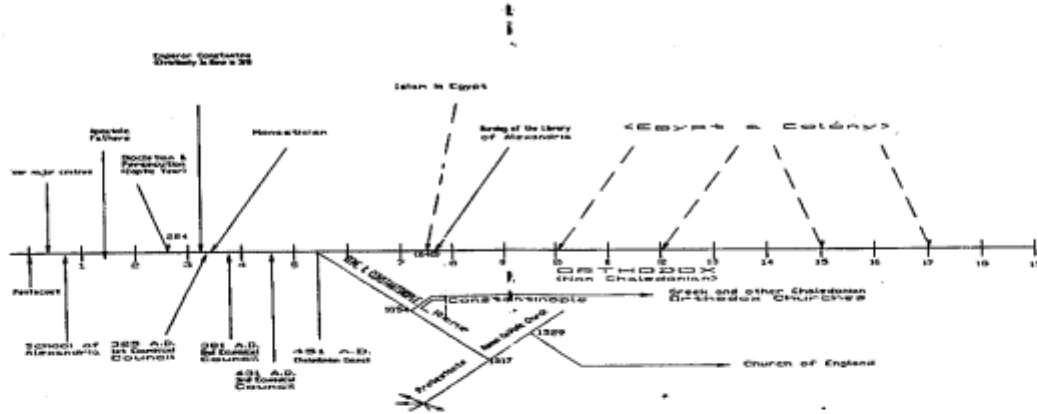
(1) We are members of a precious church whose faith is 100% right. The church was able to maintain and preserve this faith through the centuries in spite of the many pressures from society, the governments and the other sects.

(2) We should stick to our church and our beliefs despite all the pressures of the world. We should know that we have a role to glorify the name of our Lord in the society we live in. Our church is not struggling against the world, but her duty is to set a good example to the world so that she can elevate her heart towards heaven and the true faith.

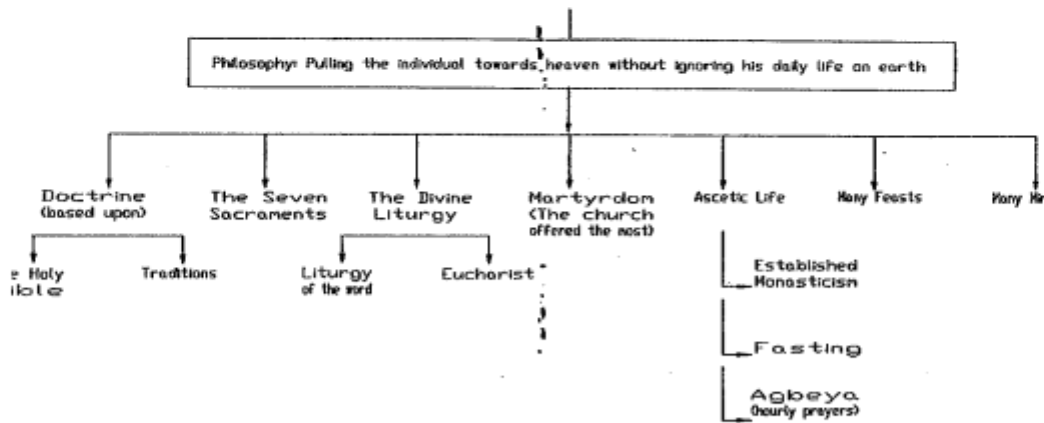
Our aim is to attract others towards our Lord Jesus Christ through invisible services, not for the increase of the Orthodox group, but for the salvation of souls through love and faith.

(B) Attached please see a chart for an overview of the History of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH



MAIN FEATURES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA



THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA

Introduction:

In the previous booklet “the History of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, A Brief Synopsis”, the November 1992 edition, we mentioned that the church of Alexandria is very old and historic. It was founded and blessed by Our Lord Jesus Christ when He visited the land of Egypt and stayed there for a period of his childhood with St. Mary and St. Joseph. St. Mark the Apostle, who was one of the seventy apostles, preached the Christian faith as he received it from Our Lord Jesus Christ. Since then, the church preserved the true faith in spite of the many pressures from heretics, governments, societies and the ceaseless work of the evil one. The church also had many martyrs sacrificing their lives; more than any other church.

We would like to present the following:

- 1) The reference that the Church of Alexandria Relies upon in its Doctrine and Curriculum.
- 2) The summary of this doctrine of the Church of Alexandria
- 3) The curriculum of the church of Alexandria and its purpose.
- 4) The main features of worship of the church of Alexandria that complies with the doctrine and curriculum.

1. The Reference that the Church of Alexandria Relies upon in its Doctrine and Curriculum:

St. Paul the Apostle says: “We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17). If we examine St. Paul’s words to the Thessalonians, we will find that they apply to church of Alexandria. It is the church chosen by God from the beginning for salvation by the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief in the truth. The words “stand fast” and the words “hold the tradition” prove that it is a steady church that does not change with time in its doctrine nor in its spirituality. The words “by word” and “epistle” prove that it is an Evangelical church (the written word) and a traditional church (the verbal teachings).

† The Church of Alexandria Depends on the Bible with its Both Testaments.

The church of Alexandria believes in all of the two Testaments of the Bible. The church believes the Bible to be a holy book, written by people filled and directed by the Holy Spirit. It is not a philosophical or a scientific book (for mental fulfillment), but it is the words of God coming from Him so that man can live by them. It is an experience of meeting God and enjoying the work of the Holy Spirit. Since the 2nd century, the church of Alexandria was famous for its theological school which concentrated on the Bible and explained it as a whole, not focusing on one verse only and leaving others as some denominations do.

† The Church of Alexandria Depends on Tradition:

The word “tradition” in the Greek language, as it came in the New Testament, is “Paradisos”. It does not mean “imitation” but it came with a sense of forwarding something to another person. This means receiving the life that the disciples who lived with Our Lord Christ experienced. The Lord did not give His disciples a written book but He prepared them in a way to accept Him in their hearts.

They had practical teachings from Him and He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in every one of them. Accordingly St. Paul talks to the Philippians saying: “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9). To the Corinthians he says “I praise you brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions as I delivered them to you.” (I Corinthians 11:1).

The church of Alexandria is an evangelical, traditional and apostolic church, which depends on:

- a) The Holy Bible
- b) The tradition received from the saints
- c) The church's worship at the time of the apostles.

All of this produced a church with a steadfast doctrine and a particular curriculum.

2. Summary of the Doctrine of the Church of Alexandria

† The Church believes that God is one with no partner. He has three Hypostases: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and these three Hypostases are in one God.

† The church believes that Our Lord Jesus Christ the person, has one nature as existing in the unity of His divinity and humanity without mixing or changing or separating for one moment or a blink of an eye.

† The Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father only as Christ said: “But the Helper the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:26)

† The Virgin Mary is the Mother of God (Theotokos) the Logos. She was born from Hanna and Joachim naturally like all humans. She is a great saint above all the heavenly powers and saints because the Logos was born from her through the Holy Spirit. She is the Mother of Our Saviour. The Church believes in her virginity after the birth of Our Lord Jesus. After her death, her body ascended to heaven and the disciples saw that.

† The church believes in the intercession of the Virgin Mary, all the martyrs, saint, angels and the heavenly powers.

All that is mentioned in this summary is taken from the Creed that was published by the three Ecumenical Councils in Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus. We pray it in all of our churches in the Holy Mass and individual prayers.

3. The Curriculum of the Church of Alexandria and its Purpose

The teachings of the church about worship are based on lifting the heart towards heaven without ignoring the human reality and daily life. These teachings bring the apostolic life and evangelical mind to the modern man without any misinterpretation, giving him a deeply spiritual life. Is the

church against the world? No. The Church's job is to lead the world towards peace, towards heaven and eternity. It is not the Church's job to stand against the world. The Church always prays in the mass for the salvation of the world. The church did not stand against those who personally produced the heresies but against the heresies themselves. God is love and His church is a church of love to all. God wants all people to be saved and to have the knowledge of the truth, and so does the church.

4. The Main Features of Worship in the Church of Alexandria that complies with Doctrine and Curriculum.

† A Church filled with prayers:

“You should pray all the time without boredom.” There are individual prayers, family prayers and church prayers. Each person needs these prayers. Praying the Agbeya is a necessity for the believer to take his daily spiritual nourishment and avoid soul degradation. Prayer is the backbone of spiritual life. It is a school where a person goes from the elementary stage (mind-wandering during prayer and unorganized) to the more advanced stage of loving affection shared continuously with God. An example of the advance stage is Abba Bishoy who used to tie his hair to the ceiling of his cell to prevent him from falling asleep during his prayers.

† An Ascetic church:

It is a church that laid the foundation of monasticism in the world. Abba Paula and Abba Antonios are the first monks. What is monasticism? It is leaving the whole world for the sake of the One, Jesus Christ. An example of this is Mary, who chose the better share that cannot be taken away from her and sat at the feet of the Saviour, listening to His words.

† A Church of Fasting:

The understanding of fasting is “Repressing the body and enslaving it.” Fasting days are ones when the spirit rises without any hindrance and bodily demands. “This kind does not go out except with prayer and fasting”. Therefore, fasting with prayer is a fortified power overcoming the evil one who keeps tempting man continuously. “Sanctify the fast”. Fasting is not just changing what you eat but it is a way to lead a person to a holy life. There are many fasting occasions in the church: Advent, Lent, the fast of the Apostles, the fast of the Virgin Mary, the fast of Wednesday and Friday.

† A Church Carrying the Cross Joyfully:

The Cross is a sign of pride in the church “I should not be proud except for the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ”. The Cross is a sign of pain and triumph. “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Romans 8:36) The church is filled with unutterable joy amid pain and persecution.

† A Church that Celebrates and Honours Feasts:

The feasts are happy spiritual occasions of blessing which the faithful enjoy.

† 7 great feasts (The Annunciation, the Birth of Christ, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, the Resurrection and Pentecost).

† 7 small feasts (Circumcision, the Lord's entrance into the Temple, the Lord's entrance into the Land of Egypt, the Wedding of Cana of Galilee, the Transfiguration, Maundy Thursday and Thomas's Sunday).

† The feasts of saints during which we sing rejoicing hymns to these saints and ask for their intercession e.g. The feasts of St. Mary, St. George, etc.

† The feasts of Angels and heavenly hosts during which we rejoice and ask for their intercession e.g. The feast of Archangel Michael.

† The two feasts of the Cross, the sign of Christians.

† The Coptic New Year, the year of the martyrs.

† **A Church of Seven Sacraments:**

What is a sacrament? It is a heavenly blessing, above any conception, which is unseen and it is given through the Holy Spirit during prayers. Only an authorized priest can perform the sacrament according to certain rituals.

a) The Sacrament of Baptism:

This is the new birth from water and the Holy Spirit. It rids the person of the original sin and all the other sins committed up to the time of Baptism. The word “Baptismos” is Greek and it means “dye” that is the reason for the complete immersion during Baptism. “Buried with Him in baptism, which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12).

“Therefore, we were Buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

b) The Sacrament of the Holy Chrism:

This is the Sacrament of confirmation in the church which is the body of Christ. Through it the believer accepts the gifts of the Holy Spirit and becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit which dwells in him. This sacrament is received immediately after baptism. The Holy Chrism was first made by the Apostles from the scents that were prepared for the body of Christ after His Burial (Luke 23:56 and 24:1).

c) The Sacrament of Repentance and Confession:

In this sacrament, the faithful are reconciled with God to receive forgiveness of the sins they committed after baptism. Repentance and confession are a return to the fortress of the Father and a renewal of the Sonship relation. It is a second baptism. Confession was practiced by the church since the first century as was mentioned in the Book of Acts. “And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds” (Acts 19:18).

The priest who receives the confessions is called “Father of Confession”. When the priest is ordained he receives the power that the Lord Christ gave His disciples to hold and release all the ties of darkness.

“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:18). Also in John 20:22-23 “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

d) The Sacrament of the Eucharist:

This is called the sacrament of sacrament, because during this the bread and wine are changed into the true body and the true blood of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. The believer becomes worthy to have eternal life through this sacrament. “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead, He who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:53-58).

According to the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians chapter 11:27-29: “Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in any unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.” The believer has to be ready for communion by repentance, confession, fasting and humility.

There are three liturgies in the church: the Basilian liturgy, the Gregorian liturgy, and the Cyrillian liturgy.

A Word about the Coptic Language:

The Coptic language is an extension and development of the old Egyptian language. The ancient Greek alphabet also took some of the letters of the same old language. By the middle of the second century B.C., ancient Greek was the official language because it was that which was used in cultural circles. When the Copts wrote down their language they used the Greek alphabet and added 7 characters from the old Egyptian language which express certain sounds not found in the Greek language.

Did you know that the most accurate translation of the Holy Bible is written in the Coptic language? Did you know, that there are some Coptic words regarding theological aspect that cannot be translated to any other language accurately?

A Word about Coptic Art:

The origin of this art is the style of Old Egyptian Art (the Art of the Pharaohs known for its richness and glamour). When Christianity was spread in the world it did not change the cultures, art and folklore already present. But when Christianity came into Egypt there was already a Byzantine influence on the old Egyptian Art. Coptic art restored its own character.

A Word about Coptic Music:

As with Coptic Art, Coptic music is an extension to the Old Egyptian music. It depends primarily on vocal music. This is the reason you do not find many musical instruments in Coptic music because the hymns depend highly on vocals.

e) The Sacrament of Healing of the Sick:

In this sacrament the priest prays on the ointment and anoints the sick person, whether he is physically or spiritually sick. This is in accordance with St. James when he said: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-15) “Anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them” (Mark 6:13).

f) **The Sacrament of Marriage:**

Through this sacrament the man and woman become one through the power of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the marriage is considered to be a holy sacrament and a symbol of the unity of Christ and the church. From the start we find in Genesis 2:18-24 “And the Lord said, It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ takes us back to this quotation in Genesis as is mentioned in the Gospel of St. Mark chapter 19:1-9.

Therefore, the Christian marriage is a complete unity and divorce is not possible unless for adultery “What God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:6).

Therefore, marriage should be preceded by prayers and serious consideration asking guidance from the father of confession and the consent of the family.

The Sacrament of Priesthood:

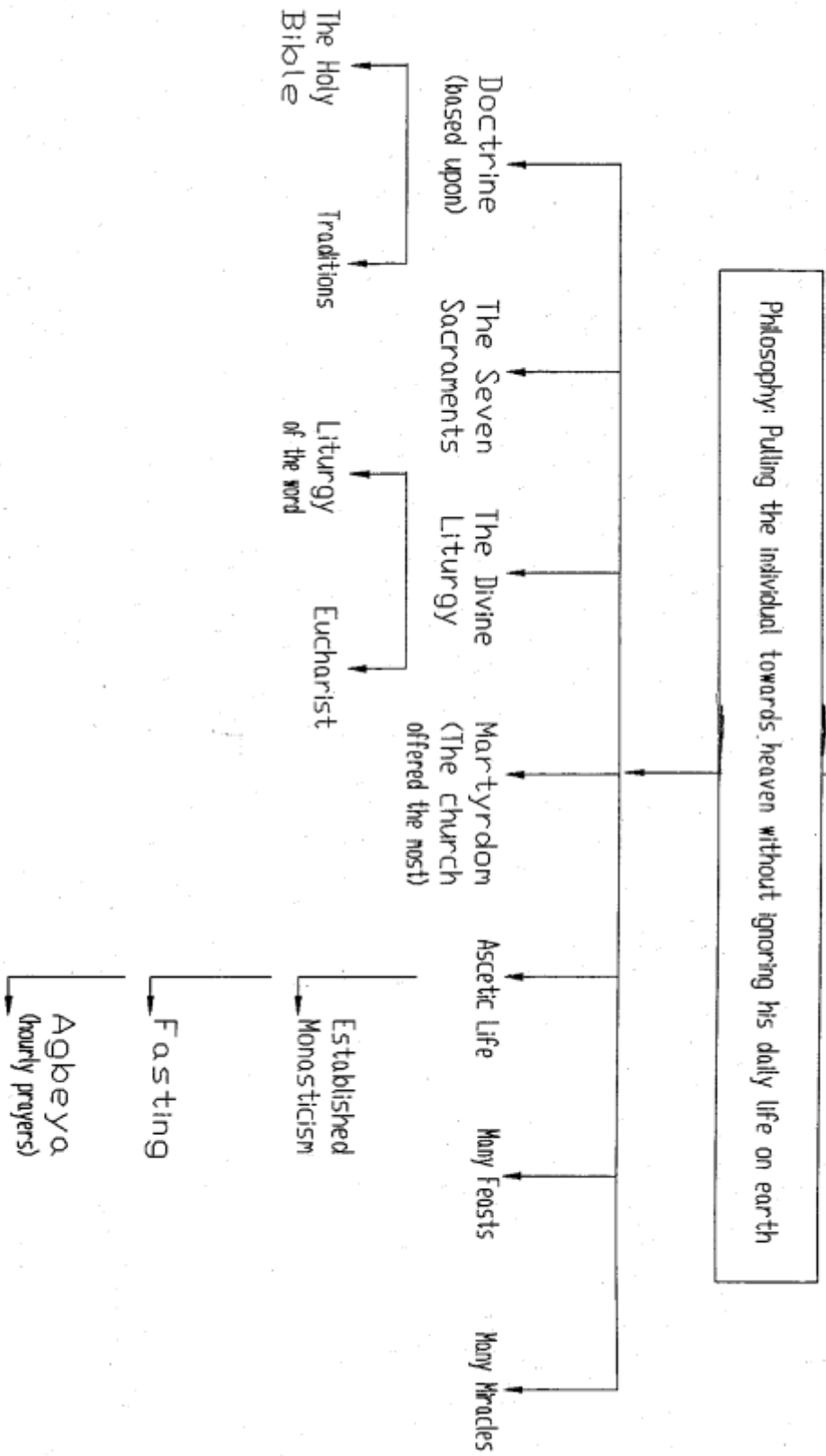
In this sacrament, the Holy Spirit grants the submitting person the ability to consecrate his life to serve the Lord by giving him 3 positions:

The Episcopal position (which represents 3 ranks, the bishop, the archbishop, and the Pope).

The Ministry position (which represents 2 ranks, the priest and the archpriest).

The Deaconship position (which represents the deacon, the archdeacon, the psalmist, the epasaltos and the anagnost).

MAIN FEATURES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA



**ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: THE ANCIENT COPTIC CHURCHES OF EGYPT VOL.
1 – WEB LINK**

[HTTP://WWW.SAINT-
MARY.NET/BOOKS/THE ANCIENT COPTIC CHURCHES OF EGYPT%20VOLUME%20ONE.PDF](http://www.saint-mary.net/books/the_ancient_coptic_churches_of_egypt%20volume%20one.pdf)

**ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: THE ANCIENT COPTIC CHURCHES OF EGYPT VOL.
2 – WEB LINK**

[HTTP://WWW.SAINT-
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ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: EGYPTIAN MONASTICISM – WEB LINK

[HTTP://LACOPTS.ORG/ARTICLES/EGYPTIAN-MONASTICISM/](http://lacopts.org/articles/egyptian-monasticism/)

INTRODUCTION TO THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH – WEB LINK

[HTTP://WWW.SAINT-
MARY.NET/BOOKS/INTRODUCTION%20TO%20THE%20COPTIC%20ORTHODOX%20CHURCH.PDF](http://www.saint-mary.net/books/introduction%20to%20the%20coptic%20orthodox%20church.pdf)

RITUAL THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION TO RITUAL THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION:

The traditions of the Coptic Orthodox Church are essential, as every move and every word in the church reflects a greater symbolic meaning.

The Lord and Master Jesus Christ observed the Hebrew traditions and announced that He did not come to condemn the law but to complete it. The Lord, in all His glory, was even circumcised on the 8th day after His birth (Luke 2:22-24). He also went to Jerusalem to attend the Passover each year, even up until the Last Supper.

He commanded the leper to show himself to the priest (Matthew 8:4), and also did the same for the case of the ten lepers (Luke 17:14). In Luke 9: 14 He distributed the bread to the multitudes after He sat them in groups of fifty (Luke 9:14). Therefore, one can conclude that a blessing does not interfere with orderliness.

The Blessed Apostles also Observed the Traditions.

Paul the Apostle says, “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you...and the rest I will set in order when I come” (1st Corinthians 11:23&34). He also tells Timothy, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2), and to Titus, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking” (1:5).

Definition of the word “Traditions”- *Toukous* (Arabic)

Toukous is plural for *Tuks*. The word *toukous* has its origin in the Greek word “*Taksis*” and which means orderliness or methodical. From this meaning, the Church adopted the word as it refers to the spiritual orderliness that we must abide by in our worship.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONS IN EVERYTHING AROUND US:

Everything is good and beneficial if it contains orderliness. If there is chaos in any matter, it will lead to failure. Orderliness in nature: There is perfect orderliness in nature. Constellations run in their orbits; if they did not, then destruction ensues. Theologists took this as evidence for the existence of God.

Orderliness in bodies of living organisms: In zoology and botany, organ systems function in perfect harmony to give life to its host. If there are damages to any organ or even a lack of harmony within the organs, then that being is susceptible to diseases or even death. To take this analogy further, even within each organ system there are organs that coordinate together yet have specific individual roles.

Orderliness in thought: The human brain has unique qualities that are not found in the animal kingdom. Thinking, imagination, memory, and organization of knowledge are all among these qualities. All these processes are working in harmony every second every day.

Orderliness in building: When building a house, many materials and different types of engineers work together in order to make a building functional.

Orderliness in the army: This is critical to the success of an army in its campaigns.

Orderliness in society: It is impossible for us to list here all the examples of orderliness in society, but one can say that societies cannot come into existence without order.

Importance of Traditions in the Coptic Orthodox Church **Traditions are Practical Faith**

What we know about faith we try to practice through the traditions of the Church. Through traditions, our faith becomes manifested.

EXAMPLES:

We believe that baptism is birth, burial, and consecration. Therefore we are put under the water three times: once for birth, once for burial, and once for consecration. Baptismal through Water and Spirit. The Lord talked with Nicodemus and said: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Therefore, baptism involves water and Myron oil (a symbol of the Holy Spirit). The priest also recites several prayers and readings of the Church that are fitting to the occasion: the Pauline Epistle to Titus (2:11), The Catholic Epistle from 1 John (5:5-14), and the Praxis from Acts (5:26-40); also Psalm 31 (1-2) and the Gospel of John (3:1-12).

The Prayer of Renouncing the Devil

Through this tradition we learn that the devil does not have any control over man. He only fights from the outside but he cannot control the heart of man. In this tradition we also announce our faith in Jesus Christ and the following happens: the priest asks the person who is being baptized to look towards the west, holds his/her right hand up and says the following: (if it was a baby the parents say it instead)

“I renounce you devil. And all your evil works. And all your legions. And all your devilish malice, all your powers and all your repulsive worship; all your evil ways and misguidance. All your army; all your dominion and all your hosts. I renounce you, I renounce you, I renounce you.”

After this, the person is turned to the east and his/her hand is raised and says: “I confess to You, Jesus Christ my saviour and all your pure laws. And all your life giving service and all your works that gives me life.” Then he/she recites the faith saying “We believe in One God, God the Father the Pantocrator, and His only Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ and the life giving Holy Spirit. And the resurrection of the body and the only one Holy Church, the Catholic Apostolic Church. Amen.”

Then the parents are asked if they believe for their child and they respond 3 times: “I believe.”

The New Birth

White clothes are worn by the person being baptized

A red sash is also worn, which symbolizes that the person is now a member in the army of Christ. The sash is tied under the left arm and over the right shoulder. This symbolizes the change from going from the left side (the lower side) to the right side (the higher side). The sash is also a symbol of a transference from the dust of the earth to the higher heavens.

Anointment with Oil for the Unction of the Sick:

This tradition was present from as far back as the time of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Our teacher St. Mark states, “And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them” (6:13).

Therefore, faith in the work of the Holy Spirit (through the anointment of the oil) for the healing of the sick is an old tradition which is still implemented in our church today.

Tradition is a Gift from God across all Generations

God is yesterday, today, and forever... All that happened in the past will happen across all generations. All that happened during the time of Christ while He was on earth, we relive through the traditions.

EXAMPLES:

Forgiveness of sins: Throughout the eras in the Bible, the theme of forgiveness of sins is present. The only difference is the method through which it happens:

From Adam to Noah during the era of ancient priesthood

From Noah to Moses during the era of high priesthood

Forgiveness in these two eras was received through a sacrifice of blood and through the high priests.

From Moses to Christ during the era of priesthood of Aaron and the Levites.

Era of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, He Himself forgave sins.

The Tradition is Timeless:

All the events that occurred at the time of Christ are lived and relived by us through the traditions.

EXAMPLES:

1 The icon of the resurrection and ascension: some call it wrongly “the resurrection play” since it contains roles. However, in truth it is a prayer for an event that actually took place a long time ago. The resurrection fills the lives of the sons and daughters of God who are united through Christ who defeated death.

2 The psalm during epiphany: “The sea saw it and fled Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs. What ails you, O sea that you fled? O Jordan that you turned back?” (Psalm 114:3-5). This Psalm was written by David about 1000 years before Christ and we recite it after the first coming of Christ.

TRADITION IS RELIVING THE OCCASION AS IT WAS MANY YEARS AGO WITHOUT TAKING AWAY FROM ITS ORIGINAL VALUE:

IN THE LAST SUPPER:

The same words that Jesus spoke when He offered His disciples His body and blood are those used during the liturgy: this includes the concept of thanking; the concept of blessing; and the concept of breaking bread. These are the same basic elements that are found in the liturgy.

Luke 22:19-20: “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”
And in Matthew 26:26-28: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’”

4. TRADITIONS ARE THE ORDERS OF WORSHIP THAT HAVE BEEN SET IN PLACE TO ALLOW US TO COME CLOSER TO GOD THROUGH WORDS AND ACTIONS THAT HAVE SYMBOLIC MEANINGS:

The traditions help define everyone’s role in the church: the priest, the deacons, and the laymen. The traditions also contain hymns and actions that have a higher spiritual meaning.

EXAMPLE: THE PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION

This is the only prayer during the liturgy that the priest prays with his hands bare. This is a symbol of the nakedness of Adam and the original sin. The priest represents the whole of humankind, and the nakedness of the hands representing sin. Therefore, this is another example of a simple gesture that has a higher spiritual meaning.

In the second half of the prayer of reconciliation, the priest holds a cloth in each hand and this symbolizes the temple’s door that was torn in half by the power of the cross. The deacon holds the cross on the opposite side of the altar. The priest next raises the *aprosvalreen* so that God would be present after the reconciliation through the cross.

5. TRADITIONS ARE A WAY TO DO THE WILL OF GOD:

EXAMPLE 1: Before the liturgy of the believers, the deacon announces to greet one another with a holy kiss...everyone is in peace. This is following the commandment of love that Jesus Himself told us about “Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother” (Matthew 5:23).

EXAMPLE 2: *Kyeralyson*—Lord have Mercy

This phrase is said in church and outside of church countless times and this is in keeping the commandment: “men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). It also shows that we are always turning to God and asking for His mercy.

Examples of praying with persistence: The hymn “*Genainai*”: a beautiful hymn about mercy.

Note: Sight is not the only sense that transmits information from the outside world into our cognition; however hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, all unite to help us appreciate the world around us. Despite vision having the dominate role in sensing the world, we cannot under appreciate the other senses and their roles. For example, the sense of hearing in appreciating music, or the sense of smell in appreciating something that smells pleasant.

Therefore, the Church has paid close attention to religious music. It is a suitable way to transfer the spirit of worship into the hearts of its believers. Similarly, the incense has a pleasing odour that helps us reflect on our prayers and reminds us of God’s presence.

Also, kissing the altar and the icons is to get a direct blessing from God Himself.

More to follow in the future by the Grace of God

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- 4) Notes about the spirituality of the Traditions from Fr. Salib Sourial
- 5) The book: *Al Masseh fi Ser Alefkarestia* by father Tadros Yacoub Mallaty
- 6) Notes from his grace Bishop Benjamin, the Bishop of Monofeya, about the Spirituality of the traditions
- 7) A collection of books on the traditions of the church by Father Mankarios Awadallah
- 8) The book: *Samo El Ruhbana* by Bishop Metaos

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: THE RITES OF THE HOLY LITURGY – WEB LINK

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXEBOOKS.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/PDFS/THE%20RITES%20OF%20THE%20HOLY%20LITURGY%20-%20HG%20BISHOP%20METTAOUS.PDF](http://www.orthodoxebooks.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/the%20rites%20of%20the%20holy%20liturgy%20-%20hg%20bishop%20mettaous.pdf)

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: HOW TO BENEFIT FROM THE HOLY LITURGY – WEB LINK

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MORAL THEOLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION TO MORAL THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION:

God, in his love to humans, created the human being in his image and likeness in many aspects such as holiness, freedom and eternity. Also in God's love for man, he endowed him with an intellect, wisdom, and a conscience. Also, God gave him the commandment through which he could discover how to walk in goodness and righteousness and not in wickedness and corruption. In the beginning, the commandment was known by humans in their hearts and was clearly understood. This was known as the "Natural Law". Then, when the human nature was contaminated with sin and man began to forget God's commandments to him, God gave him these commandments in a written format, and this is known as the "written Law" which serves as a reminder and a collection of the Divine commandments. The written Law (or the Ten Commandments) is essentially a covenant between God and man. If the human being abides by them, his entire life will be blessed, but if he does not abide these laws, he will be perished in all things. After the coming of Christ, and the era of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit inside humans, the ("Law of Love") was introduced. The "Law of Love" is the "Law of Perfection" which leads the human beings to become sons and daughters of God, because God is love.

We will illustrate and explain with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit: the Natural Law, written Law, and the Law of Perfection in the following points:

1. What is Moral Theology?
2. God gave us His commandments because the will of God is our sanctification, and not to control us.
3. Why did God give Adam a commandment?
4. The Natural Law.. God's commandments prior to Moses the Prophet
5. The Moral Law (i.e. the Ten Commandments)
6. The Christian Law is the "Law of Perfection" (love).
7. Conclusion

1) What is Moral Theology?

There are several branches to the study of Theology and they are all derived from the Holy Bible such as:

- A) Doctrinal Theology .. concerning the doctrines of the Church.
- B) Comparative Theology... concerning the comparison of the Orthodox Church doctrine with other doctrines.
- C) Ritual Theology.. concerning the rituals of the Church and their significance.
- D) Spiritual Theology ... concerning the ideal spiritual life
- E) Pastoral Theology... concerning the service if saving souls.
- F) The Theology of Mission.. concerning the work of evangelism
- G) Moral Theology.

MORAL THEOLOGY:

It is a science which researches morals, behaviors, goodness, and evil from a Christian perspective that is founded entirely on the Holy Bible.

This science is concerned with morals, conduct and the human being's behavior, either between man and God or the relationship of the human being with others (whether they are family members such as the Father/Mother and siblings in a general sense, or friends etc. Naturally, if an individual pursued a life of goodness, he/she will have a holy life full of blessings. On the other hand, if a person walked in the path of evil, he/she will have a miserable life, leading to condemnation.

1) **God gave us His commandments because the will of God is our sanctification, and not for the purpose of controlling us:**

Our Loving God desires the best for us and wants us to be holy, in His image and likeness. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification," (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Then, St. Paul continues saying "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification". (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Therefore, we must understand that the commandments of God for us are not intended to control us or rule over us. But, since He is our Creator, and knows what is beneficial for us, He gave us the commandments which if we would follow with our own free will, we will be sanctified. Likewise was the request of our Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf in His final prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17).

2) **Why did God give Adam a commandment?**

Many times we ask: If God knew that Adam would disobey His command, why did He give him a command and God knows beforehand that Adam would disobey it?

- a) God does not give commandment in order to test the obedience of the human being.
- b) God does not give a commandment to control the human being or to oppress him. This is because God is good righteous and He desires the sanctification of humans. He is our Heavenly Father who created us not for goodness to be offered back to Him, but for us to enjoy His infinite goodness and His inexhaustible richness. So every commandment must hold its essence goodness for the human being.
- c) God's predetermined knowledge of the fact that man will disobey Him, does not prevent Him from advising man against which harms him and hurts him. Otherwise, God's predetermined knowledge would limit all of God's deeds even though they are all for the good of man.
- d) An example of the one who questioned God's predetermined knowledge is the one who says to his parents and those who brought him up that they should save their energy for there are people who do not care for their advice and commands. The commandment is in itself good and it is an indication of God's love for His creation and it is not for God's predetermined knowledge to delay His unlimited love.

e) God granted the human being a commandment while knowing that he will disobey it. Nevertheless, He granted him His commandment and truly, the human being fell into wickedness and yet, he knew how to rise from his fall and to benefit from his mistake and to return once more to Paradise which he had lost through his sin and his disobedience. God provided a way out for man and provided for him the way of salvation. Therefore, man felt deep gratitude towards God, and his love for God and his appreciation toward His Maker increased substantially. Thus, the descendants of Adam became inclined to perform works of righteousness, worship and thanksgiving while their relationship with God, their love for Him, and their dedication to His service became stronger after having tasted His tender care through His search for them and His mercy upon them. This inspired some of the saints such as Saint Cyril the Great and Saint Augustine to perceive in Adam's sin a favour because it led humanity to the blessings of the New Testament which could not have been attained by humanity if it had not been for Adam and Eve's sin.

f) The commandment is not simply an exam but it is an opportunity for the training and preparation of man for greater responsibilities entrusted to him if he succeeds in the first round. In truth, man lost in his first attempt, but he did not fail for good. But, God did not allow him to fail. On the contrary, He assisted him and offered him the ways of salvation after having requested salvation himself, and expressing his regret and repentance. If God's previous knowledge of the disobedience of the human being sin had prevented the giving of the commandment, then man would have been deprived of a training which strengthened him and his psychological and mental capacities, and his abilities with that which nourishes and enhances them, and energizes them for work.

3) The Natural law... God's commandments prior to Moses the Prophet

Out of God's love, He informed the human being and commanded him about what he should do. He engraved this commandment in his mind and heart, and made it very clear to him without the slightest doubt or mixing up of issues. For God's commandments or God's laws were naturally created in mankind and through them, he had clear knowledge of how to behave. This is what is known as the Natural Law which was a long time prior to Moses the prophet and ever since the creation of Adam.

Let us mention some examples from the Holy Bible to demonstrate that man clearly had the knowledge and appreciation of God's commandment:

a) Cain killed his brother Abel, he was aware that he had committed an awful mistake. Therefore, the Bible says: "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" (Genesis 4:13). Hence, it was known murder is a sinful act.

b) Joseph the righteous, who preceded Moses by hundreds of years, when Potiphar's wife tempted him by asking him to lie with her, he refused and said to her: "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

Therefore, Joseph knew that committing adultery is a great sin even before God gave man the commandment, "Thou shall not commit adultery". Due to the great wickedness in the world, God caused a flood to drown the inhabitants of the earth, and brought fire down from heavens to burn the city of Sodom (Genesis 19:6-11). Also, when Shechem committed adultery with Dinah, Jacob's daughter, Jacob's sons became angry because he had defiled Dinah. As a result, they took

revenge by murdering the entire house of Shechem (Genesis 34:5-27). Therefore they considered adultery to be defilement and filthiness before the coming of the written commandments by hundreds of years.

c) Due to the sin of theft, there was a dispute between Laban and Jacob. Jacob defended himself in order to remove any trace of this sin from himself, when Laban accused him saying: “why did you steal my gods” referring to his idols. (Genesis 31:30-39)

d) Even the sin of lust, we see that it was known before Moses by hundreds of years. “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?.” (Job 31:1).

e) The commandment of keeping the Sabbath was known before the Ten Commandments. It was originally introduced among the commandments specific to the gathering of the heavenly Manna (Exodus 16:23-29). Also, it is known that keeping the Sabbath is an old tradition that goes back to the days of creation, when God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). Based on this fact, St. Paul stated: “For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just the sight of God, by the doers of the will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)” (Romans 2:12-15).

4) The Moral Law (i.e. Ten Commandments):

It is the Ten Commandments which Moses the Prophet received from God on Mount Sinai, in the midst of the thunder, smoke, and fog, so that the people may feel His reverence and the severity of His punishment to those who disobey His commandments.

The relationship between the Natural Law and the Moral Law

This relationship is a strong one, and the source of both laws is one, who is God. The morals are one but the means is the only difference. The Natural law is imprinted in our hearts of flesh, while the Moral Law is engraved on tablets of stone.

The Ten Commandments

Moses the Prophet received them after he had fasted for forty days. However, when he witnessed the Israelites worshipping the gold calf, saying “This is your god, O Israel that brought you out of the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 32:4). Moses broke the tablets of the Ten Commandments. As a result, he fasted, once again, for forty days to receive another set of the two tablets from God.

The Commandments of the First Tablet:

They are four commandments and these commandments deal with man’s relationship with God: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other Gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and

keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do not work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:2-11).

The commandments of the Second Tablet:

The remaining six commandments deal with man’s relationship with his neighbour “Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor and thing that is your neighbour’s.” (Exodus 20:12-7).

Importance of the Ten Commandments

The fact that God uttered these commandments with His mouth is enough to prove the importance of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1). God also wrote them with His fingers and gave them to Moses (Deuteronomy 9:10). When Moses received the Ten Commandments from the mouth of God, he wrote them, sacrificed oxen and offered brunt offerings to the Lord, took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the congregation, saying : “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words,” (Exodus 24:4-8). Moses again demonstrated the importance of these commandments by mentioning them repeatedly in his writings in the book of Deuteronomy, and the book of Exodus.

Number Ten:

The number ten signifies perfection. Therefore, the Ten Commandments, while being ten in number literally, they do symbolize the entire Law or all the commandments collectively.

The Ten Commandments turned into a covenant between God and mankind.

When Moses spoke of the Ten Commandments in the book of Deuteronomy, he said “The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.” (Deuteronomy 5:3). Hence, the tablets, upon which these commandments were written, were called the Tablets of the Covenant and the book in which they were written, was called the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:7).

The covenant signifies a serious agreement between two parties: God and Mankind. Deuteronomy 28:1-29 states: “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God. ”Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.” Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. ”Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.”

Blessed shall be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. ” The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. ” The LORD will command the blessing on

you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. ”The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you.

His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will make you head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them. ” But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. “Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall be in the country.” Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.” Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.”

“The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under shall be iron. The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. “The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away. The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumours, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you.”

5) **The Christianity Law is the “Law of Perfection” (Love).**

This Law revolves around the love of God and love for my neighbour as seen in the book of Matthew 22:35-40. “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying. Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets.”

Therefore, love is the core of Christianity; including its teachings and rituals. It is a simple word but one that reconciles heaven and earth, happiness and growth, and eternal joy. “For God so

loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

However, despite this love and sacrifice, the whole world is not saved, including Judas, Annas, Caiaphas the high priest, Pilate and all those who rejected Jesus Christ, and died rejecting Him... about whom it is written, “He came to His own and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:11).. the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:5), “And this is the condemnation that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19).

Hence, it is not sufficient that God loves you, but you also must love God. And if you do not love God then you cannot be saved because the first and greatest commandment states that “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37).

What is our point of view on God’s love?

Do we refuse His love, similar to what He said in the Old Testament about His people, “All day long I have stretched out My hands to disobedient and contrary people.” (Romans 10:21). Or do you reciprocate His love, as written by the Apostle, “We love Him, because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19). It is not only required of us love Him, but also to abide in His love as the Lord says, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15:9). Thus, it is a mutual love, and abiding in love. “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16).

The person that loves God in truth loves his fellow man because the Apostle says: “If someone says, “I love God.” And hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: That he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21).

This form of love is possible for all Christians through the work of the Holy Spirit which dwells inside the Christian individual. St. John spoke of love as a sign of the new birth from God (as in baptism and the Myron) and he said: (1 John 4:7-8) “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” And Lord Jesus Himself, glory be to Him, said: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35).

These are the new capabilities in the New Testament through the impact of the Paternal love and the salvation which the Lord Jesus Christ offered on the cross and the gift of the Holy Spirit and His fruits, as we say in the Divine Liturgy, “May the love of God the Father, the grace of his only Begotten Son our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit..” Also, as our Lord Jesus Christ clarified, in His Sermon on the Mount, “You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also, if anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax

collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:38-48).

How do we love God?

a) We must forsake the harmful love

“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4).

“For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of the life- is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1John 2:16)

If the love of the world starts to enter your heart, your love for God will decrease,..” for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.” (2 Timothy 4:10).

The Christian lives in the world but does not allow the world to live inside him/her, “And those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.” (1 Corinthians 7:31).

b) Remembering God’s blessings in our lives.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Psalm 103:1-5).

Therefore, sit down with yourself and remember the blessings of the Lord towards you, give thanks to Him.

c) Continual remembrance of God.

It is necessary to involve God in all our daily practices. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37). The mind and the heart together, (Psalm 119).

The Lord was in the thoughts of David as He was going to fight Goliath the giant. Also, God was in the thought of Joseph, as he defeated the temptations of the devil. (Genesis 39:9).

When we are busy with God even in our sleep, we say “His left hand is under my head, And his right hand embraces me.” (Songs of Solomon 2:6) Elijah also continuously placed God before him at all times, “Then Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.” (1 Kings 18:15).

In this way, God will fill your senses, and then, He can fill your thoughts and your heart. You will find yourself more watchful and careful with your actions and you will do all that pleases Him, as you enjoy and intimate the relationship with Him.

6) Conclusion

(1) The Ten Commandments were not made for the time of Moses and the Old Testament only, but they are important for every generation because “Till heaven and earth pass away, one letter or one title will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

(Matthew 5:18)

(2) God has exalted us greatly in the New Testament. He gave us His Holy Spirit to abide in us so that we act on the level of son-ship and so that the commandments of the Old Testament become easy and accessible for us with the capabilities of the New Testament. “ His commandments are not burdensome.” Therefore Christianity gave the Ten Commandments a special understanding that parallels the growth and spirituality that was understood by believers in the New Testament. The Commandments remained sturdy and their understanding expanded further according to the grace of God which permits the believer to meditate upon them. How true is the saying of David, “I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad.” (Psalm 119:96).

(3) Love is greater than any commandment, and as the Apostle says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love is not only greater than ordinary faith, but it is greater than the faith which moves mountains. (1 Corinthians 13:2). Love is the commandment, upon which all the Law and the Prophets hang. (Matthew 22:40). For if the Lord wished to summarize all the commandments in one commandment, then this only commandment would be love.

Thanks due to the Lord Jesus Christ

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW ON DRINKING ALCOHOL

□ **Introduction: “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18)**

The above verse makes it clear that the aim of a true Christian is not merely to avoid drunkenness with alcohol (which is also a socially rejected behaviour), but to choose with all his heart to live according to the will of God and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He would be transformed from a mere human being into a Spiritual human being.

The human being by nature desires to enjoy worldly pleasures (such as drinking alcohol) or resorts to worldly means (such as drinking alcohol) to deal with his problems. However, the Spiritual person is more than satisfied with Jesus Christ who lives in him and eliminates the need for any worldly desires and pleasures that person uses to alleviate their desperate conditions. This Spiritual person has a strong relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with him he does not need anything on earth.

Even the secular view proclaims that excessive drinking leading to drunkenness is an abhorred behaviour that is detrimental to the health and leads to significant personal and physical catastrophes.

The Christian person has no need to drink alcohol, which stimulates worldly lusts within, because he is led by the Holy Spirit which relieves out of his struggles and hard times. The topic of alcohol consumption is a controversial one and has different opinions. Some think that alcohol is an unclean material, while others think that it is perfectly alright and allowed in the church, while wrongly interpreting Bible verses to justify their opinions.

This is an important topic for our youth and will be covered through the guidance of the Holy Spirit by discussing the following points:

- Whoever starts with a glass ends with a bottle... a practical story.
- The Spiritual meaning of the “the Vine” and the danger of its misuse.
- Different types of drinks.
- Harmful side effects of alcohol as described in the Holy Bible
- Thoughts on how to quit drinking.
- Questions and Answers.
- Summary.

Whoever starts with a glass ends with a bottle... a practical story

The church and the priests had tried desperately to convince a young man to stop drinking, not because alcohol is defiled (God does not create anything defiled), but because all bad habits that dominate and control man start small and gradually increase to negatively affect individuals and ultimately causing significant harm. The young man adamantly refused to listen to anyone, insisting that this habit will not dominate him, and that he is in total control of himself since he thought that he was different than other people. He strongly believed that he would never get drunk.

His consumption of alcohol slowly increased bit by bit and it became a habit to the extent that one glass was not enough, but he would drink the entire bottle in a sitting.

Then one night, after drinking lots of alcohol with his friends, he returned home drunk. His wife met him with sadness and tears and tried to rebuke his behaviour. He started beating her cruelly compelling her to retreat in her room and lock herself in. Then he started beating his children until one of the children started to bleed. The sight of blood eventually made him stop and led him to walk away from the house, thinking that this is the end of the quarrel and his family will not bother again.

When the wife did not hear his voice, realizing that he is not home anymore, she came out of her room only to realize that her children have been injured badly. At that instance, she called the ambulance, and the police arrested him and took him away. And this was the end of this family. Truly, who starts with a glass ends with a bottle, and this applies to everyone no matter how strong the person may be.

The Spiritual meaning of the “the Vine” and the danger of its misuse.

1) The Vine (the fruit from which wine is made) is Jesus Christ

“I am the true vine, and My father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” (John 15: 1 – 8)

2) The Vine is the Church

“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower...” (Matt 21:33)

“Then he began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower...’” (Mark 12:1)

“Then He began to tell the people this parable: ‘A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time...’” (Luke 20:9)

3) The Vine is the people of Israel

“Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?” (Jeremiah 2: 21)

“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard. My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.” (Isaiah 5:1)

4) The Vine is the Word of God

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Luke 5: 37 – 38)

5) The Vine is the eternal happiness

“But I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom.” (Matt 26:29)

Despite all these wonderful spiritual meanings, some people claim that Christianity views wine as unclean or impure. This is wrong. The substance of wine in itself is not impure or a sin, otherwise God would not have created it. Also, the church does not view the alcohol found in the wine as a sin or as impure, since alcohol by itself has many beneficial applications such as in medicine and other industries. The problem and the danger lie in the misuse of these substances that potentially lead to significant harm. And this is the sin.

Different types of drinks

- ***Non-alcoholic wine or grape juice.***

Grape juice is a tasty juice with lots of health benefits. One can drink it if they wish.

- ***Naturally fermented wine***

Grape juice is exposed to the air leading to fermentation of the sugar content to alcohol and carbon dioxide.



Alcohol concentrations vary from 5 to 15 %. Drinking this wine can lead to drunkenness and alcoholism.

- ***Beer***

This is derived from barley that is a useful crop for man and animal. When barely is soaked in water for 2 to 3 days at a suitable temperature, it’s starch content will be transformed to sugar by an enzyme called Diastase that is found in the crop itself. The barely is then dried at very high temperature to deactivate the enzyme and placed in big barrels in which it is mixed with water and boiled along with certain herbs. Yeast is also added to the mixture for further fermentation to increase alcohol content (yellow beer has 5% and dark beer has 10%). And so, man transforms the beneficial barely into beer with special taste and odour.

- ***Whiskey and other liquors***

Onion, a nutritious food, is transformed by wicked men into alcohol drink called Whisky with alcohol content up to 40%. Other fruits such as Dates can also be transformed into alcoholic drinks with alcohol content reaching up to 40%. It is thus apparent how God gives us many goods for the benefit of the body but evil hands transform them into alcoholic beverages that ruin this body despite the fact that alcohol may have many benefits when used appropriately such as in medical practice.

Harmful side effects of alcohol as described in the Holy Bible

1) ***Ruins the body***

Solomon the great writes in the book of Proverbs: *“Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.” (Proverbs 23: 20-21).*

Alcohol in the wine is comprised of a chain of compounds starting from the simplest organic group called Methyl alcohol, which is poisonous. Medical studies have shown that alcohol consumption leads to weakening of mental abilities, and may even lead to hallucinations. It can also cause cancer in the stomach, larynx, and the liver, as well as various peptic ulcers. Moreover, other effects include physical distortions such as the protrusion of the eyeballs and gradual loss of appetite, *“Who has woe? who has sorrow? who has contentions? who has complaints? who has wounds without cause? who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine.”* (Proverbs 23:29,30).

The human body is a precious gift from God. We do not own our bodies but God does, *“...but the substance is of Christ”* (Colossians 2:17). Do we then spoil this human body and its members, by wine and alcohol and expect to escape from his divine judgement?

2) **Drinking is a habit ending in addiction**

“Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of His hands. Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.” (Isaiah 5:11-13).

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine.” (Proverbs 23:29,30).

3) **Drinking leads to loss of consciousness**

A person who drinks so much to the extent of losing consciousness where drunkenness leads to inappropriate behaviour without any respect for others nor fear of foul language that may insult others. The Holy Bible describes Noah in the book of Genesis as: *“And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness.”* (Genesis 9: 20-23).

4) **Drinking deviates man from wisdom**

“But they also have erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, they are swallowed up by wine, they are out of the way through intoxicating drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.” (Isaiah 28: 7)

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” (Proverbs 20: 1)

“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” (Proverbs 31: 4-7)

Therefore, whoever drinks alcohol is not fit to be a leader.

5) **Wine overcomes man and leads him to commit adultery**

Wine overcame Lot till he became unconscious and vulnerable leading him to impregnate his

two daughters in drunkenness over two nights without his knowledge or awareness. The offspring of the two daughters gave rise to two nations, the Moabites and the Ammonites, who were punished by God for their transgressions in the Old Testament.

“Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. Now the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.” (Genesis 19:30-38)

6) Wine leads man to recklessly commit any crime and sell his most cherished possessions to drink more

“They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.” (Joel 3:3)

7) A drunkard does not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10)

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5: 16-21)

Thoughts on how to quite drinking:

1. Beware of the first glass.
2. Beware of drinking as a compliment or for social occasions.
3. Heartily conviction of God’s help in time of trouble instead of searching for help in wine.
4. Admit your weakness and inability to stop drinking by yourself and ask God for strength and divine help to assist you.
5. Regular physical exercise.
6. Attach yourself to the church and practice the holy sacraments.
7. Repentance and confession, and fasting, and prayers, and taking Holy communion

Questions and Answers:

Q1) ◀ There is a saying that claims that “a little bit of wine is good for the stomach”. What is the validity of this claim? ▶

When St. Timothy was suffering from stomach infirmities, St. Paul advised him to “*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.*” (1 Timothy 5: 23).

St. Paul always taught the abstinence from wine consumption; “*For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ...*” (Titus 1: 7), and “*Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ...*” (1 Timothy 3:8), and “*the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not give to much wine, ...*” (Titus 2:3)

St. Timothy received such teachings whole heartedly, where he never drank wine, and passed them on to his disciples and to his congregation. However, St. Paul advised him to drink some, in order to teach him that wine can be used for medical treatments, such as against his infirmities.

This advice is not suitable for everyone at any time, but only for medical condition under professional medical guidance.

Q2) ◀ In the miracle during the wedding in Cana of Galilee, our Lord Jesus Christ transformed water into wine. Does this mean that the Lord allows the use of wine during feasts and celebrations? ▶

During the wedding in Cana of Galilee, the Lord Jesus Christ performed his first miracle, and this event has become a feast in the Coptic Church.

The hosts of wedding ran out of wine and were in need of something to avoid embarrassment in front of all the guests. St. Mary felt sympathy towards their need and good intentions and brought their case to the Lord who transformed the water into a type of wine that is rejuvenating and not intoxicating.

The master of the feast was so astounded by the good taste of the wine, “*When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And said to him, ‘Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!’*” (John 2:9, 10).

The wine used in the old days was different than wine made today. Unlike today, the fresh juice of the vine was fermented naturally in the open air without additives. This divine miracle does not justify wine consumption, but is an example of a miracle by God where He makes what is beneficial to our bodies and senses.

Q3) I have read in the book of Sirach what indicates to be permissible consumption of alcohol. Can your holiness please clarify?

In the book of Ecclesiasticus, Jesus son of Sirach says: “*Do not try to prove your strength by wine-drinking, for wine has destroyed many. As the furnace tests the work of the smith, so wine tests hearts when the insolent quarrel. Wine is very life to human beings if taken in moderation. What is life to one who is without wine? It has been created to make people happy. Wine drunk*

at the proper time and in moderation is rejoicing of heart and gladness of soul. Wine drunk to excess leads to bitterness of spirit, to quarrels and stumbling. Drunkenness increases the anger of a fool to his own hurt, reducing his strength and adding wounds. Do not reprove your neighbour at a banquet of wine, and do not despise him in his merrymaking; speak no word of reproach to him, and do not distress him by making demands of him.” (Sirach 31: 25 – 31)

This verse presents two types of wine usage: natural uses and unnatural uses.

And the natural uses refer to life, simplicity and joy of the heart, but not drunkenness. The Russian monks utilize wine along with their meals for the purpose of warmth in their harsh and cold environment with temperature reaching – 60 C.

The natural uses also refer to medical uses with medications containing alcohol.

The unnatural uses refer to the destruction of many people, evilness, death, and all acts of unrighteousness. This alone is enough for the reader of the verse to understand the spirit of the Holy Bible in presenting the unnatural uses of wine as a sin against the Lord.

Summary

- Christianity does not consider alcohol as defiled in itself and does not prevent its proper uses; however, it warns of its misuse.
- Christianity distinguishes between grape juice and other alcoholic beverages, which present many dangers. Alcohol in itself can have beneficial uses in medicine and other industries.
- The Holy Bible presents many examples of the harmful side effects of alcohol consumption.
- There are successful methods for quitting drinking and treating alcoholics.

+ Thanks due to the Lord Jesus Christ +

ATTEMPTING TO KNOW THE FUTURE FROM A CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

Introduction:

The human being's need to have the knowledge of the unknown

Ever since sin entered into the world, human beings have been plagued with fear. This has been happening since the days of our father Adam and continues to take place till this day. Directly after our father Adam's fall from heaven he said: "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:10).

Hence the generations after him inherited his sin which brought with it fear. Fear constantly makes a person want to know the future in order to secure him/herself, and to try to think of ways of getting through whatever circumstances may arise. The spiritual individual who has a strong relationship with God however relies on God completely, and does not fear for the future, nor wants to know the unknown; because he lives in the hands of his keeper. For it is written "Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust" (Psalms 16:1) and "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalms 23:4)

This peace found in the spiritual person prevents him from worrying about what is hidden for him/her in the future and so he/she does not feel the need to seek the knowledge of the unknown. During times in which weakness may arise where this person is curious regarding his/her future, he/she would turn to the Father who is in heaven asking for guidance and direction. The person who walks in sin and lives his/her life in anxiousness and fear wants to know the unknown and is ready to go even to Satan or his followers to ask about the future.

A true story

A young woman who was engaged went to her priest requesting to break off her engagement from her Christian fiancé even though she had a good relationship with him. So what was the reason for her request? She was advised by a bad friend to go a palm reader in order to foresee her future. And so without consulting anyone this young woman went to the palm reader in order to have her palms read, and was informed by the palm reader that she sees a blocked path in her future and that she must leave this path in order to find peace. The girl interpreted the blocked path to be her engagement, which she thought would lead to an unhappy marriage. All trials to convince her that what she was doing was wrong failed, and because of the lack of reliance on God, she did not marry an excellent person. There are many similar examples similar to this young girl of people who lose in life because they do not rely on God.

The Spread of the need to know the unknown

The knowledge of the unknown (or knowing the unknown) has become a lucrative business in many countries around the world and represents a large percentage of their profit. This business has been around for a very long time and has led to the destruction of many lives.

1. The sin of relying on others rather relying on God
2. Satan is the father of all liars... so how can we go to him to reveal the future?
3. God warns us about the consequences of attempting to know the unknown from sources other than Him
4. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ refuses the witness of Satan
5. The blessed apostles refuse the sayings of Satan in all its forms
6. The different evil methods in knowing the unknown
7. The strength of God is infinitely great making all of the power of Satan negligent
8. The story of Saul and the woman with the familiar spirit (1 Samuel 28:14-7)
9. From the saying of the Holy Bible regarding this subject
10. Conclusion

1. The sin of relying on others rather than relying on God

Humanity in different eras has relied on many twisted methods in order to be familiar with the unknown. They have sought this knowledge from Satan rather than God, and so originating from their life of sin which is followed by fear and worry is the need to know what is hidden in the future for them. This is a great sin and it is equal to the sin of murder and adultery. Why? Because seeking Satan is leaving the worship of God and breaking the first of the Ten Commandments “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3)

No Christian person should seek those who use Satan’s power to predict the future.] We should not ask of them what we need whether it be marriage, success in school, work, children, or any other situation in which we seek guidance.

2. Satan is the father of all liars, so how can we go to him to reveal the future?

It is written in the Holy Bible, Satan “was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8: 44)

Is it not Satan who lied and deceived our Father Adam and Eve and caused them to fall into sin? And so Satan is incapable of doing anything good. And even if in the beginning we believe they are benefiting us, greater harm will follow thereafter. Does it make any sense that a human being would surrender to Satan in revealing his/her future when he is a liar and the father of all liars? Of course not.

3. God warns us about the consequences of attempting to know the unknown from sources other than Him

“When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are abominations to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.” (Deuteronomy 18:9-14)

“Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31) “A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them” (Leviticus 20:27)

“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people” (Leviticus 20:6)

“You shall not permit a sorceress to live” (Exodus 22:18)

4. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ refuses the witness of Satan

“So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread,” (Luke 24:33 -35). Even though our Lord and Master Jesus Christ would like to spread heaven and the gospel throughout the world, He refuses for Satan to take any part in spreading the word of God. The Lord spread his Word through the pure saints, whom he chose and sent to preach the kingdom of God witnessing to the living Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is manifested in the flesh.

And likewise we are the children of Our Lord Jesus Christ and we want to live by the example, which was left for us, and follow the steps of our Lord. Hence, there should be no relationships in our decisions or in our life with Satan, who is the enemy of good, who is a liar, and the father of liars.

5. The blessed apostles refuse the savings of Satan in all its forms

The Acts of the Apostles tells us about the refusal of the first church to have any relationship with any individual or any person except God alone.

“Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.” (Acts 16:16-18).

And likewise another incident with Simon the magician, “there was a certain man, called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria giving out that himself was some great one.” (Acts 8:9). What was St. Paul’s action towards him? “Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghosts set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun of a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” (Acts 13:9-12)

To what extent were the magicians and those who corrupted society with their lies found in the first generation? “Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found fifty thousand pieces of silver” (Acts 19:19).

Therefore, in past times, all the sin and evil used to try to gain knowledge of the future through satanic method was largely present as it is today.

6. The different evil methods in knowing the unknown

A. Magic

There is no doubt that there is true magic as long as the Satan exists. And this is what we have read about in both the Old and the New Testament. The Lord God commanded in the Old Testament “You shall not permit a sorceress to live” (Exodus 22:18). And he prevented in the New Testament magic when he spoke about Simon the magician who used magic and made the Samaritan congregation in astonishment say: This is something great. And a multitude of people followed him because they were amazed for a long period of time by his magic. However, St. Paul the apostle spoke to him saying “For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (Acts 8:23). And with St. Paul the apostle we see the same thing, when Elymas the sorcerer was seeking to turn away the deputy of the country Sergius Paulus from the faith, and Paul filled with the Holy Spirit said to him: “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.” (Acts 13:10-14).

Therefore it is not appropriate for Christians to seek Satan to tell them the future and to solve their problems for he is a liar and the father of all liars.

B. The woman with the “knowing” spirit and the summoning of Satan

This follows the concept of magic, and its followers try through it to know things concerning their lives and their futures. It is extremely wrong for someone to ask of such people and to try to know such things without God. Is this not the first sin that our father Adam fell into? The first sin, was when the serpent (Satan) said to Adam: “you will not die when you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘you will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’”(Genesis 3:4-5). And for this reason God commanded saying:

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you”. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12)

Therefore the Holy Bible considers this a serious sin.

“Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed

Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.” (Acts 16:16-18)

Even though this servant was speaking the truth, St. Paul refused to accept this Satanic spirits words.

C. Stars and horoscopes

This is also something that we should not trust in or run after. Some of those who practice it consider it an education (just as they thought preparing spirits was an education). The theories of stars and horoscopes in which one incorrectly characterizes individuals based on the month they are born, and generalizes that they possess the same characteristics and traits. How is this correct, it essentially leads to the conclusion that there are only 12 distinct characters among all of humanity, which is clearly wrong. As for the star that appeared to the Wisemen, this was not a real star (as was said by St. John Chrysostom) but it was the power of God, which lighted their way for them. This star was going in the opposite direction than the real stars in the sky, and it shown brighter and closer to the earth than the than the rest of the stars as it was set to lead the Wisemen way to a specific house. “When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was” (Matthew 2:9). Therefore reading today’s fortune is recreational and those who follow it day after day and act according to what it’s saying are making a big mistake. This way they are denying God, the source of our knowledge and the focus of our lives and our salvation.

D. Reading the coffee cup and the sand

They are all very general issues that have no basis in reality. When there is real magic and participation from Satan, that situation becomes unacceptable. As for people who believe such false prophesies of the future, this is wrong and dangerous, because in that way a person exposes himself/herself to be shaken emotionally and spiritually. Therefore, it is not appropriate for Christians, even for recreational purposes to seek such things, which unfortunately are popular in many different societies, even the classy and sophisticated individuals.

E. Palm reading

And this is one of the kinds of witchcraft that exists nowadays, which we must escape from and refuse, because the lines on our palm are nothing more than the way we were formed during our growth in our mother’s wombs. The lines on our palms have no association with the past, present and/or future events of our lives. Many youth have sought palm reading, and the readers would often tell them that their life line is short and that they will not live past the age of thirty years old. This has turned many of their lives upside down and has prevented them from happiness. For some it has also prevented them from marriage, because they are in fear that they will widow their spouse and leave their children without a parent. And this all goes against the will of God and the commandments of God, for God desires that a person surrenders his/her life to Him so that he could lead it with all love and wisdom, doing all good things always for us and for everyone around us.

7. The strength of God is infinitely great making all of the power of Satan negligent

The Holy Bible reassures on the reality of the infinite glory of God. “But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods” (Exodus 7:11-12)

8. The story of Saul and the woman with the familiar spirit (1 Samuel 28:7-14)

Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at En Dor.” So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Please conduct a séance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you.” Then the woman said to him, “look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?” And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.” Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” And he said, “Bring up Samuel for me.” When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, “Why have you deceived me? For you is Saul!” And the king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What did you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth.” So he said to her, “What is his form?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle.” And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down”

From this verse we can see the following:

- i. Samuel the prophet did not come because of the work of the woman with the familiar spirit but appeared before the woman did her work.
- ii. God is the one who allowed for the appearance of Samuel the prophet to Saul using this method and the reason is that God wanted to record this great sin against Saul, which was breaking God’s commands. And he deserved God’ anger and complete rejection. “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:13-14).

9. From the saying of the Holy Bible regarding this subject

A. The children of God take guidance from the direction of the Holy Spirit

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”

(Romans 8:14). “Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He” (John 4:26).

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27).

B. The children of God are shown to let the will of God be done

“Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness” (Psalms 143:10).

“But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You” (Psalms 5:11).

C. Those who seek after Satan for the knowledge of the unknown are unhappy individuals.

“Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, Nor take up their names on my lips” (Psalms 16:4).

10. Conclusion:

1. The children of God live in peace and do not fear the future because their lives are in the hands of God, and if they experience weakness or tribulation, then they rely on God alone, asking for his guidance.

2. Reliance on someone else other than God to know the unknown is a great sin, so much so that it is similar to murder and adultery because of the reliance on Satan and the worship of him.

3. In Christianity there is no such thing as fate or luck, because all things are in the hands of God.

4. The devil works through fortunetellers, and Satan worshippers in order to lead Christians astray and to live in sin, and believe in luck and coincidence.

5. Our Lord Jesus and our fathers the apostles rejected any testimony from Satan and all his helpers in anything concerning their lives.

6. It is important for the Christian person to reject all of these methods to reveal the unknown such as opening of the napkin, the date's seed, the cup of coffee, palm reading etc. We should reject very simple things such as the fortune cookie (which are given in Chinese restaurants), or the future predictions found in the daily newspaper under the section of 'horoscopes'.

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

+ Defining the spiritual life:

Man is composed of body, mind, and soul. The mind fades away with the death of the body. "... *Its blood sustains its life...*" (Leviticus 17:14)

The soul is the component that does not die. It determines one's spiritual life. As the soul associated with God, the spiritual life is strong when the soul is close to God, for God is the fountain of life. On the contrary, if the soul is away from God, then the spiritual life is weak. And thus the psalmist proclaims "*And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.*" (Psalm 69:32). The word "hearts" here refers to your souls. Jeremiah the Prophet also declares, "*Please, obey the voice of the LORD which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live*" (Jeremiah 39:20).

The topic of Spiritual Theology is important to our spiritual lives. It is the most important part of a human being for it determines his final outcome. "...*Be faithful until death*" (Revelations 2:10). The spiritual life is the internal life with God. It does not have an external appearance. As was previously said about the soul associated with God: "*The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace*" (Psalm 45:13).

The topic of Spiritual Theology or what is commonly referred to as the spiritual life, is a very important topic and is composed of several components. We will discuss here several of these important points and these are:

1. The role of the Holy Bible in the spiritual life
2. The fear of God
3. The spiritual struggle
4. Faith in the effect of the Holy Blood of Christ
5. Other topics related to the spiritual life

1. The role of the Holy Bible in the spiritual life

A. The importance of the Holy Bible:

The importance of the Holy Bible is emphasized by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:36).

Therefore the words of the Holy Bible "speak to the soul" for they are the words of God and "*God is Spirit*" (John 4:24). These are not just any simple words that communicate to the mind. They are "the sword of the Spirit;" as our teacher St Paul said, "*take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Ephesians 6:17).

The sword of the spirit gives the spirit its strength. The strength is provided through the word of God. An example of this is the temptation on the mountain in which our Lord and Master Jesus Christ was victorious over the devil. He gave us the strength to be victorious in such wars using the sword of the spirit. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ repelled the devil in every temptation by using the words "*it is written*". Therefore, the reading of the Holy Bible provides the spirit its strength.

There is no way to know God outside of the Holy Bible. Why?

Because the Holy Bible was written by God and therefore every word in it is “the strength of God”. The power of these words is an extension of the writer of the words. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 16-17).* Also, the famous verse that was spoken by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ *“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4).*

B. Living the Holy Bible:

How do I live the life of the Holy Bible? Make the Holy Bible always above your thoughts in humility until it becomes a fountain quenching your thirst. It also becomes a guide for your life and a revelation, as was written, *“You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes” (Luke 10:21).*

The Holy Bible was written by the Spirit of God and should be obeyed. How do we follow and obey the commandments in the Bible?

Fulfilling our needs through the Gospel

Comfort and peace through the Gospel

Depth of our spiritual life

Depth of our faith

Amongst the famous verses in the Bible is: *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)*

The beauty and strength of our holy fathers of the past is “living the Bible”, not just reading it. How can this be achieved? Meditation and memorization of verses, as well as obeying and living the commandments; through these practices the word of God enters into the depths of a person and becomes a part of him.

C. Take the Holy Bible as a source of joy in your life:

“Moreover He said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.’ So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.” (Ezekiel 3:1-3)

Note the order here, He said eat the scroll first then, go speak to the house of Israel second. Therefore, preaching the word of God comes after being fulfilled by the word of God.

Also, notice the beauty of the words of God and how it gives a beautiful meaning to our lives, *“So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness”.*

Persistence in the enjoyment of reading the Holy Bible leads to a constant change in the way a person thinks and lives his life. *“But be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).*

Through the Holy Bible the person lives a life filled with hope and optimism and expects all good things, as the Psalm says *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever“ (Psalm 23:6).* Be comforted, as many other verses teach similar messages.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

The Holy Bible is the primary source for the divine spirit and it is also the primary source for all the spiritual studies. It is what the churches are established on, along with all Holy Blessed Mysteries.

2. The fear of God

A. The importance of looking at the Holy Bible as a complete book.

There are times when there are commandments in the Holy Bible that may seem contradictory to one another, however it is important to study these commandments as a whole and with thoroughness.

For example, Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ when He taught us to pray “*Our father who arts in heaven...*” (Mathew 6:9), therefore He is implying that He is our father. It is also written that “*No longer do I call you servants.... but I have called you friends*” (John 15:15). **However**, there is also a Commandment that says, “*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, because has been born of God*” (1 John 3:9) and also “*When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘we are unprofitable servants.’*” (Luke 17:10)

Another example:

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said “*who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4). The Lord wants salvation for all. **However**, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*” (Revelations 3:20). Keeping this in mind, was Judas Iscariot saved? No.

B. The loving and merciful face of God and the just and fearsome face of God

Many people who want to speak about the love of God, His kindness and mercy do not speak of His justice and His punishment for those who do not follow Him and sin against Him. **Similarly many preachers** speak about the love of God and His mercy, His forgiveness of sins, and His great sacrifice for us. They only talk about half the verse: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*” but they ignore the rest of the verse which reads: “*that whoever believes in Him should not perish*” (John 3:16).

As a result, many sects that claim to be “Christians” do not want to speak about the Just God as they fear people would flee from the churches. They only speak about God’s love to attract people to God. This is a dangerous affair. God is perfect in Love and perfect in Justice as the Bible teaches us.

About God’s love: (1 John 4: 7-16): “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him*”

About God's Justice: (Romans 2:4-11) *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”*

(1 Corinthians 6:9-10) *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist will inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ gave us, during His period of incarnation, an image of God's justice through His love. He gave everyone love *“and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people”* (Mathew 4:23). He wiped away the tears of the broken hearted, for example the sinful woman who came at His feet crying. On the other hand, He said to Simon the Pharisee *“a certain creditor who had two debtors...”* (Luke 7:41) to rebuke him.

He also cursed the fig tree that did not bear fruit. He gave a second chance, however to another tree which did not yield fruit. It must have appeared not as a lively tree from the outside and internally it bore no fruit, yet He gave it a second chance. He judged the Pharisees and the scribes and said, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites”* (Mathew 23:13-36)

There was also the time He had mercy on Zacchaeus the chief tax collector and Levi the tax collector. He said to the crowd *“but unless you repent you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3) and (Luke 13:5)

The Holy Bible speaks to us about the importance of the fear of God:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10)

“Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear” (1 Peter 1:17)

“When they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.” (1 Peter 3:2)

“From that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” (Hebrews 10:13)

Therefore St. John the beloved says, *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:18). Here he speaks about perfect love.

What are the features of perfect love?

+ Perfect love does not fear those who kill the body: *“do not fear those who kill the body”* (Matthew 10:28)

Perfect love does not fear the dangers of life: *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear”* (Psalm 27: 1)

Perfect love does worry about tomorrow: *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things”* (Mathew 6:24)

Perfect love does not fear and run away from God’s mission like Jonah: *“But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord”* (Jonah 1:3) and our father Adam *“I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself”* (Genesis 3:10) As for the person who feels the burden of his sin, he has to fear God’s justice

Examples:

- 1) When St. Peter discovered the Divinity of Christ in the miracle of the great catch of fish, he felt the depth of his sin and said *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”* to which our kind Master responded *“Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men”* Lk 5:8-10
- 2) And also after the incident of Ananias and Sapphira who agreed together to deceive the church, so they fell and died. (Acts 5:1-5)
- 3) The Bible says *“Great fear landed over the church”* and therefore when one approaches God, he must know God’s love but also His justice and acts cautiously so he does not anger God who *“will render to each one according to his deeds”* (Romans 2:6)
- 4) For this the church alerts us in the prayers *“Stand up in the fear of God and listen to the Holy Gospel”* and also the deacon within the altar says, *“Worship God in fear and trembling”*. As well as the powerful Psalm that the worshipper prays on his way to church *“But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple”* (Psalm 5:7).

How does God handle the person who is careless in his spiritual life and does not fear Him?

God is kind and compassionate however, He can punish and correct someone:

If it was for the sake of this person’s salvation

If this person was to harm others around him

If it was to warn others of the effects of sin

St. Paul says: *“And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who *“will render to each one according to his deeds”*: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”* (Romans 2: 3-11)

Examples of God's punishment:

+ God punished Achan the son of Carmi (in Joshua chapter 7) when he stole the accursed things of the war. He heated the anger of God against Israel (Joshua 7:1). What was the outcome?

The people of Israel were humiliated in front of the small village of Ai "*but they fled from the people of Ai*" (Joshua 7:13). As for Achan son of Carmi who stole, God punished him by letting the people of Israel stone him and all his belongings to death. (Joshua 7:25). After this punishment "*The LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger*" (Joshua 7:26).

+ Moses was speaking with God on the Holy Mountain for forty days. He received the Holy Commandments. He dealt with a lot from the stiff-necked people of Israel. Despite him being a great prophet, one time God asked him to speak to a rock, however he disobeyed God and struck the rock with a rod instead and said "*Must we bring water for you out of this rock*" (Numbers 20:10). This was in reaction to the stubbornness of the people of Israel, despite how much he has done for them. "*Yet, for all that, you did not believe the Lord your God*" (Deuteronomy 1:23). Moses told them about the Promised Land "*the Lord was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Even you shall not go in there. Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there'*" (Deuteronomy 1:37-38). He kept asking God several times about this matter and finally God told him to go up the mountain so he can see the Promised Land from afar.

+ Another example is Mariam, the sister of Aaron and Moses. When she judged her brother Moses for taking the Ethiopian woman as a wife (Numbers 12:4-15), God struck her with leprosy. Then God healed her through the prayers and intercessions of Moses her brother.

+ With David: The man of prayers and psalms, whom God spoke of and said "*I examined the heart of David, the son of Jesse and found it after my own heart...*" He was the man that praised God "*I praise you evening, morning and at noontime*" However when he fell in the sins of lust and murder, he received earthly punishment.

Another example is David's son Amnon who fell in sin with his sister Tamar. Also the sin of Absalom, David's other son with the concubines. The outcome of these sins was that David left Jerusalem in fear of his son Absalom. and David was asked to collect all the material to build the Temple, however the temple itself was to be built by his son Solomon. For this, David feared God and said "*Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me*" (Psalm 51:11). And he also said, "*Please let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.*" (1 Chronicles 21:13)

+ The angels and saints in the church have a merciful way, but also have a strict way: The angel of the resurrection, for example, was kind and joyful to the Mary's that visited the tomb on early Sunday morning, but was fearsome to the guards around the tomb.

+ The angel of death also passed along the houses that were marked with the lamb's blood and did not harm the occupants, as for the unmarked houses, all the firstborns were killed.

+ The story of Ananias and Sapphira: St. Peter the prophet struck them and they died.

+ The story of St. John Chrysostom, of the golden mouth: The Empire at the time unfairly took a piece of land that was owned by a poor woman. She took the matter up with the Pope at the time, St. John Chrysostom. He dismissed her from the church and denied her, because she had

made for herself a statue and it became a source for dancing and pleasure, leading to sin.

God rewards those who fear Him:

“The Lord will take pleasure in those who fear Him and in those who hope in His mercy” (Psalm 147: 11)

In Joseph’s story, Joseph said, *“How then can I do this great wickedness” (Genesis 39:9)*. His reward was great blessings in that God brought him out of every trouble and raised him to a very high position

Likewise the right thief said to the left thief on the cross *“Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation” (Luke 23:40)*. His reward was also handsome in that he heard Christ utter the words *“today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Therefore, the fear of God is very essential in the way we talk, in our dealings with others, and in our dealings with our enemies. There is a beautiful prayer that says, “The fruit of your fear is in our flesh”. Therefore fear God and do not anger Him.

3. The Spiritual Struggle

Introduction

For a person to repent, he must feel the ugliness of sin. Sin is often referred to as the cancer of the spirit, therefore do not underestimate it. If you intervene early, then there’s a chance to save your soul. However, if the sin propagates and percolates throughout the body, then the person dies spiritually. *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place—unless you repent” (Revelations 2:5)*. The danger is when the person continues as is without repentance; he does not realize the ugliness and dangers of sin.

For example, the sinful woman who repented with her tears in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Simon, on the other hand, did not realize his sin and could not repent from it.

The ugliness of sin

- Sin is death *“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)*

It was said of the prodigal son *“my son was dead and is alive again” (Luke 15:24)*. And Saint Paul said about the blessed widow, *“...is dead while she lives” (1 Timothy 5:6)*. And in Revelations, *“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Revelations 3:1)* Therefore sin is synonymous with death since it separates us from God; and God is life.

Sinning is being astray, being lost, and being careless

In Luke 15, these three elements were highlighted

- a) Being astray: The parable of the prodigal son
- b) Being lost: The parable of the lost coin
- c) Being careless: The parable of the lost sheep

This is the outcome of sin in man. It makes him go astray, lost and disoriented.

8. Sin is darkness

God is light from light. Sin separates us from God (light); therefore a sinful man goes into darkness and loses his way.

It was said of the people of Israel at the coming of the Messiah “The people sat in darkness until they were surrounded by light...” The person that lives in darkness does not know how to deal with issues in his life for he is under the control of the devil, “the master of darkness”.

- Sin makes a person lose his inner peace through fear and uneasiness

The Holy Bible talks a lot about losing peace through sin and wickedness. We see this in everyday life. “*‘There is no peace,’ says the Lord, ‘for the wicked’*” (Isaiah 48:22). “*The wicked are like the troubled sea*” (Isaiah 57:20)

Likewise the evildoers and sinners, God becomes a source of fear for them and they do not see His kindness or compassion. Similarly, our father Adam when he said “*So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself’*” (Genesis 3:10). The sinners fear the Day of Judgment and fear the day in which their body expires.

- Sin is being in a faraway land

“Far away land” does not mean to be in a far away physical place, but it means distance from God. As was said of the prodigal son: sin is the hunger a person feels when they are in that far away land and he desires the food that the swine eats.

- Sin leads to servitude and takes away freedom

The sinful person becomes a servant of the devil and the world. Our Lord and Master said, “*Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.*” (John 8:34)

13. The punishment of sin on earth

God loves mankind very much and says “*...And my delight was with the sons of men*” (Proverbs 8:3). On the other hand, God hates sin and loves to save man from sin. “*...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:9). God loves to extinguish the fire of sin.

What becomes of the person that holds onto sin? He will find himself consumed by it.

Due to sin and how widespread it was at the time of Noah, God punished the world with the flood. He destroyed the earth and all of humanity aside from 8 souls. He also extinguished entire cities with all its inhabitants, such as Sodom and Gomorrah, where man turned away from God and was occupied with sexual immorality and homosexuality.

If it were not for repentance then the people of Nineveh would have also been extinguished. Also, Ananias and Sapphira fell to their death due to sin.

Indeed many other examples are presented in the Bible to demonstrate the ugliness and vileness of the outcome of sin. Please read (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

14. THE ETERNAL PUNISHMENT OF SIN

On the Day of Judgment, the punishment of sin becomes eternal, inordinate, and fearsome. “*And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*” (Mathew 25:46). He also says “*The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*” (Mathew 13:41-43). Sin leads to eternal punishment that does not extinguish with wailing and gnashing of teeth in the external darkness.

The external darkness here refers to distance from God. “*He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be*

tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelations 14:10-11). Also in 2 Thessalonians, “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed” (1:9-10). How fearsome is that judgment? In Revelations: “And I said to him, Sir, you know. So he said to me, these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (7:14)

Those are the ones that came from the great despair and washed and whitened their clothes in the blood of the Lamb. In the great Day of Judgment the appearance of God alone will reveal the internal being of a person and reveal his inner thoughts so that nothing will be hidden. Thus, God will judge the evildoers and malefactors just by being around them, not through His power and anger.

The people of Israel could not handle seeing the light that shone on Moses’ face when he saw God after he came down from the mountain since his face was so bright, let alone seeing God himself on the Day of Judgement. How miserable it will be for the sons of the devils on that day when they face the just Judge.

How do I repent?

Repentance needs a calm period of introspection at the feet of Christ

- “...sat down in his shade with great delight...” (Song of songs 2:3)
- Sit at the shadow of the heavenly Prince. Do not sit by yourself to introspect without Him. Give a chance for God’s Holy Spirit to work in you and in your depth. If the repentance is not through God’s Spirit then the repentance will be temporary and not lasting
- Go to your room, close your door and the Holy Spirit will work with you and will guide you through decisions about your spiritual life. Receive this advice with joy and comfort.

Repentance is a divine miracle

- The Holy Spirit examines the depth and knows how to deal with one’s spirit. Do not think that repentance is a humanly deed only, but it is God’s response when someone sits by himself and asks for forgiveness. He has to have faith that God will assist him.
- Closing your door implies closing your senses to the world so that you have time to think peacefully. Choose a calm place and listen to a hymn or a song that could move you spiritually. You can also read a chapter from the Holy Bible or a Saint’s story that affects you personally. After that, begin to pray so that your inner depth becomes open and vulnerable.
- The Holy Spirit intercedes for us continually and exposes for us our vulnerabilities and weaknesses. It also moves us to repent and regret our sins. One does not see his true self except in the light of Christ, which exposes all his sins so he can repent and ask for forgiveness.
- Staying busy and occupied with the world can be dangerous. It prevents a person from sitting peacefully under the Cross of Christ, but keeps him living in a turbulent life preventing him from seeing his weaknesses and sins
- Facing God is something that is of utmost importance. But be weary that the devil will fight you when you spend a peaceful period with God. The evil one will try to occupy your thoughts with things that can paralyze you. The devil can also normalize the feeling of sin and make you lose your sense of remorse over sin. This can ruin this spiritual session with your

Saviour. Cry out loud to God and say “*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*” (Psalm 51:2)[*Psalm 50 in the Agpeya]

- Look at the prodigal son when he says “*How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you’*” (Luke 15: 17-18)

1. Do not use excuses or justifications: Adam tried to use excuses.

2. Do not delay repentance: It was said about Essau that “*...for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears*” (Hebrews 12:17)

3. Beg for God’s mercy: The tax collector stood from afar and the prodigal son said, “*I am not worthy...*” (Luke 10:12)

4. Regret and Hope: “*... for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled*” (Psalm 6:2-3).

Faith in the effect of the Holy Blood of Christ

- The problem of sin

1. St. Paul focuses on this issue of the “Problem of sin” from Romans 5:12 to the end of chapter 8

2. We were all within Adam when he fell. He represented mankind. When he was defeated by the devil, we were all defeated along with him. We inherited this sickness—if the army loses, the whole population loses along with the army.

3. The first Adam cooperated with the devil and was exiled from paradise. God placed a cherub of fire on the door of paradise. Adam separated himself from God and this affected us in two ways:

4. The partaking of the derelict nature, since he became a servant to the devil. This nature resulted in the apparent fruits of sin: murder, lust, etc. The Holy Bible speaks through the mouth of St. Paul about this derelict nature and its apparent manifestation through sin.

5. The Derelict nature “*For the flesh [i.e. the derelict nature] lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another*”(Galatians 5:17). “*..as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind [i.e. the derelict nature], having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*” (Ephesians 4:17-18).

6. The acts of the derelict nature are manifested through sin:

“*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...*”(Galatians 5:19-21)
“*who, being past feeling [i.e. the derelict nature], have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*” (Ephesians 4:19)

- The problem of sin (the evil nature and the manifestation of sin) leading to death

7. “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” (Genesis 2:17). Then God said a second time, “*but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’*” (Genesis 3:3)

8. *“Therefore, just as through one man's sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12)*

9. Three types of death were transferred from Adam to the whole of mankind: eternal death, spiritual death, and physical death

“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)

“And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelations 14:11)

“When Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelations 20:14)

A. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ (the second Adam) came and paid the price of sin wholly. He resolved two problems that we inherited from the first Adam:

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mathew 1:21)

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18)

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:17-23)

A. The need for faith in the Blood of Christ for the salvation of the world:

1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ was crucified for us and paid fully the price of sin *“And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6)*

2. *“For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame” (Romans 10:11)*

3. *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15)*

4. *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (Ephesians 1:7-8)*

5. *“And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,*

and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Revelations 1:5-6)

6. Through the blood of Christ on the cross, He gave us the power of removing the old derelict person through baptism “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:3-14)

After baptism and the removal of the derelict person, the devil started to fight mankind from the outside. The devil becomes beaten, just like he was beaten by Our Lord on the mountain of temptation. “*Away with you, Satan*” (Mathew 4:10). He was also bound for our sake. “*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison*” (1 Peter 3:18-19). The devil continues to fight however from the outside, as a beaten, bound enemy, like a lion trapped within his cage. The lion will devour any person that goes into his cage from carelessness in his spiritual life or from a loss of faith in Christ.

A. The need for faith and belief in my eternal life with Christ

- “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16)
- “*And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (Acts 13:39)
- “*So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’*” (Acts 16:31)

The summary of this section:

1. The outcome of sin is death. Sin resulted from the first Adam to the whole creation
2. The blood of Christ is enough to pay the price of sin for the whole world throughout eternity
3. The need for the faith in the blood of Christ. He is the second Adam, through His death on the cross, he resolved the problem of sin and through his resurrection, he also resolved the problem of death
4. This faith is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*” (Galatians 5:22)
5. This faith should be combined with works that would make this faith real. “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*” (James 1:22) then he says, “*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*” (James 2:15) “*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*” (James 2:17)

Other topics related to the spiritual life

- A. Constant repentance, confession, and partaking of the Holy Communion
- B. The life of prayer
- C. The life of gratitude
- D. The life of humility
- E. Helping the poor and the needy, as well as helping in the Church
- F. Spiritual retreats
- G. Alertness for temptations from the devil

H. Alertness from heretics and deviations from Church teachings.

My beloved reader, you can find many books and articles on these important issues in the church. I highly recommend those authored by the triple blessed His Holiness Pope Shenouda the Third. May the Lord repose his soul.

HOW TO HUMBLE MYSELF?

+ Introduction:

The reader of this subject “How to humble myself?” might think that a person obtains the humility with his own work only. However, the truth is indeed not that. In fact, humility which is the greatest virtue of all is a gift from our Lord to His sons and daughters just as the prophet says “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*” James 1:17. Additionally, the Lord Jesus Himself says “*And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*” Luke 12:25.

The spiritual gifts and virtues come from above, but the person has a role to obtain them. That is because the Lord does not force anything on anyone. Just as one of the saints said, “Without God, the human being cannot work. And without the human being, God would not want to work”. All of the saints who obtained great virtues, got these virtues from God, but they also did their part no matter how tiny that part was. And that is why they obtained the virtues. All of the saints have the virtue of humility, since it is impossible for a person to reach any level of sainthood without humility. However, every single saint had a role in obtaining this virtue.

In this small booklet, we will cover:

1. What is humility?
2. The importance of humility.
3. How do I obtain the virtue of humility?

1) What is humility?

Let us reference some of the fathers of the Church sayings to define humility:

1. St. John Darjy “Humility is a grace in the soul that only those who obtained it know it.”
2. St. Bassillios the Great “Humility is for a person to think that all of the creation is superior than him”
3. St. Anthony the Great “Humility is to consider that all of humans are better than you... making sure inside your heart that you have more sins than them”
4. St. Mari-Isaac “Humility is for a person to disgrace himself in everything”
5. St. John Chrysostom “Look as to how the qualities defeated the acts! The Pharisee had plenty of justice and righteousness virtues who he lost by his pride; whereas, the tax collector gained the justice and righteousness by merely pronouncing his humility even though the humility by the tax collector is not the true one.
6. The true humility is when the person is luxurious and great, but he is humble. The tax collector was honest when he said he is a sinner since his job was tax collection and nothing is more evil than this specific job (i.e. the tax collection). Tell me: is there any worse than a person who forces himself into sharing in the money that people earned with their hard work and becomes a partner in their business and earnings which he has no right to share in while not even participating in the hard work? It is with no doubt that tax collection is an awful sin. His words ‘Lord forgive me I am a sinner’ were true, honest and free of hypocrisy or deceiving. It wasn’t humility from him as well. Hence, if the person who voiced the truth gained so many virtues, how is it then the person who truly humbles himself the true humility?”
7. St. James the Syriac “Humility is the house of the Divine, and whenever it exists then God lives in it.”

2) The importance of humility

1. Humility is the greatest virtue

“If pride was the most evil sin to the extent that it brought down a group of angels from the heaven to earth, then humility is the greatest virtue which can raise the human from the deepest ground to heaven. And if Satan fell from the heaven with pride itself, then humility itself can raise the human being to the heaven” St. John Darjy

2. Humility is the basis of the spiritual fight

“Learn that if you have earned in your life all the virtues and all the good deeds – such as mercy, prayer, fasting, and other virtues – but you did not have humility in you, then all your efforts will go astray. That is because humility for these virtues is the base. Without humility we cannot finish one of the virtues. All of them would be unclean and not accepted in front of God since these virtues were not done by humility and love” St. John Chrysostom

3. With Humility we defeat Satan

“At one time St. Anthony the Great saw the devils happy on earth. He sighed and said ‘Lord, who can run away from them?’ a voice came to him from Heaven saying ‘The humble one can run away from them’” St. Playdiouis

4. Humility brings the grace of God

- a) “The grace of the Holy Spirit always asks for the humble heart” St. Thomas the Kambisy
- b) “If you were truly humble at heart, then the Lord will reveal for you His Glory” St. Isaac the Syrian

5. Humility brings peace

“The humble person departs in peace even if disgrace got to him. He abides with God not with the world. With humility there is always the continuous peace, and in the heart of the arrogant person there is always envy and anger. My peace is with the humble and gentle heart.... Said the Lord” St. Thomas the Kambisy

3) How do I obtain the virtue of humility?

The Lord Christ said “**learn from Me**, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” Matthew 11:29. Hence, we learn the humility from God Himself and His loved Son our Lord and God Jesus Christ as follows:

1. Think of how to make others happy ... and don't just be self centric

It is from God's humility that He has created creatures that are happy with Him and that He can give them His glory. God is perfect in Himself and has all the power and ability as He does not need anything just as we pray in the liturgy according to St. Gregory “You had no need of my servitude. Rather, it was me who was in need of Your lordship.”

That is why the humble person looks like the Lord God who has created all the creation to be happy in Him and with Him. The humble person does not concentrate on himself with selfishness, but rather always think about putting others in front of him and how to make them happy? How to comfort them? How would he act in a way that will comfort the others?

Therefore, the person who wants to achieve the humility will always think and act in such a way that will give others precedence to make them happy and to comfort them before himself. That

is why the Lord God will look on that humble person from above and give him with grace the virtue of “humility”. The Lord Jesus says “But when you are invited (*to a wedding feast*), go and sit down in the lowest place” Luke 14:10

2. **Think about how to help in making others succeed to the greatest extent**

It is from our God’s humility and love that He has created the creation in a remarkable manner. He has created the angels and then humans in their best. He has created humans as per His liking. God would have been able to just create, but He did so in the best way and the greatest picture because He wanted all the creation to succeed and He wants to see them happy and successful. He was not afraid on His glory from us. On the contrary, He was sad when we have lost that image upon our sin. Similarly, the humble person wants and works for others to succeed and feels sad when they fail. The humble person would not feel threatened from others’ success. Instead he wants them to be better than himself.

3. **Think in easily forgiving the person who offended you**

It is from the humility of our Lord that He leans towards forgiving. The sin is directed towards Him “*Against you, you only, have I sinned*”. However, God in all His mighty is willing to forgive the sins and cast them in the sea of forgiveness. “*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*” Isaiah 1:18. He is not only willing to forgive us when we sin, but He is willing to help us in correcting our mistakes. Jonah the prophet did not want to obey God’s commands, but God arranged for the whale and saved him from his failure and helped him in correcting mistakes. Similarly, the Lord God forgave Saul from Tarsus and led him to the faith in Christ and made him a great preacher. There are many other examples where God shows His glory, mercy, forgiveness, and even carrying of our sins “and it was placed on Him all of our sins”. Similarly, “*the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*” Matthew 20:28.

Therefore, the humble person is willing to easily accept the insult and easily forgive and then look into how to help the person who sinned against him and how that person who sinned against him can be put in the realm of prayers so that God can help him.

4. **Think into how to encourage others as well as to commend them and thank them on everything no matter how small it was**

It is from the humility of God that He forgets about the human’s mistakes and be happy with the small but good matters that the human does. “... *And accept your burnt sacrifice*” Psalm 20:3. This is in contradiction to the arrogant person who wants to judge others because he does not want anyone else to be commended as he wants himself only to be better and higher than everyone.

a) The Lord God met with the Samaritan woman which had an extremely bad life in sin. However, He humbled Himself and spoke with her and asked her to give Him to drink. Then He found a word of truth in her, so He encouraged her and said “truly you have said”. His humility was incredible with the Samaritan woman how He spoke with her about deep subjects and the water of life. As a result, she went and preached to the people of Samaria. Indeed, humility builds and arrogance destroys.

b) The humility of the Lord Christ was very deep with Peter the disciple, so He understood him and used his extreme anticipation and even used his prompt speech and made out of him a great preacher and martyr in the name of God Jesus Christ.

c) And what do we say on the humility of God with the sinful woman that was well known in the city? How He humbly met her at the house of Simon the Pharisee. How He defended her and did not allow anyone to hurt her. Moreover, He encouraged her and found in her great love

so He said about her “She loved so much”.

Therefore, the humble person treats others with good words and encourages everyone. He looks at the good but very small matters in others and commends them on these matters as well as thanks them. That is why we read in the book The Grove of Monks “Make the name of your brothers sweet in your mouth”

5. **Make it for everyone to deal with you**

While God is the Great, the Creator, and the Fully Pure “The Sky is not pure in front of Him”, He, with His humility, made it very easy for everyone to deal with Him despite the huge difference between God and us. Yet, He had made it easy to deal with Him. It is not difficult to pray. There is no difficulty to come to Church (the house of God). No difficulty to read the word of God.

It is really interesting that when someone wants to meet an important person (such as the governor) then he would find it hard to setup an appointment with the governor in the first place and if he was successful to setup an appointment then he would probably meet the governor’s office manager rather than the governor himself.

On the contrary from that, God, with all His Greatness, allowed it to be easy to deal with Him in spite of the greatness of God. St. Paul went up to paradise in a blink of an eye, and when he came down he was not able to describe the beauty of that place from how great it is. This is Paradise the place where the pure people are going to wait. How great is the Kingdom of God and the Lord’s throne then!! We read about our God and how He wanted to take Abraham’s opinion when He wanted to judge Sodom and Gomorrah with a great punishment (Genesis 18). The Lord says “*No longer do I call you servants ... but I have called you friends*”. The Lord also said when you pray say “*Our Father Who art in heaven...*” This is God the Great in His humility which does not contradict His Greatness. Whereas, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich person, we find that the rich person does not give any respect to Lazarus’ feelings who used to desire to eat from the crumbs that fall of the rich person’s table.

Does the governor deal with the people he governs in an easy way without disparity? Do the parents deal with their children, whom they have given birth to, in an easy way and without difference? Does the priest with the highest rank in the Church deal in an easy and humble way with the rest of the servants whom are of less rank in the Church? Does the great father deal on the father’s level or the leader’s level? There is a huge difference!

6. **Behave in great humility and be keen in that so that everyone around you becomes humble**

The Lord God in His great meekness taught humility to whoever was around him from Angels and Principalities. The Bible says about the Angels “*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*” Hebrews 1:14. The Angels are very strong. Only one Angel killed the army of Sennacherib. Despite all that, the Angels took the virtue of Humility from God Himself. And the Archangel Michael “*dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”*” Judah 1:9. And a heavenly group of Angels lost their humility and fell from their heavenly rank and became a lesson that the Lord in His humility does not accept around Him except the humble ones.

Therefore, the Christian person emits with his humility on those around him and as a result we find them imitating him in his humility.

We wish that every person would remember to apply the humility in all his/her actions since this way that person would gain the good-jealousy of all those around him and make them humble like him. St. Isaac the Syrian says “God does not reveal His secrets except to the humble ones.”

7. **Always remember the humility and come back to it**

In the book of Nehemiah, when Nehemiah went on to build the fence of Jerusalem, he used to say to the people “*You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.*” Nehemiah 2:17

Before he started the building of the fence, the Lord God allowed him to pass by three doors which are three trainings before he starts the work with God. The doors are the Valley Gate, Refuse Gate, and the Fountain Gate as it is written in Nehemiah 2:13-15 “*And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.*”

These three doors are specific symbols of success before the start of the building of the fence of Jerusalem that was destroyed. Meaning that it is regaining of the spiritual life and nourishing it after it was destroyed. This is done by three steps. The first “The Valley Gate” which is a representation of the humility and the required refractivity which is needed for all success and praise.

The second door is “The Refuse Gate” which means the door of the garbage. The reason for it after the Valley Gate (i.e. the Humility Gate) is the humble person feels that all the materialistic things are garbage and that he can easily loose them for Christ’s sake just as St. Paul says “*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*” Philippians 3:8

The third door is the “Fountain Gate” and it is an indication of the Holy Spirit and the waters of the Holy Spirit that cleanse the human soul and gives the enlightening of the mind. In John 7:38-39 “*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*” *But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*”

Therefore the believer passes by three stations to reach success in his life: The Valley Gate (Humility), the Refuse Gate (Rejecting the materialistic things and abiding by the heavenly), and the Fountain Gate (the enlightening by the Holy Spirit). Then, he returns back to the first door which is the Valley Gate (Humility) as he must go back to it as God says in the Bible “*So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.*” Nehemiah 2:15

8. **Personal Actions that lead to Humility**

“Moreover, humility is gained by remembering the falls, waiting for death, dressing up in poor clothes, choosing a calm place, and the acquisition of complete silence. Also, there should not be any meeting with the crowd. Let it be unknown and not counted for. Abiding by what destiny brings. Hating to meet with people, to do things for their sake and to socialize. Not loving the profit. Forbidding his mind from judging anyone or tricking any person. So, he should not deal/live with anyone but be alone with himself. All of these give birth to humility” St. Mari-Isaac.

“Abide yourself in all of the virtues that I say to you: nutrition, analgesic, silence. All of these bring humility and humility forgives all of the sins” St. Isaiah.

Conclusion

A) The spiritual virtues are grace from God. However, God gives them to the person who does his part in asking for them and working for them with all of his power

B) The virtue of humility is the greatest of all virtues

C) Humility is a grace in the person’s soul. It is the house of the Divine. It is for a person to think in all the creation that they are better than him

D) The importance of humility: It is the base that the spiritual life is built upon and is the base of the work of the Holy Spirit in the human being as well as the base in winning the Kingdom of God.

E) How do I humble myself? God said “*learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*” Therefore, we learn the humility lesson from God Himself since He is the Great but he humbled Himself in many things (as mentioned above) and that is humility. This is besides what the fathers of the Church have said (and it is mentioned above Mari-Isaac, and St. Isaiah)

LIFE OF FELLOWSHIP – KOINONIA

Introduction:

One of the important things in man's life is fellowship "Koinonia" at the family, church and society levels.

One Body:

The old creation occurred when God created Adam; He took dirt and breathed in it and He created Adam. How do all the organs of life function in this mound of dirt? God's breath was not a usual one but His power entered in the dirt and moved life in it. Then God created Eve "...and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man." (Gen 2:21-22) Eve was created out of Adam, so He loved her very much. "...Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Therefore, the power of God worked in this "One Body", and the homogeneity of the body originated from this beginning and the entire human race came from Adam and Eve. Despite the fact that God could have created everyman from the dust again, but He did not. Therefore it was essential to have "The One Body" to have the human multiplication.

One Spirit:

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ promised His disciples and "...presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3) "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" (Acts 1:4-5)

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4)



Therefore, the Church was born from the descending of the Holy Spirit; established on the concept of “One Spirit”. This was not a usual descending however; it was an inner movement that allowed for a new creation; through which God’s work was manifested in the first church. **“Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:17).** And the congregation of Ephesus (Acts 19:6) through the laying of the hands, the blessing of the Holy Spirit appeared in the mystery of priesthood (2 Timothy 1:6)

Therefore, it was important that the Holy Spirit functioned in this “One Spirit” so that the strength of being born of the Spirit is manifest. Therefore, we take the blessing of the Holy Spirit from the church through baptism and being anointed by the Holy Myron oil, and we feel its affects in us through Holy Communion and prayers.

In this booklet through the Grace of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I will discuss the concept of fellowship or the “One Spirit” in the following points:

1. The Lord of Glory warns us against separation
2. The importance of the One Spirit to gain the blessing of God
3. The Unity of the family and at work
4. Unity in the human personality
5. Unity in the Holy Trinity
6. The unity in serving the church and its membership “Koinonia”
7. How to maintain the unity?
8. Summary

1. THE LORD OF GLORY WARNS US AGAINST SEPARATION:

“...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house” (Matthew 12:25-29)

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ONE SPIRIT TO GAIN THE BLESSING OF GOD:

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)

For a human being to achieve the spiritual blessing he/she must love others because God is love. For example, the radio system must be set at a certain tune to receive certain waves from the station so that they become information that the human can hear and us. However if the tuner was not set to receive the right signals, even if we increased or decreased the volume, there will be no way of hearing anything, only noise that a human being does not want to hear.

Likewise, in order for God’s glory to reach man, He must be in complete love with others around

Him, “one spirit” without any hate. Without any arrogance. “Love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself”. Jesus’ disciples went through a period of great weakness and thought, “Who is the greatest?” They were not ready to receive any spiritual blessing in this position. They had to get rid of thoughts of pride and competition and lack of love. “**When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place**” (Acts 2:1); and this is the climate that heavenly gifts can appear in and act with great power.

3. UNITY IN FAMILY AND AT WORK:

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “**Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand**” (Matthew 12:25). Therefore, we must preserve the unity of spirit and avoid any divisions in the family.

- a) Strength in unity. A common story is that of a father on his deathbed gathered his children and showed them a chip of wood on its own how weak it is. However when he added another chip, it became more difficult to break and then he added many more; it became impossible to break. Therefore, he told his children if they preserved the Unity of the spirit and the love, you will receive heavenly blessings, and the evil one will not be able to divide you or trouble you.
- b) In the Family of our Father Jacob of the Old Testament; Joseph’s brothers arose against him, beat him, and threw him in a dry well; then they sold him as a slave in Egypt. All this was because of his coat of many colours that Jacob gave to Joseph. What was the result? Many troubles from Jacob and all his sons.
- c) After the leadership of David and his son Solomon over the Israelites; many weak kings came and fought each other, which lead to the division into two kingdoms: The Kingdom of Judea to the south and the kingdom of Israel to the north. The two kingdoms became weak, which lead to their captivity and humiliation. The devil wants to separate man from his family so that hate can prevail instead of love and the devil can take advantage of one soul on its own.
- d) Even the philosophy of the world states “divide to win” this philosophy is destructive and leads to separation between people and congregations, which leads to wars, famines, diseases and death.

4. UNITY IN THE HUMAN PERSONALITY:

Humans are of one body, soul and spirit. The body is known and seen. The soul is united to the body and is living as long as the body is living. The spirit is the facet that interacts with God during prayers and worshipping.

The individual must be united through all three aspects. If the spirit was leading, then the body and soul will follow; therefore the individual can take advantage of the Godly blessing “**led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.**” (Romans 8:14)

The Holy Spirit leads the human spirit to the deep spiritual life without struggling and without opposition from soul or the body; therefore the person grows in the blessings of God and receives the fruits of the Holy Spirit and His heavenly gifts.

For example: St. Moses the Strong chose to be led by the Holy Spirit, however, he was under the

influence of the body. He was torn and used to say “Sun if you are the true god tell me”. However, when he calmed down and his body united to his soul and spirit with the Lord, he became a new person who is now known as “The strong St Moses the black”

5. UNITY IN THE HOLY TRINITY:

“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (1 John 5:7)

Therefore, we worship One God, from One Divine nature; One with three Hypostasis; working together with no conflict and join together in all their work.

God, for example, creates through His Son (the Logos) in the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God that proceeds forth from the Father)

In the Orthodox creed, we say, **“Truly we believe in One God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Creator of heaven and earth, seen and unseen, We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages... Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, who proceeds from the Father, Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified”**

In addition, here we find the Golden verse; where the Trinity works towards salvation **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)**

6. THE UNITY IN SERVING THE CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERSHIP “KOINONIA”:

- **What is Koinonia?**

Koinonia is a Greek word that occurs 20 times in the Bible. Koinonia’s primary meaning is “fellowship, sharing in common, communion.” The first occurrence of Koinonia is Acts 2:42, **“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”** Christian fellowship is a key aspect of the Christian life. Believers in Christ are to come together in love, faith, and encouragement. That is the essence of Koinonia.

Philippians 2:1-2 declares, **“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in the spirit and purpose.”** Koinonia is being in agreement with one another, being united in purpose, and serving alongside each other. Our koinonia with each other is based on our common koinonia with Jesus Christ. 1John 1:6-7, **“if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with other, and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanest us from all sins.”**

A powerful example of what koinonia should look like can be found in a study of the “One another’s” of Scripture. Scripture commands us to” be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10), honour one another (Romans 12:10), live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:6; 1 Peter 3:8), accept one another (Romans 15:7), serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13), be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32), admonish one another (Colossians 3:16), encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrew 3:13), spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrew 10:24), offer hospitality (1 Peter 4:9), and love one another (1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11; 3:23; 4:7; 4:11-12). That is what true Biblical Koinonia should look like.

- **Why is church membership important?**

The universal Church – the body of Christ (Romans 12:5) – is composed of all true believers in Christ. Non-believers are not part of the Body of Christ; therefore, it would seem that God keeps a “membership list” of who is in the Church. We see just such a list in Revelation 20:12, the Lamb’s book of life. If the universal Church has a “membership roll” in heaven, it would be appropriate for local churches to maintain a list of members on earth.

“And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved” (Acts 2:47). This verse indicated that the salvation is a prerequisite for being “added” to the church. Churches today who require salvation before membership are simply following the biblical model. See also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Membership in the local church is strongly implied in Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians to **“put away from among yourselves that wicked person”** (1 Corinthians 5:13).

The preceding verse speaks of those “without” and “within” the local church. Such language is meaningless without a clearly defined group of members.

Why is the church membership important? Church membership is a way of officially identifying yourself with a local body of believers. Church membership is a statement that you are in agreement with that local church and are a representative of it. Church membership is also a good way of determining who is allowed to vote on important decisions and/or who is involved in official church positions / function.

- **What is the purpose of the church?**

Acts 2:42 could be considered a purpose statement for the church, **“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”** So according to this Scripture, the purpose / activities of the church should be (1) teaching Biblical doctrine, (2) providing a place of fellowship for believers, (3) observing the Lord’s Supper, and (4) praying.

The church is to teach Biblical doctrine so we can be grounded in our faith. Ephesians 4:14 tells us, **“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”** The church is to be a place of fellowship, where Christians can be devoted to one another and honor one another (Romans 12:10), instructs one another (Romans 15:14), be kind and companionate to one another (1 John 3:11).

The church is to be a place where believers can observe the Lord’s Supper, remembering Christ’s death and shed blood on our behalf (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). This is another example of the church promoting fellowship. The final purpose of the church according to Acts 2:42 is prayer. The church is to be a place that promotes prayer, teaches prayer, and practice prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 encourages us, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**

Another “commission” given to the church is proclaiming the gospel of salvation through Jesus

Christ (Mathew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). The church is called to be faithful in sharing the Gospel through word and deed. The church is to be a “lighthouse” in the community – pointing people towards our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The church is to both promote the Gospel and prepare the members to proclaim the Gospel (1 Peter 3:15).

Some final purposes of the church are given in James 1:27, **“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”** The church is to be about the business of ministering to those who are in need. This includes not only sharing the Gospel, but also providing for physical needs (food, clothing, shelter) as necessary and appropriate. The church is also to equip believers in Christ with the tools they need to overcome sin and remain free from the pollution of the world. This is done by the principles given above – Biblical teaching and Christian fellowship.

So, with all that said, what is the purpose of the church? I like the illustration in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. The church is God’s “Body” – we are his hands, mouth, and feet in this world. We are to be doing the things that Jesus Christ would do if He were here physically on the earth. The church is to be “Christian” – “Christ-like” and Christ following.

7. **HOW TO MAINTAIN THE UNITY?**

There will always be differences in opinions. This is a great feature, that each human being must express his/her opinion; however in love and in respect. After expressing their opinion, we must try our best to keep the unity of spirit as the Lord and Master has done. Let us recount some examples:

(a) After the birth of Jesus Christ; Herod became troubled from the words of the wisemen when they said **“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matt 2:2)**. He sent an army to kill the children of Bethlehem 2 years and younger.

Our lord could have killed Herod and whipped his kingdom from the surface of the earth. What would have been the reaction of the entire earth at the time? They did not know that Christ was the King; Son of God; the Saviour. How is it that differences in opinions and divisions and troubles are sitting in darkness? However, the Lord and Master in great humility and peace left everything, escaped from him with the Holy Family, and left for Egypt. He kept the peace and harmony and there he established the church in Egypt and blessed it and returned and re-returned to it one more time after the death of Herod. His Divine wisdom. Maintain the peace in any way you can.

(b) Another example is the example of the taxes (Matthew 17:24-27) Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ did not have to pay any taxes to the temple as He is the Lord of the temple; He even called it His house. If every person paid to the temple; except the person of the Lord; because He is God manifest in the body. However since He did not want to trouble anyone and He did not want to cause any disturbance; He felt that there would be a better solution to maintain the unity of the spirit and He said to Peter **“Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”**

8. SUMMARY:

- 1) The work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the birth of the Church because “Everyone was with One Spirit”. This will always be the rule to do the heavenly work. The Holy Spirit descended in a unique way on the heads of the disciples and filled them and they became those that provided the Holy Spirit through the laying of the hand.
- 2) The Lord works and gives blessings in the climate of Love between people; and the spirit of unity in each individual
- 3) To maintain the spirit of unity, the individual must work fully so that there are no divisions.
- 4) The individual grows...the house and family grows...and the service in the church grows in a peace, harmony and a spirit of unity.
- 5) Our Koinonia goes back to our Koinonia with our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 6) Church membership is very important because it determines the group who have the same faith.
- 7) The church purposes are many e.g. teaching, helping the needy, enjoying the sacraments, prayers and preaching.
- 8) Unity brings life and death brings division. e.g. when someone dies his or her soul leaves, the body is buried and after a while it starts to disintegrate.

CHRISTIANITY IN PRACTICAL LIFE

(Includes some quotes by the late His Holiness Pope Shenouda III)

Introduction: Christ came with many goals

“I have come that they may have life” (John 10:10). God took care of the people who were cast out of heaven as a result of sinning against the Lord’s command. God did not leave the human being to the end, but rather God sent His prophets and disciples throughout time to calm down the human being and to give him the promise of salvation by the coming of Christ the Logos and His incarnation. For God to send His only begotten Son to this world so that He lives among us, is the utmost love. *“... and death which entered into the world by the envy of the devil; You have destroyed, by the life-giving manifestation of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ”* St. Basil Liturgy – The Prayer of Reconciliation.

Therefore, with the incarnation of the Son and His appearance among us *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14) He achieved in us many things such as:

1. Incarnation is the road to salvation

The Saviour must be infinite (to redeem all of those who believe in Him), without sin (otherwise he would need a saviour), and be a human being (to save humans)

2. The incarnation changed the human beings’ knowledge of God

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3)

“And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26)

“I am the good shepherd.” (John 10:11)

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:16-19)

Therefore, with the Incarnation of the Lord Christ, we came to know that God is our Great Shepherd. He is our Father. He specializes in healing the sick and feeding the hungry. With the Incarnation of the Lord Christ, we knew **“The True God”**

3. Through the incarnation, we became partakers in the divine nature

“ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4)

In the liturgy, we pray and say *“You blessed my nature in You”* **Through the incarnation, we learn from the Lord Christ how the human being can act humanly and how his personality should be in society.**

In multiple occasions, we talk about the Lord Christ Who incarnated to save us and to give us a share in the Heavenly Kingdom and eternity. In doing so, we might neglect to note that the Godly person, who believes in Christ, must have a personality that is similar to the Lord Christ's personality, because He said *"learn from Me"* (Matthew 11:29). St. Paul also says *"to be conformed to the image of His Son"* (Romans 8:29). Also, *"leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps"* (1 Peter 2:21). What is deeper than this is when the weak person unites with Christ *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"* (Galatians 2:20). The characteristics of Christ inside that person would then appear as behaviours and highly respectful acts.

As a result, before we say *"For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."* (Luke 17:21), we live heaven on earth as we deal with others as sons and daughters of God according to His image. One of the first characteristics of Christianity is to deal with others in a respectful way. To cover this subject, we will talk about the following points:

4. The Human being is the image of God ... He lost this image after sinning and this was reflected on his personality and behaviours.

- 1 The need to change the way of thinking Through the Lord Christ's life
- 2 Love everyone... We hate sin and love the sinner... as the Lord Christ did
- 3 Care for the poor... Just as the Lord Christ did
- 4 Respect everyone... Just as the Lord Christ did
- 5 Enter into the subject's inner idea.... Just as the Lord Christ did
- 6 Being honest with everyone Just as the Lord Christ is
- 7 Freedom Just as the Lord Christ did
- 8 Patience and endurance... Just as the Lord Christ lived them
- 9 The enlightened thought... Through the work of the Holy Sacraments
- 10 The personalities of the saints in today's society
- 11 Some of the words by the late Pope Shenouda III about dealing with others

• **The Human being is the image of God ... He lost this image after sinning and this was reflected on his personality and behaviours.**

"So God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:27) at least in three things: freedom, holiness, and eternity. The human being has the full freedom in his acts and is prone to sin. Therefore, when he sinned, he indeed fell through the serpent's temptation. Additionally, the human being is the Lord's image in holiness since he is the being that God Himself gave the breath of life to. It is a holy breath for a holy life. The human being is the being that has eternal life which can be either a happy and successful eternity, or an eternity full of sadness and destruction.

This person, who was created according to God's image, lost his freedom, holiness and eternity when he fell into sin. He was then in Satan's palm and lost everything. This reflected in his actions and behaviours. So, Cain (the first born of Adam and Eve) rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. This act was a result of jealousy and hatred in Cain's heart towards his brother Abel. Then corruption (killing, adultery, obscenity) spread across the whole earth to the extent that the Lord God killed everyone in the old world through the great flood, except Noah and his family, who were eight people out of all the earth's population. Then generations passed by again and filthiness, killing and adultery took place yet again. Homosexuality, rudeness, and killings were all invested in Sodom and Gomorrah, so the Lord destroyed it with brimstone and

fire, except for Lot and his family, although his wife perished. Then, the old world started to worship idols, except for a few people throughout the ages. This was as a symbol of the fact that inside all this darkness, the Lord did not leave Himself without a witness, such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord sent many prophets till He Himself will one day come with salvation.

He sent Moses the prophet and gave him the Ten Commandments, which was written with the finger of God for the Jewish people. However, the Jews steadfastly created a Gold Calf and ran after the gentiles, and because of this, the Law and the Ten Commandments became a sign of a person's weakness, and his inability to fulfill the commands. However, the need for Christ increased since everything failed. However, these events needed to take place in order to lay the grounds for the coming of Christ. This included prophecies, symbols of things, symbols by persons, bloody sacrifices; all in preparation for the true sacrifice.

Then the Lord Christ came "*The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light*" (Matthew 4:16). "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*" (Hebrews 1:1-2)

- **The need to change the way of thinking Through the Lord Christ's life**

The start of everything in the New Testament, which began by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, needed a change in the way of thinking. The Lord Christ was born to a poor and orphaned virgin that He had chosen from all the women in the world. Therefore, the human being is valued with what is inside him and his purity, and not according to his wealth and richness in this world. The Lord Christ was born in a manger in Bethlehem as He did not have a place in the house.

Again, it was not one of the greatest cities, such as Jerusalem or any other capital. Nor was the house He was born in the greatest house. However, the important thing was that the heavenly glory did not need an outside glory such as a city, a house, or any other great glory, but rather the heavenly glory itself is full of unspoken glory. Therefore, the three Wiseman gave interesting gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. They came from a far place through the guidance of God and a heavenly star. Hence, the way of thinking should be a heavenly one and not an earthly or materialistic one. What about the earthly matters? These do not even compare to the heavenly glories "*but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.*" 1 Corinthians 15:40.

We should give more value to the spiritual and heavenly matters because they are the most important ones "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*" Matthew 6:33

- **Love everyone... We hate sin and love the sinner... as the Lord Christ did**

The Lord Jesus Christ used to go about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil in the congregation. He loved everyone and had compassion for everyone including both, the sinners and the good "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*" Matthew 9:13. It was said about Him that He loved the sinners and tax collectors. He visited Simon the Pharisee (yet Simon did not benefit). He visited Zacchaeus the tax collector (and Zacchaeus and his household were saved).

Jesus met with the Samaritan woman that used to live in sin. He spoke with her to the extent that she left her jar and went onto preach with Him. Jesus also defended the adulteress woman and

told her to go in peace and not to sin anymore. Let us not forget that the Lord Christ is the only person without sin, yet He had compassion towards the sinners; although He did not agree with their sins, nor did these sins have anything to do towards Him.

We live in a society that has excess corruption and has plenty of evil thoughts and theories, such as homosexuality, marrying within the same kind, abortion, doing drugs, getting drunk and many others. What should a Christian person do in this case? He should be like his master in being compassionate, respectful; yet he should not agree with the wrong doings or any sin because *“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?”* 2 Corinthians 6:14. On the other hand, if a Christian person attacks those who live in sin, he will cause them to stumble more and cause them to hate without any solution. This will increase hatred in the society for no reason and this is not Christ’s way.

- **Care for the poor... Just as the Lord Christ did**

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor” Luke 4:18. This was Christ’s message, glory be to His name. He stood up for the poor and those who have no one to remember them. He went close to Bethesda, where an infirm man of 38 years was. The man told Jesus *“I have no man to put me into the pool”* and so Jesus told him *“Rise, take up your bed and walk”*, so the man rose immediately. Jesus also went to the poor person who was born blind and cared for him. From the point of view of the uncaring people, this poor man has no value, but Christ had compassion for the poor. He gave that person new bodily eyes as well as new spiritual eyes so that He may grant him faith *“Lord, I believe!”* And *he worshiped Him”* John 9:38. There are many other examples such as that throughout the ages: Christ raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap.

There is a story from the *Paradise of Monks* book about a saintly monk who lived in a cave that was a few kilometres away from the monastery. The monks of the monastery used to send him his needs of bread and water. At some time, issues took place at the monastery to the extent that the monks forgot to send anything to the monk who lived in the cave. When they remembered him, they noticed that it had been a few weeks already. So, they went to pray on him and bury him for they thought that he would be dead.

When they arrived at the cave, they found him alive and in good health for God sent him whatever he needed through a miraculous way. God loves the poor and the needy. The Christian person should be the same in today’s society just as his master used to love the poor. What about visiting the sick people? *“I was sick and you visited Me”* Matthew 25:36. What about visiting the jailed? They are truly poor people. What about the strangers? *“Do not forget to entertain strangers”* Hebrews 13:2

The Christian person has a role in the society just as his master did. He should care for the children, the poor, the sick, the jailed, the strangers, the oppressed and the needy.

- **Respect everyone... Just as the Lord Christ did**

The Lord Jesus Christ used to respect everyone whether old or young, rich or poor, and a believer or unbeliever. The disciples were about to forbid the children from getting close to Him, but He said *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them”* Matthew 19:14. As for the rich, Jesus respected Zacchaeus’s wish to see Him and told him *“Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house. So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.”* Luke 19:5-6. And when Judas Iscariot was betraying Him, Jesus said to him *“Friend, why have you come?”* Matthew 26:50.

We might disagree with others' opinions, but that should not mean that we should lose our respect for them. We must respect the poor and take into consideration their feelings and needs; we should never disrespect him. We must also respect and adhere to those who are in high ranks and obey the laws that they create "*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" Matthew 22:21. We must also respect women "*dwelling with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*" 1 Peter 3:7.

We ought as well to respect the elderly, the wise, the clergy, as well as all of the servants that serve in God's field. When we respect everyone, we not only become Christ-like, but we also win everyone's heart and respect as well.

- **Enter into the subject's inner idea.... Just as the Lord Christ did**

The point of difference between the Scribes and the Pharisees was that they have left God's commandment and got attached to the formalities. They left the love of God and the neighbour to hold on the Jews habits, such as washing of the cups, the whitewashing of the tombs, cleansing the outside of the cup and dish and holding onto Sabbath. They have done so literally and not spiritually. The Lord Christ used to say to them "*woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*" Matthew 32:13

In our practical lives, we should think of the inner matters rather than of its outside formality. As an example, when a young man or woman prays for God to send them their life partner, would the spirituality of that person be the focus? Would we look at how that person loves God and the church? Or do we look at what that person does for a living and his/her income? Another example would be for a person who suffers from weak spirituality, would accuse the church, the bible and even God Himself that there is nothing good that exists; yet this is a result of his own spiritual weakness.

When you ask that person, you find that he does not give any time to God, but rather is continuously busy with worldly matters wasting his time, does not pray and does not read God's words. What would the result be? A weakness in his spiritual life, but the problem is not from the church or the bible, but rather in his way of life and not giving enough attention to his spirituality. Jesus said to Peter "*Launch out into the deep*" Luke 5:4

- **Being honest with everyone Just as the Lord Christ is**

The Lord Christ was honest throughout His service and did not use any sort of political or deceptive talk. For example, the crowd was looking for Him after the five loaves and two fish miracle. He was honest with them and said "*Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."*" John 6:26. He was also honest in His visit to Simon the Pharisee after the sinful woman came, repented and wet Christ's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

Jesus said to Simon "*I have something to say to you.*" Luke 7:40 and was truly honest with him. He was also honest with the crowd that were following Him and said to them "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me*" Matthew 16:24. He did not hide it from anyone that taking up the cross and denying oneself is required for the person to be a true Christian. This is a filtration process that is required for the Christians and not like the other religions that spread through violence, luring or jealousy. The story is clear in Christianity: there is a cross that one must bear, pain and suffering for God- however, there is

also a divine and heavenly help that is above the norm, which gives the person an infinite inner strength above all the sufferings, resulting in life full of happiness and glory that cannot be spoken off.

- **Freedom Just as the Lord Christ did**

The Lord Christ used to act freely and Satan had no power over Him. While using that freedom, the Lord Christ did not harm the interests of others nor did he rip them from their freedom. Herod the king feared the birth of Christ and was afraid to lose his kingdom, not knowing that Jesus Christ was the king of Kings and God of gods. The Lord Christ, the baby infant, left to Herod everything and fled with His Holy family to Egypt.

With His own will, He chose not to harm Herod and did not strangle Herod's free will. The Lord Christ was able to destroy Herod and his kingdom immediately, but He used His free will to run away from evil "*depart from evil*". Similarly, when the Lord Christ used to talk about the Holy Body and Blood (Communion) Sacrament and that They were not a symbol – He left to His disciples the full freedom "*Do you also want to go away?*" John 6:67 meaning that, you have the full freedom to choose. The answer came clear from Peter "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" John 6:68

We should act with full freedom in the society that we live in and not as those who are under Satan's power. This is the true victorious life. However, we have to note that our freedom cannot be based on the corruption of other people's comfort, and should not be through breaking the law of the country that we live in. As an example, a person wants to hear the liturgy using a CD player.

This is his right. However, the CD player volume can be reasonable and not disturbing to others. In another example, a person works in his field of work with full freedom and to the best of his ability. However, that person should pay his share from the taxes so that the country that he lives in can do its responsibilities. Hence, the person should know that his freedom is not unlimited but limited within the law and others' interests.

- **Patience and endurance... Just as the Lord Christ lived them**

It was said about the Lord Christ that He was "*A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*" Isaiah 53:3. Indeed we find that the Lord Christ was insulted by the Jews despite of His compassion and care for everyone. They called Him "*The carpenter son, and said "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"*" John 8:48. The Lord Christ endured all of these insults and did not answer back with one word. "*He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth*" Isaiah 53:7.

He drew for us the road of salvation this way "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*" Acts 14:22 and "*By your patience possess your souls.*" Luke 21:19

Contrary to that, in today's society, everything is fast-paced and no one wants to have patience or endurance. We learn in the Agpya's prime prayer to be "*bearing with one another in love*" Ephesians 4:2. As for the Christian person, whom the Holy Spirit work in, he enjoys the fruit of longsuffering and patience "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness*" Galatians 5:22

In all of the studying, working, dealing with others and passing through hardship, diseases and tribulations, we find that the Christian person endures everything with thankfulness "*Let us give*

thanks to the beneficent ... for every condition, concerning every condition, and in every condition ...”

- **The enlightened thought... Through the work of the Holy Sacraments**

The behaviours of the Christian person should not only be normal in comparison to the social level, but should also be according to the enlightened inner person through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Sacraments in him.

On the day of the liturgy, the bread and wine is converted to the Body and Blood of the Lord Christ. The believers union with God becomes a true Sacramental union for an inner and very deep life. This deep life appears to the person who is united with Christ *“it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”* Galatians 2:20. In every look, thought and action, we find that person is *“... the salt of the earth”* Matthew 5:13 and *“... the light of the world”* Matthew 5:14

That person, through the power of God that lives in him, is able to *“love you enemies”* Matthew 5:44 and *“And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two”* Matthew 5:41. A normal person cannot live these characteristics. After the liturgy, the person should have taken a huge heavenly dose that he can enjoy so that he can feel that the day of the communion is totally different compared to any other day.

- **The personalities of the saints in the society**

All of the saints have the same characteristics as the Lord Christ. These characteristics appeared as the fruit of the Holy Spirit from great love, beautiful joy and full patience.

Let us remember our late Pope Shenouda III. All of those who have dealt with him felt his kindness with everyone, whether Christians or none-Christians, clergy and congregation. Everyone felt his great gentleness and his unbounded funny soul without insulting anyone. Even in the midst of difficult situations, we find him full of fun, not insulting to the person in front of him and able to get out of the situation with happiness and without insult.

Everyone felt the love that Pope Shenouda III had for everyone. As a result, he took on the title of the father of all Arabs with all their religions and beliefs.

Wherever Pope Shenouda existed, happiness was there too as well as solutions to problems. He had the spiritual energy that he was able to give to all of his children. He had the Christ-like characteristics such as his humble and compassionate smile that reduces the pain of a person – a beautiful and great smile.

I had many encounters with Pope Shenouda III and in every situation I learned many things from him. Let me tell you about one of the situations:

At the beginning of the 1970's, I had a specific issue that I was passing through, so I decided to go to Pope Shenouda and seek his guidance. He was at his residence at St. Pishoy monastery. I arrived at the monastery's door and they asked me if I had an appointment? I said no. It was about 10:30 PM, so I asked them for a piece of paper on which I wrote to the Pope that your son came from Canada and needs some help and is requesting an appointment. They went and delivered the message.

They then came to me telling me that Pope Shenouda has agreed to meet with me. I entered full of surprise from the immediate answer, welcome and love. He asked me to drink some cold drink. When I asked my question, he answered and said, “Abouna, I need you to understand why.” His answer put a huge relief in me in a period that did not exceed 30 minutes. He then

asked me to sleepover in a nearby new room. How great was his love, kindness, intelligence, and his fatherhood.

• **Some of the words by the late Pope Shenouda III about dealing with others.**

- 1) Use your life to fulfill the idealistic model that others wish for.
- 2) Abstain from what the people have and they will love you... do not make others think that you are their competitor who wants to take over what they have in their hands or who wants to get what he wants.
- 3) Endure others in their weak times or during their sinful times... win them with the patience and tolerance... as there is no doubt that they will feel sorry for what they have insulted you with when they get some time to themselves.
- 4) Forgive others... and make them feel you are appreciative of them. Make them understand that all the good that they do, gives you admiration and that you recognize their goodness.
- 5) Respect others and treat everyone with respect. Not only the adults, or those who you ought to respect, but also the young ones who are younger than you, age-wise or level-wise.
- 6) Work for the positive construction of others and not for their destruction.
- 7) Do not rebuke others quite often. If you have to do so, then do that without an insult to anyone. Do not think wrong of others and do not try to hold them for a word or action. Do not make them feel that you are their enemy or that you criticise them.
- 8) Deal with everyone in humility, modesty, gentleness, and kindness. For kindness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit as St. Paul said in Galatians 5:22.
- 9) Give others the benefit of the doubt and defend them as much as you can. Do that not with hypocrisy, but with truth and as much as the situation can take. Do that with a way that has no hypocrisy to avoid overpowering the truth.
- 10) Always give and serve. If you cannot give help to someone, give him a good word, a gentle smile or a true courtesy. Perform your responsibility to the fullest towards others.
- 11) Understand others and make them understand you in calmness and quiet spirit. Live with them in mutual understanding, in love and quietness.
- 12) In your relationships with the others, make sure you feel for them and their needs "*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep*" Romans 12:15. Do not let go of an opportunity in which you can make someone feel good.
- 13) It is more important to win over your enemy, than to win over him.

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

(1) **Basics:**

- 1.1 Definition of Theology
- 1.2 Why study Theology
- 1.3 Systematic Theology
- 1.4 Definition of Doctrine
- 1.5 Definition of Dogma
- 1.6 Definition of Comparative Theology

The main differences between the Coptic Orthodox faith and the Roman Catholic faith.

The main differences between the Coptic Orthodox faith and the Protestant faith.

(1) <u>Basics</u>

1.1 Definition of Theology:

The word theology comes from two Greek words (Theo means God and Ology means study). Both combined mean: “Study the Nature of God and God’s attributes”. Christian theology is simply an attempt to understand God as He is revealed in the Holy Bible. No theology will ever fully explain God and His ways because God is infinitely and eternally higher than we are.

Therefore, any attempt to describe Him will fall short: Romans 11:33-36 “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? 36 For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” Theology needs accuracy of expression and interpretation.

1.2 Why Study Theology:

God does want us to know Him insofar as we are able to, and theology is the art and science of knowing what we can know and understand about God in an organized and understandable manner. Biblical Theology is a good thing; it is the teaching of God’s Word, 2 Tim 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

The study of Theology, then, is nothing more than diving into God's Word to discover what He has revealed about Himself. When we do this, we come to know Him as:

- 1 The Creator of all things
- 2 The Sustainer of all things
- 3 The Judge of all things
- 4 The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things

When Moses asked who was sending him to Pharaoh, God replied: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). The name I AM indicates Personality. God has a name, even as He has given names to others. The name I AM stands for a: Free, purposeful, self-sufficient personality. God is not an ethereal force or a cosmic energy. He is the almighty, self-existing, self-determining Being with a mind and a will-the "Personal" God Who has revealed Himself to humanity through His Word, and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

To study theology is to get to know God in order that we may glorify Him through our love and obedience. Notice the progression here: we must get to know Him before we can love Him, and we must love Him before we can desire to obey Him. As a by-product, our lives are immeasurably enriched by the comfort and hope He imparts to those who know, love, and obey Him. Poor theology and a superficial, inaccurate understanding of God will only make our lives worse instead of bringing the comfort and hope we long for. Knowing about God is crucially important. We are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about God. He is the One with whom we will joyfully spend eternal life.

1.3 Systematic Theology:

Systematic Theology is a division of theology into systems to explain its various areas.

For example:

- Patrology is the study of God the Father
- Christology is the study of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
- Pneumatology is the study of God the Holy Spirit
- Eschatology is the study of the end times\
- Christian Anthropology is the study of humanity

1.4 Definition of Doctrine:

It is a belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a church. Usually presented in some type of official form but also may not be stated in an organized manner.

1.5 Definition of Dogma:

Something taught, principles or beliefs. Usually an officially established belief or principle that is handed down from a higher authority. It is similar to Doctrine however, it may be more arbitrary and not have any relationship to a systematic or carefully worked out principle or belief.

1.6 Definition of Comparative Theology:

Comparative Theology is a branch of Christian theology, which studies the religious diversity and its comparison, as well as theological reflection upon it.

(2) THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX FAITH AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC FAITH.

Introduction:

When we study these differences, the intention is not to raise any fruitless arguments with our Roman Catholic friends. The intention here is to learn the differences and be ready and better equipped to answer for our beliefs when we are asked about them. Besides, when we understand our Orthodox faith we gain the following:

- 1) We appreciate what we have and thank God that we are born in this faith.
- 2) We understand the reason for which our forefathers suffered willingly all kinds of persecution and even martyrdom to defend this faith.
- 3) We hold strongly to this faith and become encouraged to live according to what it teaches. Besides, we do not get shaken when we come face to face with other unorthodox beliefs.
- 4) We become ready and able, by the power of God, to answer for what we believe in as St. Peter instructs us to do: "... and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (I Peter 3:15).

Historical Background:

† The Church was one since its birth on the day of Pentecost. It continued to be so until the first schism as mentioned here below. However, during that period, heresies which are unorthodox or wrong teachings and dogmas) did arise. But the Church held ecumenical councils, heard the heretics out, examined their teachings thoroughly in the light of the Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the Apostles, and if found guilty of heresy, the Church by the authority vested in her, excommunicated the heretics. An example of this is what happened at the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) when Arius was ex-communicated.

† The Church continued to be one after the First, Second and Third Ecumenical Councils, namely, Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus.

† What happened in the Fourth Ecumenical Council (A.D. 451) was really sad. Though it appeared to be a theological debate, it actually was not. It was, in fact, a struggle for power. Up until that date, Alexandria (the Coptic Church) was officially taking the lead in Church matters as was decided by the First Ecumenical Council (Nicea), and the Patriarch of Alexandria was the Pope of the Church at large. He was not by any means the supreme head of the Church because that place is only Christ's; but he was, by definition, "first among equals".

† The Patriarch of Rome (Leo I) wanted to take that position of leadership from the Pope of Alexandria (Dioscorus), so he claimed that, since he was the successor of St. Peter, and since St. Peter was the head of the Apostles, then, the Pope of Rome should be the head of the Church. To reach his goal, he misinterpreted a sentence in the Papal message of Pope Dioscorus and accused him of falling into heresy. The Emperor, who was on the side of Pope Leo I, called for a council to convene in Chalcedon (A.D. 451) and to be chaired by the Emperor and not by Pope Dioscorus. In other words, Pope Dioscorus had been in actuality condemned as a heretic without even having the Council hear him out. To this, the Pope, the Patriarchs and bishops of the Oriental Churches (Alexandria, Syria, Armenia, India and Ethiopia) opposed strongly. When the Council decided to try Pope Dioscorus 'in absentia' without even giving him a chance to defend himself, the Oriental Patriarchs and bishops walked out of the Council declaring that that

Council was un-canonical. That was the first schism in the Church. The Oriental Churches called themselves the Orthodox Church, and the Western Churches called themselves the Roman Catholic Church.

† Shortly after the schism, the Roman Empire fell and the Vatican became, not only a Church but a state as well, and the Pope of Rome assumed supreme power both civil and religious wise. This led to have him declared by the Church, later on, as “infallible” which means that he cannot make mistakes or do wrong, in other words, without sin.

The Main Differences between the Two Churches, Orthodox and Catholic:

1) Filioque:

† Filioque is a Latin word which means “and the Son” which was added to the Nicene – Constantinopolitan Creed by the Church of Rome in the 11th century. Roman Catholicism teaches that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son” (Filioque)

† Thus the Catholic Church added words to the Nicene Creed “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life Who proceeds from the Father and the Son....”

Our answer:

- 1) It is contrary to scripture – John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, Whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” Thus the Lord Christ never describes the Holy Spirit as proceeding from Himself. Also, in Luke 11:13 “... Your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.”
- 2) Triadology consists in the notion that for any given trait, it must be either common to all Persons of the Trinity or unique to one of them. Thus God head is common to all but Fatherhood is unique to the Father, while begotten is unique to the Son, and procession unique to the Spirit. Positing that something can be shared by two Persons (i.e. being the source of the Spirit's procession) but not the other is to elevate those two Persons at the expense of the other. Thus, the balance of unity and diversity is destroyed.
- 3) The Apostolic Tradition has always taught that God the Father is the single source “monarchy” of the Son and the Spirit.

2) Was St. Peter Really the Head of the Disciples?

The Roman Catholic Church says “yes” and it bases its answer on the following verses:

Jesus said to St. Peter, “But I have prayed for you; that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32). They say that the mere fact that he was commissioned by our Lord to strengthen his brethren gives him the supremacy over them.

Our answer:

We say that this is not so. On the contrary, when you read the following two verses it becomes evident that Jesus said this statement because He knew beforehand that Peter would deny Him and would fall more than all the other Disciples. Our Lord actually dedicated a special prayer for St. Peter because of a weakness in his faith at that time rather than a strength.

Jesus said to St. Peter: “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my

church I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 16:18-19).

Our answer:

We say again that this is not an indication that Peter is the head of the Disciples. In this context, the Lord Jesus was praising St. Peter for his faith in the Divinity of Christ which he declared, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The rock is Christ Himself, or the faith in Christ as the Son of the living God, but it cannot be Peter who was weak at some point and denied the Lord in front of a servant. As an evidence that Christ is the rock, St. Peter himself declared: “This is the stone which was rejected by you builders which has become the chief cornerstone.” (Acts 4:11). Review also (I Peter 2:6) and (Romans 9:33). As for giving Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven, Jesus gave the same to the rest of the Disciples. “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:18).

The Gospel according to St. Matthew said, “Now, the names of the twelve apostles are these; first, Simon, who is called Peter, and ... “ (Matthew 10:2).

Our answer:

We say that, to have Peter’s name mentioned first does not imply that he is higher in rank than the rest of the Disciples. In another location the name of St. James was mentioned first: “And when James, Cephas (i.e. Peter) and John, who seemed to be pillars ...” (Galatians 2:9). Besides, when you read the discussion, which happened in the Jerusalem Council, you find that the last and decisive word was not Peter’s but James’ (Acts 15:6-29).

3) The Immaculate conception of St. Mary:

† Both the Orthodox and Roman Catholicism believe St. Mary is the “Mother of God” “(Theotokos), Perpetual Virginity of St. Mary” and her intercessions.

† The Catholic Pope Pius IX, in 1854 said: “St. Mary was preserved from all stain of the original sin. It is a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore to be firmly and steadfastly believed by all faithful”.

Our answer:

† St. Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour” Luke 1:46-47. So it is clear cut that St. Mary needed salvation as anyone else and that she was born like anyone else.

† When the Holy Spirit came on her to give birth to the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit Sanctified her and prevented any inherited sin to proceed from her to the flesh of the Lord Jesus in her womb.

4) What about the Indulgences?

During what is known as the Dark Ages, particularly at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church introduced this teaching and put it into practice. It says that the Pope, by the authority vested in him to forgive and bind sins can issue documents of forgiveness of sins to whomever he wished. This dogma was further misused to the extent that those documents were sold for money and also were issued to forgive not only the sins that were already committed, but those that would be committed in the future. The dogma is based

on what Jesus said to His Disciples: “Assuredly, I say to you whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:18).

Our answer:

We say that the forgiveness of sins is not given except to the repentant who comes confessing his sins. After his confession, he is absolved of his sins by God through the priest. But buying documents of forgiveness makes the rich inherit the kingdom of heaven, and the poor become outcasts. This is certainly a clear violation of Biblical teaching and it clashes with the spirit of Christianity. For further Biblical reference please read: I John 1:9, James 5:16. 1 John 2:1-2 and 1 Timothy 2:5.

5) The Extra Merits of the Saints:

This also is a dogma that was introduced by the Roman Catholic Church in the course of the Middle Ages. It states that the saints were extra-righteous and acquired extra merits more than they needed for their salvation. These extra merits are at the disposal of the Popes of the Church to distribute at will. Again this dogma, which has no Biblical foundation whatsoever, was misused by the Popes of that period and those merits were granted to those who could afford them.

A question here might be asked: If these dogmas have no Biblical bases, how could they be introduced in the Church and why didn't the Church theologians stop them from being issued? The answer is simple. As aforementioned, the Popes were declared by the Church infallibles, so whatever they said became law and could not be wrong. The same happened with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which says that the Virgin Mary herself was conceived of without the natural marital relation between her father and her mother.

Regarding the extra merits of the saint, we will just state the following two Biblical quotations:

- Jesus said: “so likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done what was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10).
- St. Paul wrote: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14).

6) The Purgatory:

Again, the dogma of the purgatory was introduced in the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. The purgatory is an intermediate place between Paradise and Hades (hell). It is a purifying phase through which all people will go and suffer for a time that differs from one to the other according to each one's sins; therefore, when a person goes to heaven he would be completely sanctified. And again there is no Biblical foundation on which this dogma would rest. The Biblical evidence proves that there is no purgatory. Read Matthew 25:46: “... and these will go away into **everlasting** punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” Besides, Christ our Lord mentioned only two places in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Moreover, we know that Christ while on the Cross told the repenting thief: “Assuredly, I say to

you, **today** you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43). Our salvation and purification is affected by the redemptive work of Christ our Lord on the Cross. There are some other differences like the infallibility of the Pope which we are not going to study in the course of this lesson.

7) **Concept of “Doctrinal development” in the Catholic Church:**

† In order for the Roman Catholicism to justify new doctrine erected in the last century, a theory of “doctrinal development” was introduced. The Holy Spirit, they said, amplified Faith as the church moved into new circumstances and acquired other needs.

† Consequently, Roman Catholicism, pictures its theology as growing in stages, to higher and more clearly defined levels of knowledge.

† The teachings of the Fathers, as important as they are, belong to a stage or level lower than the theology of the Latin Middle age, and that Theology is lower than the new ideas which have come after it.

Our answer:

† The Orthodox Church affirms that the teachings of Christ have not changed since He delivered it to the Disciples “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age” Matthew 28:19-20. Also, “the faith once delivered to the Saints.” Jude 3.

† Orthodoxy recognizes only external things (e.g. monastic **holists**, new feasts, vestments of clergy, ...) but nothing has been added or subtracted from her faith.

Conclusion:

Our Orthodox Church does not deviate from the Biblical and Apostolic teachings in spite of all the difficulties she has passed through during its long history. Our forefathers’ steadfastness in the faith has become an example for the whole world to see. That is why the Orthodox Church is called even by Western historians and theologians “the main stream of Christianity”. We do thank God for bringing us up in the Orthodox faith.

(3) THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX FAITH AND THE PROTESTANT FAITH
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Introduction:

1 The Protestant belief was established in Germany by Martin Luther. He was a Roman Catholic monk who lived in the first half of the sixteenth century. He found out that the Roman Catholic Church had deviated far away from the main stream of Christianity. He tried very sincerely to correct the wrongs from within the Church. However, all his attempts failed and he was opposed, ridiculed and threatened by the Cardinals of the church. As a result he revolted against the Roman Catholic Church by burning the documents of forgiveness in A.D. 1526. In his revolt he went to the other extreme by abolishing the priesthood, most of the Sacraments, ... etc.

2 As a direct result of Martin Luther's teaching that the Bible is so simple to understand that even a child of the age of seven can read it, without putting any safeguards regarding its interpretation, hundreds of Protestant churches stemmed out of the Lutheran church.

Some of the Major Differences:

1) About the Sacraments of the Church:

In the Protestant church, a new and unorthodox definition of the "Church Sacrament" was introduced. A Sacrament is defined by the Protestants as only "a sign and a seal"... It is no longer a "grace-bearing act" as established by Christ Himself and as we believe. Therefore, the importance of any Sacrament has become insignificant. Besides, the seven Sacraments were reduced by some Protestant churches to two only, namely Baptism and Eucharist, and were reduced by the others to none. We cannot study in this lesson the differences in all the sacraments, therefore, let us give only few examples.

2) An Attack against the Sacrament of Holy Orders (the Priesthood):

Seeing that the authority given to the Roman Catholic Pope and the priests was gravely misused, Martin Luther went to the other extreme and opposed even the validity of the whole sacrament of Holy Orders. He based his opposition on the following Scriptural verses: St. Peter wrote, "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (I Peter 2:5). He wrote also, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (I Peter 2:9). We also read in the Book of Revelation, "And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father." (Revelation 1:6).

To explain these above-mentioned verses, let us go back in history to St. John Chrysostom. He explained that calling the Christians as "priests" (or the priesthood of the believers) is similar to calling them as "kings"; it is not intended to be taken literally but allegorically. If we review other verses in the Bible, we find that a certain group was given the authority to bind and loose, and this group gave this authority to their successors by the laying on of hands and so on in an unbroken chain until the present time. Let us review some of these Biblical verses. "And when it was day, He (Christ) called His Disciples to Him, **and from them He chose twelve whom He also named Apostles.**"(Luke 6:13). Then we find St. Paul instructing his disciple Bishop Timothy to deliver this authority to others that would be worthy of it; "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (II Timothy 2:1-2). Please review also Matthew 28:19, Luke 22:19 and John 20:23.

3) What about Baptism?

The verb "to baptize" is taken from the Greek word "baptismos" which means "to dye". The only way you can dye a garment is to immerse it completely in that dye, and not sprinkle or pour few drops of dye on it. All through history, and starting as far back as the baptism of John the Baptist, Baptism was administered by immersion. This is because Baptism is in fact a new birth or being born (out) of water and Spirit. Jesus said: "unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." (John 3:5). It is also a "burial" with Christ and "resurrection" with Him in the new life. Let us read what St. Paul wrote: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4). Read also

Colossians 2:12. Again, because of the insignificance the Protestant church has put in the Sacrament of Baptism, it has become just a sign for being a Christian and its ministers administered it by sprinkling or pouring, forgetting even the meaning of the word itself and the practice of the Church all through history. John the Baptist was baptizing by immersion; Jesus Himself was baptized the same way, "... when He was baptized, **came up immediately from the water...**"(Matthew 3:16), and Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch by immersion too, "...

And both Philip and the eunuch **went down into the water**, and he baptized him "Now when they **came up out of the water...**" (Acts 8:38-39). There is no justification, whatsoever, in changing the way Baptism is administered in the Church. Once we allow changes like this to happen we can never stop. A clear indication of this is what has happened in the Roman Catholic Church and in the hundreds of denominations in the Protestant church. Christ Himself has warned us against making such changes when He said: "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law ... Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven..." Matthew 5:18-19). St. Paul warned us also when he wrote: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8).

4) The Protestant's Stand against the Honouring of the Virgin Mary and the Saints:

As mentioned in the previous lesson, the Virgin Mary and the saints were considered by the Roman Catholic Church as having extra merits and those merits were at the disposal of the Popes. As a revolt against Catholicism, the Protestant Church took the other extreme and tore away all honour from them. Their support for this action is that honouring the saints reduces our honouring of God.

But, all through the history of the Church, the saints have had a special honour and recognition. By honouring them we are, in fact, honouring God whom they represent. Just as an example ... When we honour an Ambassador, aren't we, in actuality, honouring the head of the country who sent him? Besides, didn't Christ Himself say to His Disciples, "He who receives you receives Me." (Matthew 10:40). He also said, "He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me." (Luke 10:16). Even in Old Testament, God honoured His saints:

"Behold, I send an angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared ..." (Exodus 23:20).

Moreover, what did Christ our Lord say about the woman who anointed His head with the very costly oil of spikenard? Didn't He say, "Wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the whole world, what this woman did will also be **spoken of as a memory to her**"? (Mark 14:9).

As for the Virgin Mary, the holy Mother of God (the Theotokos) who the angel called "blessed" and through whose mouth the Holy Spirit foretold that "... henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48); the church holds the first place of honour for Her among all the saints.

There are so many other differences that we cannot go through in the scope of this lesson. Some of these differences are the intercession of the saints, fasting, and the use of icons ... etc. But we feel that this suffices to assure our students that their Orthodox Church is the Church that follows very strictly the teaching of the Bible and the practice of the early Apostolic Church.

Conclusion:

As mentioned above, we know now that our Church's teaching is the original apostolic teaching handed over from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself through the Apostles to the Church for all generations. Let us pray that God would give us faith so that we can live according to His word in our daily life.

A Comparative Chart of Christian Beliefs

Oriental Orthodox Church	Roman Catholic	Eastern Orthodox	Anglicans	Lutherans	Baptists	Methodists	Presbyterians	Evangelicals	Beliefs
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Trinity
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Belief in Christ's redemption
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Jesus is both God and Man
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	Salvation by Grace and Deeds
YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Belief in Sacrifice of the Mass
YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Belief in all 7 Sacraments
YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Bible canon contains 73 books including all 7 books is Septuagint canon
YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Honouring St. Mary and the Saints
YES	YES	YES	?	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Perpetual Virginity of St. Mary
YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Baptism by Immersion

YES	NO	?	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Christology: Miaphysite
YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Processio n of the Holy Spirit from the Father
NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Private Judgment of Scripture over Church authority

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

[HTTP://WWW.COPTICCHURCH.NET/TOPICS/THEOLOGY/COMPtheo.PDF](http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/theology/comptheo.pdf)

ADDITIONAL FILE: COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON & CHRISTOLOGY – MP3 LINK

[HTTPS://APP.BOX.COM/S/04JTC0W7PBL7DERTK54SYPEH21TVUBJ9](https://app.box.com/s/04jtc0w7pbl7dertk54syph21tvubj9)

PATROLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION TO PATROLOGY

In this topic we would like to know the value of Patrology in our church. We want to appreciate the depth of faith and love of the fathers of the church.

“So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void.....” Isaiah 55:11.

(A) What is Patrology?

The word “Patrology” is taken from the Latin word “pater” which means, “father”. Therefore the subject of Patrology is the study of the life of the fathers, their writings, their sayings and most importantly their thinking and explanations of the doctrines of the church.

The subject of Patrology, in other words, is not only dealing with the fathers and their writings, but also understanding their deep life, faith and intimacy with the Lord Christ.

(B) Basis of Orthodox faith:

There are three basic sources for the Orthodox teaching:

The Holy Bible

The Holy Tradition

The Ecumenical Council and the sayings of the fathers (Patrology).

(C) Who are those fathers?

In the subject of Patrology we don't limit the word “father” to the bishops or priests or deacons. But we include all those who defended the Christian faith, in the first few centuries. We include those monks who fled away from the priesthood but they were teachers of many of the fathers. For example, St. Anthony the great was teacher for St. Athanasius.

(D) Importance of Patrology in our church:

Since the establishment of the church in Egypt, the Copts have connected themselves with the original fathers' thinking in the church. They were translating many of the sayings of the fathers to the language that the people can use. The subject of Patrology helps Christians to study the interpretation of the fathers of the Holy Bible and also their explanations of the doctrines of the church. One has to realize a basic difference here between the Holy Scriptures and the sayings of the fathers (Patrology). The scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit and they are infallible. Fathers were enlightened and passed on their enlightenment to us, which resulted in occasionally differing opinions.

(E) Languages of Patrology:

Languages of the texts of the fathers were: Greek (all the Eastern fathers), Latin (all the Western fathers) and other languages.

The fathers of the church of Alexandria wrote their texts in Greek not in Coptic. For example St. Athanasius.

(F) Classification of Patrology:

The writings of the fathers can be classified, especially in the first five centuries, through a timeline. Some people think that the first Ecumenical Council (325 A.D.) is considered the line separating two

groups of fathers from the point of view of their writings:

- Anti-Nicene fathers (their writings are popular because of their great simplicity).
- Post-Nicene fathers

We can also classify the writings of the fathers according to the language in which they wrote their texts:

- Greek fathers (eastern)
- Latin fathers (western)

We can classify also the writings of the fathers geographically:

- Fathers from Alexandria Egypt
- Fathers from Antioch
- Fathers from Cabudiuc
- Latin fathers

Sometimes the classification of the writings of the fathers is done according to the subject:

- 1) Writings to defend the Faith
- 2) Explanations of the Holy Bible
- 3) Sermons
- 4) Letters
- 5) Church Liturgy
- 6) Praises
- 7) Dialogue
- 8) Asceticism
- 9) Church Laws
- 10) Historical writings

(G) Church fathers from the School of Alexandria:

Please see the attached table about the Fathers from the church of Alexandria who have a very significant contribution to the subject of Patrology and affected the theology and faith of all the churches in the world.

What did we learn?

1. In our spiritual life, there are various sources for us to learn from in our daily life. We can learn a lot from the Fathers of the church, their life, their writings and their opinions on various issues.
2. We are proud to belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, which offered the whole world a wealth of theologians, whose writings until now are everywhere in theological libraries.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLES: PATROLOGY INDEX – WEB LINK
[HTTP://WWW.COPTICCHURCH.NET/TOPICS/PATROLOGY/INDEX.HTML](http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/patrology/index.html)

CHURCH'S STAND ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

ADDITIONAL ARTICLES: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES – WEB LINK

https://www.stgr.org/share/sschool/Contemporary_Issues.pdf

INCLUDES:

PERSONAL ISSUE TOPICS
SOCIAL ISSUE TOPICS
ADDICTION TOPICS
MEDIA TOPICS
RELATIONSHIP TOPICS
SCIENCE AND CHRISTIANITY TOPICS
OTHER RELIGION TOPICS
ANSWERING THE ATHEISTS TOPIC
OTHER CONTEMPORARY ISSUE TOPICS

THEOLOGY OF MISSION

AN INTRODUCTION INTO THE THEOLOGY OF MISSION

Principles:

Definitions: Let's start by defining some commonly used terms:

Evangelism comes from a Greek word found in the New Testament and it means sharing good news. Most of us enjoy sharing good news stories, whether of a child's birth, a job promotion or a marriage. Likewise, many of us enjoy telling others of our positive experiences. We like to tell others about a good restaurant, a good movie or a terrific book we have read.

The real Good News is centered on salvation which is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Great Commission Christians are called by Jesus "to go and make Disciples of all people (Matthew 28:19). We are called to share our faith and the good news of God's love for us in the Lord Jesus. This happens at both inside and outside the church.

Evangelism is meeting people in situations where the Gospel is given the opportunity to change them. Our working definition will be of "welcoming the stranger." Evangelism is sharing the hope and hospitality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Church Growth is the increase in worship attendance that happens when people hear the good news and respond to the acts of Discipleship to Christ and His church.

Mission involves all aspects of the work of Christ's church. It is everything that the church does in His name. Our church's mission is to carry on the Ministry that Jesus began two thousand years ago.

Outreach is a part of mission, and often refers to just one aspect or program.

Faith Sharing is a three way conversation between a faith seeker, a faith sharer and God, where personal experiences of God are shared.

Witnessing is sharing your own faith story.

Conversion happens when someone comes to have faith in Jesus Christ. It is the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Relational Evangelism is sharing the good news of God with another person, or with a small group of people. This can happen when we share our faith with friends, relatives, neighbours and business associates.

To cover the subject of Mission and Evangelism with the help of the Lord, we are going to include these points:

- The importance of missionary work in the life of all Christians
- Positive actions in Evangelization
- God's support for us to carry our mission of Evangelization
- Many Christians sacrificed their lives on earth to preach the message of salvation

- **The importance of missionary work in the life of all Christians**
- **The Evangelistic Commandments**

While going through the verses of the Holy Bible, do you recall coming across the evangelistic commandments in both the Old and New Testaments? Go, I send you, Evangelize, Be Missionaries, Be Witnesses for Me in... The Remotest Parts of the Earth! You probably came across these without pausing and without reflecting. Perhaps it did not occur to you that these commandments were directed to you personally. As you believed that you have served adequately, within your ability and your means, you felt spiritually comfortable and satisfied so far.

When it comes to going to the remotest part of the world, you may feel that this is not for you. It seems more suitable for people like Apostles, Evangelists, or others who are specifically called for this. Perhaps it is for Christians from other denominations who seem to have the expertise, knowledge and training for this type of service. Perhaps you think it is for those people who have the courage, strength, special personal or financial capacities, and who speak several languages. Then you turn to yourself saying, "As for me, it is enough for me to serve within Jerusalem or Judea - at the most, in Samaria - but not to serve in the farthest parts of the earth."

(B) GO THEREFORE!

Many Orthodox Christian believers may not be aware that the commandment exists, straight from the mouth of the Lord. It addresses both individuals and groups imploring, "Go therefore!" This commandment includes necessary sacrifice, hard work, insecurity as a result of leaving behind a dwelling or a place of comfort and luxury. This may involve separation from motherland, familiar environment, culture, family, friends and your childhood church.

Perhaps this non-awareness is due to our inadequate knowledge of the divine commandments contained in the Holy Gospel. For example, in Sunday school and youth classes, our teachers, in preparing us as servants, focused on those commandments that dealt with our relationship with God, and with developing this relationship. They emphasized those commandments that dealt with our relationship with family, relatives, neighbours and people in general, whether they were enemies or friends.

They spoke also about the commandments that led to salvation through the means of grace, repentance, renewal and sanctification of the heart, mind, body and soul. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" Mark 16:15 Perhaps the majority of ministers and teachers agreed not to deal with the commandment regarding the missionary:

Go! Evangelize! Become Witnesses! Go Out And Beyond! Be Missionaries!
Send You, Proclaim!

Go Therefore! – to the Village!

If a minister or preacher is modern, courageous and daring in his evangelistic thinking, he will urge his servants to move from one settled service to another settled service.

FROM MODALITY TO ANOTHER MODALITY

Moving to the outer village is then considered a courageous leap. The minister of one modality has moved to another, which is again another pastoral modality. It is, however, less stable and comfortable than the original modality, which falls within the frame of the stable pastoral ministry.

Go Therefore! to Lands of Immigration

The need arose for our church to serve immigrants, who settled in many countries. It was necessary to send priests and shepherds to these parishes. The church leadership took a daring step: they selected ordained ministers and gave them the authority and the commandment to “Therefore go!” But to where?? Go to the West, and far off lands where the standard of living is high and technologically advanced. There were few obstacles (minor and major) in the face of this type of ministry, while there are many attractive and encouraging aspects.

Numerous ministers obeyed this commandment with zeal and great love. They moved to a stable ministry within the same modality which were replicas of the original mother church that were established, with priests and various other people who were ecclesiastically and evangelically within the structure of the pastoral work.

Go To The Field of Mission In The Farthest Part Of The Earth!

“Go Therefore and make Disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’ Teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:19)

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15)

Through these two commandments, and many more, the Lord Jesus commanded us to go to a deeper and more noble sodality. This is for the sacred purpose of winning over new souls, adding more disciples to His disciples, and expanding the church to include new nations, nationalities, and diverse ethnicities. The Lord assures us that this evangelism will influence all creation. Once a person has been reborn, the mind and attitude are changed; the person becomes more gentle, protective and nurturing to plants, animals and the environment. The Bible says: ‘A righteous person regards the life of his beast.’ (Prov. 12:10)

Sings of Life In The Church

The living church works, struggles and grows in **faith and numbers**. It expands and gives birth to new members through two means:

BIOLOGICAL GROWTH

Biological growth falls within the settled model – **MODALITY**.

EVANGELICAL GROWTH

Evangelical growth falls within the world of evangelism – **SODALITY**.

This is the very hard spiritual work which brought us the message of the gospel. Through it: the first baptism took place, the first bishops, priests, and deacons were ordained, the first churches and cathedrals were founded, and many souls repented and joined the footpath of faith. When they had grown spiritually strong in the faith, the establishment of the church began.

ACROSS THE CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

Although many think of St. Mark as an Egyptian, more aptly he emerges as an African. The Apostolic Fathers were of entirely different nationalities from those of their mission and evangelism. They all moved across boundaries of their motherland, culture, language, their cultural customs and kinship.

Evangelism does not constitute a part of the spiritual responsibility within the church; rather it is its pillar; it is its backbone, and its foundation. Not all those who serve within the church may be called evangelists, missionaries or apostles, but it is possible to re-direct the church from the broad ways to the narrow ways; from the settled modality, to the mobile sodality, which goes out to evangelizing.

St. John Chrysostom demonstrates the importance of evangelism as follows: the pastoral bishop says that his diocese is his world; the evangelist says the world is his diocese.

As head of the church, the bishop performs three tasks (or rather, one with three sides to it):

- * Sacramental priesthood
- * Pastoral priesthood
- * Evangelistic priesthood

These were the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, St. John adds further:

- * We have a full Christ for our salvation.
- * We have a whole (Bible) for our teaching.
- * We have a whole church for our fellowship.
- * We have a whole world for our mission (our diocese).

⇒ Do not say that you are unable to influence others. For as long as you are a Christian, you are able to influence others, because this is the essence of Christianity.

⇒ It is contradiction to say that you are a Christian but you are unable to do anything for others; this is like saying the sun is unable to give light.

⇒ If yeast is incapable of leavening the dough, is it possible to call it “leavening”?

⇒ How can the perfume be fragrant if its aroma does not permeate the surrounding air?

⇒ By the same token, a Christian who does not work for the salvation of others, is he/she a Christian?

⇒ Thus, Christianity and serving others are inseparable, like the sun which cannot be called a sun if it does not radiate light, Christianity cannot exist without love for the salvation of the human race.

⇒ We have one ultimate goal which is above all goals: to save those at risk.

We do not mean the type of risk felt by our senses.

We mean the risk of true danger inflicted by Satan on the human race.

⇒ If you saw a blind person who was about to fall into a pit, would you not rush to extend a helping hand? How can we then help watching our brethren fall into similar dangers without reaching out, with a healing hand, when they are about to fall into the eternal pit?

⇒ Treat the souls of your brethren who are suffering from sin and who are laden with the shackles of paganism the same way you seek treatment for yourself, knowing that our transient life is only brief. If we do not win over these souls, there will be no salvation for our own souls.

We are committed, my brethren, to struggle for the salvation of our brethren, so that on judgment day we can meet Christ with joyful faces, offering our generous and unsurpassed gifts: the souls of the

sinners, the pagans and the non-believers whom we restored to Him through our evangelism and preaching.

There are many nations and millions of souls across the universe, who live in spiritual famine: in the darkness of ignorance and paganism. If we embrace the evangelistic thought, we shall be able to reach the whole world and to look at all these people with eyes of love, concern and responsibility. We will be able to offer them all that was handed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and share with them one communion ... in one hope of your calling; one LORD, one faith, one baptism.' (Eph. 4:5)

Through St. Paul, the Holy Spirit poses the following questions for us:

- ⇒ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?
- ⇒ How shall they believe in whom they have not heard?
- ⇒ How shall they hear without a preacher?
- ⇒ *'How shall they preach unless they are sent?'* (Romans 10:14)
- ⇒ *'So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.'* (Romans 10:17)
- ⇒ *'Whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved.'* (Romans 10:13).

Main points in this section:

- 1) There are evangelical commandments in the Holy Bible. These commandments are for all Christians. Every Christian is to have in mind and to put into action to affect people and help them to draw nearer to God. A true Christian must be light in the world.
- 2) The growth in the church is supposed to be not only biological growth but also evangelical growth.
- 3) We have duties towards the non-Christians. We must affect them and lead them towards the salvation of their souls. Then when we stand in the final judgment day we will not be ashamed of ourselves because we did not care for others and help them out towards their salvation. It is the commandment of God.
- 4) It is not hard to win those souls who are suffering from sin because God is great and He is the One Who is actually doing it through our weak selves.

NOTE: This section is taken from the writings of His Grace Bishop Antonios Markos.

- **Positive actions in Evangelization:**
- **AIMS AND TYPES OF "GOING"**

1. Seeking Livelihood

This constitutes a genuine desire to endure all the sacrifices that exceeds the entire sacrifices involved in going to a foreign land and facing all risks as oppose to achieving the ideal standard of living, saving money, furthering progress in academic or educational standards.

2. To Escape Danger

- * "Arise, take the young child and his mother, flee [go] to Egypt." (Matt. 2:13)
- * "Arise, take the young child and his mother, and go to the Land of Israel." (Matt. 2:20)

3. To Escape Tribulation

“At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered...those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1-4).

4. Believing in the Lord and Being Committed to Obey Him; to Prepare Chosen People, and Receive the Promise of Eternal Life

“The Lord said to Abram, "Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you; and make your name great, and you shall be a blessed..." (Gen. 12:1-2).

5. To Preach the Gospel: Give Birth to Children of God, Born Through the Water and The Holy Spirit

* “Go Therefore and make Disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:19-20).

* “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15,16).

* Now an Angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Arise and go towards the south along the road..” so he arose and went ... opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached to him, Jesus...and they went both into the water and he baptized him ...” (Acts 8:26-38).

* “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the Kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:60).

* But the LORD said to me: “Do not say I am a youth. For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak...Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.” (Jer. 1:7-9).

* And he said, “Go, and tell this people.” (Isaiah 6:9).

* “And as you go, preach saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 10:7)

(B) Prerequisites and Constituents of Going, for the Gospel:

1. To Forsake All Things

When the Lord commanded us to go to remote and foreign places for the sake of the gospel, He also commanded us to leave behind all things because those who do will be rewarded by the Lord.

“Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother, or wife or children, or land, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and inherit everlasting life.” (Matt 19:29)

“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundred fold now in this time...and in the age to come eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30)

“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents, or brothers, or wife or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come, everlasting life.” (Luke 18:29-30)

It is wise to abandon everything for the Lord's Name, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, or for the sake of the expansion of the kingdom of God on earth.

2. Not to Burden Oneself with Many Material Things

Materialistic objects hinder a person's free mobility and may expose them to dangers of robbers or greedy people who desire their treasures. (They need carry only one treasure, which is the Name and Word of the Lord). Neither should they carry anything which may be interpreted as a self-defense weapon (e.g. a stick).

As to the needs of the flesh, the Lord assures us that these will be abundantly provided for: accommodation; food; footwear; clothing; currency (gold, silver or copper). It is an historic fact that when St. Mark arrived in Alexandria in 42 A.D., he did not carry any shoes in obedience to the Lord's commandment. One of the fruits of this obedience was the miracle the Lord manifested through him. This miracle opened the door, an evangelism among the Egyptians, for him: when St. Mark's sandals were torn, he took them to Anianus-the shoemaker. While repairing the sandals Anianus' hand was wounded, and through the name of the Lord Jesus and the power of the sign of the holy Cross, Anianus' hand was healed.

3. Sent Them Two by Two

“Two are better than one”. For if one falls, the other will lift him up. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Eccl. 4:9-12) If the Apostles were subjected to martyrdom, the presence of a companion with the martyr enabled him to write his sayings and his biography for the benefit of the church.

- “The LORD appointed seventy others... also sent them two by two before His face into every city and place.” (Luke 10:1)

4. To Be Wise As Serpents And Harmless as Doves

The spiritual power, commanded by the Lord to accompany us in the field of evangelism, opens many doors and spares us many dangers. Thus, the evangelists are protected, and at the same time, the hearts of the recipients are opened.

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves...” (Matt. 10:16)

5. To the Whole World

This includes crossing over all barriers, obstacles and limitations.

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

6. Proclaim

“And as you go, Preach saying the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 10:7).

7. Pray for the People

Pray for the sick to be healed, for the lepers to be purified, for those possessed by demons to be freed, for the dead to be resurrected...

8. Speak in New Tongues

The evangelist ought to learn the languages of the people amongst whom he ministers, as this is a very important medium to convey a comprehensive spiritual teaching, according to the gospel. It is worth noting that the first gift of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles and the Disciples on Pentecost Day was the ability to speak in the tongues of the people among whom they were scattered for the purpose of evangelizing. Learn the people's language, you will win their hearts. "They will speak with new tongues." (Mark 16:17)

9. "And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:4)

(C) The Blessings of Going: The Gifts and Assurances of the Lord

1. "...shall receive a hundredfold and inherit everlasting life." (Matt 19:29)

b) "Receive a hundredfold now in this time - houses and brothers and sisters, mothers and children and lands along with persecutions - and in the age to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:30)

3. "Receive many times more in the present time and in the age to come everlasting life." (Luke 18:30)

4. "A worker is worthy of his food." (Mark 10:10)

5. You will not lack any worldly needs or spiritual power: * "When I sent you without money bag, sack and sandals, did you lack anything?" (Luke 22:35)

6. Do not be concerned as to what to say, and about what to speak: * "When they deliver you up, do not worry about how and what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour, what you should speak." (Matt 10:19)

7. Signs, miracles and powers which accompany the evangelist: * "In my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues." (Mark 16:17)

8. He will give them immunity and protection against all dangers and threats: * "...they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them..." (Mark 16:18)

9. "The LORD worked with them and confirmed the word through the accompanying signs." (Mark 15:20)

(D) Going Requires Courage

Irrespective of the motive for going, it requires courage to endure being a foreigner, facing the unknown, crossing long distances, learning new languages, dealing with people of different races.

“The word of the LORD came to me saying: 'before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’”

Then said I: "Am, LORD God! Behold, I cannot speak for I am a youth." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say I am a youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces. For I am with you to deliver you."

Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdom, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.' (Jer. 1:4-10)

"Thus says the LORD, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you and when you pass through the rivers, they shall not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD, your God. The Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honoured, and I have loved you.' (Isaiah 43:1- 4)

(E) Going Requires Obedience to the Evangelical Commandments:

1. “Go therefore and make Disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:19)

2 “Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:47)

3 “Peace to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” (John 20:21)

4 “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

“And in the church, God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.” (1Cor. 12:28)

* “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we come to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-13)

* Then he said to me: “depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.” (Acts 22:21)

The Shift from “Going” to “Stability”; or the Shift of the Evangelist, to A Pastor/Minister, Consequently Transferring the Mission Into A Parish

- After St. Mark evangelized in Egypt, baptized many, established the church of Alexandria, and ordained Bishop Ananias in addition to a number of priests and deacons, would it be logical that St. Mark would stop his evangelistic mission to become a parish priest of a congregation or a bishop or a diocese looking over after the concerns of the congregation?

- Would it be logical that St. Mark would be content with establishing churches in Alexandria, without any plans to extend his evangelism to the rest of the Egyptian soil, followed by North Africa (his birthplace), then down to southern Egypt, Nubia and other countries?
- After the apostles and the Disciples saw the Lord Jesus with their own eyes, after they witnessed His miracles, listened to all His teachings and experienced His crucifixion and His resurrection, would it be logical that they would keep all this to themselves (or to their families), so that they alone might receive the redemption and salvation and inherit the kingdom?

Main Points in this section:

- (1) A Christian must take a serious role in Evangelization i.e. “Go”. Evangelization is not just thinking about it, but doing something about it.
- (2) In “going” to evangelization we must be ready to sacrifice and leave something behind, do not worry about money, to be wise and simple in the same time, most importantly to pray for direction from God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to go two by two, be able to speak the language of the people to whom we are preaching and have courage.
- (3) The rewards of "going" are several huge blessings now and eternal life.

Note: This section is taken from the writings of His Grace Bishop Antonios Markos

God’s support for us to carry our mission of Evangelization

(A) I SEND YOU, GO FOR MISSION

“As the Father has sent me, I also send you” said Jesus the Lord

God sent the human race prophets and scribes of his word for whom He sent His Spirit for inspiration. Then He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He also sent His Apostles and Disciples and gave them talents, power, tongues, courage and the authority to administer the seven sacraments.

It is an instruction by the Lord to carry the message in order to fulfill His will for the salvation of the human race everywhere, and at all times. He rejoices in working within and through us. He lays down the basis of the mission for us; He sends us to accomplish it.

He first came, sent by the Father, to fulfill the most serious of tasks and the most important mission for the whole humankind. This was the mission of **redemption and salvation**. He emphasized that in the same manner that the Father sent Him, He also sent us. If we were to keep all the various commandments of the Lord, and we were to ignore the missionary commandment, we would ignore a vital part of the church mission on earth.

This mission did not come into being until they ascertained His resurrection of being Alive, existing, glorified and giving them His Peace. After that, He gave them the mission and He also gave them the authority to forgive the sins.

□ Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them “Peace be with you...” Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His sides. Then the Disciples were glad when they saw the LORD.

Then Jesus said to them again “PEACE to you! As the father sent me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.” (John 20:19-23)

Many nations live in the darkness of sin because they are ignorant of anything different. The knowledge of salvation, for which they are to be prepared and which is waiting for them, is the essence of this ministry and its mission. When a person responds to this vocation, it is then that God's love for these sinners and His yearning for their redemption and their salvation from sin and from the corruption of this world, is realized in their mission.

□ “You are our epistles written in our hearts, known and read by all men, You are manifestly an epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. ”
(2 Cor. 3:2-3)

□ I must preach the Kingdom of God, to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent. “And he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.” (Luke 4:43-44)

□ “How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14)

□ Then he said to me, “Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21)

□ “I certainly seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt, I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.” (Acts 7:34)

□ “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel out of Egypt.” (Exodus 3:10)

□ Also I heard the voice of the LORD saying “whom shall I send and who will go for us? ” Then I said “Here I am! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:8)

□ “Do not say I am youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.” (Jer. 1:7)

□ “...sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where he was about to go.” (Luke 10:1)

□ “Show which of these two You have chosen, to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell.” (Acts 1:24-25)

□ “... called to be an apostle and set apart for gospel of God ...” (Romans 1:1)

□ “For he who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me towards the Gentiles.” (Gal. 2:8)

(B) BE MY WITNESSES

To be an eyewitness is to proclaim what actually has been experienced, and the innermost feelings of one's heart, reaching a stage where you can no longer suppress your feelings, nor keep these feelings to yourself only. Instead, you must spread them to others, emphasizing their truth. A person greatly rejoices when his/her witness is well received and accepted by others. On the other hand, a person becomes greatly saddened if his/her witness is rejected. Generally, it is preferable that the witness be through the mouths of two or three witnesses.

□ “...by the mouths of two or three **witnesses**...” (Deut. 19:15)

□ “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be **witnesses** to me in Jerusalem and in Samaria and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

□ “And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets **witness**.” (Acts 10:42-43)

□ “Of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to that day when He was taken from us...one of these must become a **witness** with us of His resurrection.” (Acts 1:21-22)

□ “Most assuredly, I say to you, we speak what we have known and testify what **we have seen**.” (John 3:11)

□ “This is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things and we know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:24)

□ “You killed the Author of Life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are **witnesses**”. (Acts 3:15)

□ “And we are His **witnesses** to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (Acts 5:32)

□ “And we are **witnesses** of all things which He did both in the Land of Jews and in Jerusalem.” (Acts 10:39)

□ “He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people.” (Acts 13:31)

□ “Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, and you are **witnesses** of these things.” (Luke 24:47-48)

□ ”And I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:34)

□ ”Rabbi, he who was with You on the other side of the Jordan to whom you have testified... - behold, he is baptizing ...” (John 3:26)

- “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me ...” (John 5:39)
- “You say rightly that I am king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear **witness** to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.” (John 18:37)
- John bore **witness** of him and cried out, saying, “this was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me. From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.” (John 1:15-16)

Main Points in this section:

- (1) The call is from God to spread the word of the gospel of joy to all. He will send us equipped with spiritual strength and heavenly power no matter how weak we are physically.
- (2) To have an effective preaching and evangelization one must have experience himself or herself in living his or her daily life with the Lord and witness to others on the work of the Lord.

Many Christians sacrificed their life on earth to preach the message of salvation.

(A) PROCLAIM, PREACH

Evangelism is not a part of the religious responsibilities; it is the pillar and the backbone of the spiritual ministry. It is the main feature of church life and growth, and without it the church is weak and lifeless.

Evangelism was the first mission of the Lord Jesus. It was the fundamental work of the apostles and their successors - the believers in the early centuries.

Evangelism was the commitment of the believers throughout the generations i.e. delivering the message to many for the sake of their salvation. For the sake of the noble mission of evangelism, thousands of missionaries offered their lives to convey the message of salvation and redemption to souls who never heard of it.

The Catholic monks and nuns began the missionary work during the fifteenth century, in Africa; their arrival to the shores of East Africa was possibly in 1494 A.D. They were followed by the Protestants in the seventeenth century. They boarded huge ships, departing from the European shores in multitudes. On some ships, about one thousand missionaries would be on board, together with their families. The journey to African shores was a long one, under harsh conditions. Some of them suffered from malaria, and dysentery. At the time, diagnostic and medical facilities were not well developed. Many died, and their bodies were thrown in the sea. Those who remained, continued their journey to Africa approximately 60-70% of the total number who left Europe.

From the time they arrived on the African shores, until the time they reached their destination of evangelism, they had to travel for hundreds, even thousands of kilometres, either on foot, or on the backs of mules or donkeys. They were preceded by a guide, followed by a large number of porters, carrying their luggage.

The journey on foot took a long time. In the equatorial jungles, some were subjected to attacks by wild animals; some were infected by fatal illnesses which prevailed at that time e.g. fevers, bites of tsetse flies, pernicious malaria, dysentery. By the time they reached their destinations of ministry, large numbers had died and were buried on the way. In a marvellous devotion, deep love and self-denial for the sake of the mission, those who remained continued, until they reached the mission locations. They numbered less than 50% of those who had initially departed European shores.

They commenced their mission, and later, were followed by large numbers of missionaries who took their same routes. They were neither inhibited nor intimidated by the news of various dangers, obstacles, and losses of many of those who had preceded them; nor by other difficulties, nor stories of those who were buried at sea, or in the African jungles.

Those who eventually reached their mission stations, lived with their wives and children under very harsh conditions. They were deprived of all means of comfort, security, medical attention and education. As soon as they settled among the African tribes they tried to communicate with them. They made arduous attempts to learn the various African tribal languages, beginning by writing various expressions and terminologies for each dialect. Then they compiled a dictionary for each of these vernaculars, and eventually translated the gospel to the tribal languages.

Translating the New Testament alone required between 50 and 70 (perhaps even 100) years. This work was undertaken by successive groups of missionaries for centuries, until both Testaments of the Bible had been completely translated into the relevant local languages.

Many of the missionaries established schools and hospitals. They taught the indigenous people how to read and write. They then evangelized the message of salvation, to win them over to become a prepared nation of believers. When they converted a believer he/she would become a co-worker to convert others, among his/her ethnic group (tribe), to the good news of salvation.

- And he said to them *"Go into all the world and preach the gospels to every creature."* (Mark 16:15)

"Then the Disciples went out and preached every where and the Lord worked with them and confirmed His word by the signs that accompanied it." (Mark 16:20)

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matt 24:14)

"He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." (Mark 3:14-15)

"Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:2)

"Then He called His twelve Disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick." (Luke 9:2)

"Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him" (Luke 8:1)

*“And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”
(Romans 10:14-15)*

(B) THE EVANGELISM - EVANGELIZATION. DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

Evangelism is when a person conveys good and joyful news to people who have never heard it before. These people are the ones most in need of this news. The "good news" is synonymous to the "gospel". The joyful tidings from the mouth of God are similar to the joyful news brought by the angel: the living spirit, **sent** by God to convey the **message** of good news - the gospel- , for such is the likeness of an evangelist and angel.

- *“For if I preach (evangelize) the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach (evangelize) the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16)*
- *“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Tim 4:5)*
- *“O Zion, you who bring good tidings (evangel), get up into the high mountains; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings (evangel), lift up your voice with strength, lift it up be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" . Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will father the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.” (Isaiah 40:9-11)*

'And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and evangelizing Jesus as the Christ.' (Acts 5:42)

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching (evangelizing) the word.” (Acts 8:4).

“But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching (evangelizing) the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, ... great number believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:20-21)

As it is written “How beautiful are the feet of those who evangelize the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15)

“And we declare to you glad tidings (evangel) - that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus.” (Acts 13:32-33).

“To me, who am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given, .. I should preach (evangelize) among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” (Eph 3:8).

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your god reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7)

Main Points in this section:

Every one of us must maintain the faith which we obtained through the shedding of the blood of the Apostles. To pursue their footsteps, we must be ready to sacrifice with our time, efforts, money and comfort. We are responsible after tasting how sweet is the life with the Lord to let other hearts also rejoice through the Gospel of joy.

ANSWERING VARIOUS CULTS

ANSWERING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Introduction

Our youth come across people of different religions. It is important that our Christian youth be able to answer back when they are confronted by these people so that no one can shake their belief. It is also important for our youth to be informed about the origins of these modern religions in order to have awareness. It is also possible to attract such people to the true Christian faith. We are going to concentrate on Jehovah's Witnesses by covering the following:

- Who are Jehovah's Witnesses?
- The work of the Few and the Work of the Many in Jehovah's Witnesses
- Jehovah's Witnesses and the Holy Bible.
- Some beliefs held by Jehovah's Witnesses and the answers to those beliefs.
- How can I deal with preachers of Jehovah's Witnesses

1. Summary about Jehovah's Witnesses and their doctrine:

Jehovah = Yahweh from the Hebrew "To Be" meaning "the self-existent one" or "the one who causes to be" (see Exodus 3:14 "I AM WHO I AM").

Jehovah's Witnesses are non-Christians because they do not believe in Christ being the incarnated God. They belong to one of the modern religions that appeared in the 20th Century which are called "Cults". Their leaders are 4 Americans led by Charles Russell and their present headquarters is in the City of New York. They believe that God is "Jehovah" and He created Jesus Christ, who was first Archangel Michael, who came from heaven to Mary and was born from her as human being. When he died, God, "Jehovah" raised him as a spirit that went back to heaven as Michael again.

As for the body, it was taken by Jehovah. Jehovah's Witnesses also do not believe in the Holy Trinity. Their main concern is the timing of the end of the world, but all their dates have been inaccurate so far. They believe that at the time of the end of the world, there will not be the second coming of Christ. Only a select few of Jehovah's Witnesses (144,000) are going to have a place in heaven with Jehovah and Jesus Christ, the rest will have a paradise here on earth. As to those who are not from Jehovah's Witnesses, they are doomed to be destroyed eternally with the devil.

Jehovah's Witnesses have a bible of their own called "*The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*", but they do not encourage reading it, and if needed, it should be accompanied by the explanations provided by their leaders known as "The Watch Tower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom". Without these articles, they believe the bible could lead to total darkness.

- **Who are Jehovah's Witnesses?**

They are a group of people who founded their religion in the 20th century by Charles Russell,

Joseph Rutherford, Nathan Knorr and Fredrick Franz.

- **What was the starting point?** In his studies of the Holy Bible, Charles Taze started by rejecting the Christian explanation of the Book regarding:
 - a) The Holy Trinity
 - b) The second coming of Christ
 - c) Hell and the torment of the evil one.

He, and the above three leaders mentioned, declared that Jehovah's Witnesses are the only religion and that the Christians, being Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox are a group of liars and their beliefs are not correct.

Charles Russell started writing many articles which developed into what is now known as the "Watch Tower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom". These four have founded a religion which was sparked by prophecies regarding the end of the world with dates. Many people were attracted, but when these dates passed and nothing occurred they changed the dates.

2. The work of the Few and the work of the Many in Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that there are a few people who govern and lead the rest. The head office is in Brooklyn in the State of New York and consists of 14 to 18 people. They control all Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. They speak on behalf of God "Jehovah" , and no one can question God, but rather obey only. So is their power, rules and behaviour. Whoever questions or opposes them would be doing wrong to God Himself.

Not only do these few rule over the rest, but there are only a few who will be saved. They believe that 144,000 persons, including the members if the ruling committee, will be saved in heaven and they refer literally to the Book of Revelation Chapter 20. But what about the other people who follow the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses?. They will receive a new place here on earth when the end of the world takes place but they have no place in heaven with the few who will be with Christ the King. How could one be from these few. This can only happen when he/she put extensive efforts in preaching the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. Every member of the Jehovah's Witnesses has a responsibility of preaching from door to door and of passing out articles and attracting new members.

They receive a lot of training to perform this task. The time that the individual spends preaching and getting new members to Jehovah's Witnesses decides the position he/she gets after his /her life on earth.

3. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Holy Bible

Jehovah's Witnesses do not encourage anyone on reading the Holy Bible or referring to it in any context other than their words and the books of Charles Taze and the 3 who followed him. Charles Taze Russell said whoever reads the Holy Bible without his personal writings will end up in complete darkness. On the other hand, if his writings are read as an important base, then that person will live in the true light without Bible.

Although they do not encourage reading the Bible, they state that the Bible takes the first position, i.e. their own translation if the Bible which is " The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT). Their translation is not easily understood without their own books and their printing is from the watchtower and awakness.

4. Some beliefs held by Jehovah's Witnesses and the Answers to those beliefs.

I) God to Jehovah's Witnesses

- His personal name is "Jehovah"
- Jehovah has no beginning and no end i.e. self-existent, eternal.
- Jesus Christ is not God. The Holy Spirit is not God but the Power of "Jehovah" that He works with.
- At a time, only Jehovah existed and all the power and thoughts were within him.
- Satan came with the idea of the Holy Trinity in the one God.

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" Genesis 1:1.

"To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God; there is none other besides Him" Deuteronomy 4:35.

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and Truth." John 4:24

"For there is One God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." I Timothy 2:5.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19.

"Then Jesus, when He had been baptized came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were open to Him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16-17.

"Come let us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Genesis 11:17.

"Come near to Me, hear this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me." Isaiah 48:16.

"For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one." (I John 5:7).

II) Jesus Christ according to Jehovah's Witnesses

He is not a God, but the first son that Jehovah brought. He was the first creation of Jehovah. In their bible John 1:1 "The word or Logos is "a God" but not God.

Jesus Christ was present before coming to earth. He was Archangel Michael then he came and was born from the Virgin Mary.

When Christ was baptized he was anointed and became Jesus Christ. Then He submitted to “Jehovah” and died a humiliating death to give salvation to those obey Him. The God raised him as a spirit only and his body was taken by “Jehovah”. Jesus Christ went back to heaven as a spirit and he is Archangel Michael.

Answering Jehovah’s Witnesses:

1. Jesus Christ is the incarnated God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” John 1:1.

“Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel. Which is translated “God with us” Matthew 1:23.

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and My God.” John 20:28.

“Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name, Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14.

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Colossians 2:9.

2. Jesus Christ was called “Kirios”

The word “Kirios” is originally Greek and it means “Lord”. In the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ was called “Kirios” as in:

“And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice “Lord, do not charge them with this sin” and when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:59-60.

- “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9.
- “Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:3).
- The same word “Kirios”, which is the Greek word for “Jehovah” that was used in the Old Testament.
- Is it not clear that the Lord Jesus (Kirios) is “Jehovah” i.e. God?.

3. Jesus Christ in the New Testament is “Jehovah” in the Old Testament.

* **Compare Isaiah 6:1-10** “In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings, with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.” And

the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then I said “woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,” then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand alive coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

And he touched my mouth with it, and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged”. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then I said, “Here am I , send me.” And he said, “Go and tell this people, “Keep on hearing, but do not understand, keep on seeing but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return to be healed.” Isaiah 6:1-10.

* **With John 12:31-42** “now is the judgement of this world; now the rules of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” Then He said, signifying by what death He would die, the people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever, and how can You say, “the Son of Man must be lifted up?” who is this Son of Man?

The Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you walk while you have the light lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them. But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke; “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again, “He has blinded their eyes and hard-dressed their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and understand with their heart, lest they should turn, so that I should heal them.” These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. Nevertheless, even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.”

- So St. John is saying that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ and talked about it.

Also compare Exodus 3:14 “I AM WHO I AM:

With John 8:58 “Jesus said to them “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM”

These two references clearly show that Jesus is Yahweh / Jehovah / God!!!

Also compare Exodus 34:14 “For you shall worship no other god..” where is it mentioned that we do not worship another except Jehovah.

With Hebrew 1:6 “When He again brings the first born into the world, He says. “Let all the angels of God worship Him”. Here it is mentioned that the angels worship Christ and also, so do the people in Matthew 14:33. “Those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God”

In Isaiah 44:6 “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, “ I am the First and I am the Last; besides He there is no God.”

Jehovah is called the First and the Last, same as in Revelation 22:13
“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

4. The Description of Our Lord Christ Reveals that He is God.

- He knows all things (John 1:48, 2:25, 6:64 & 16:30)
- He is eternal (Micah 5:2)
- He has full authority (Matthew 28:18, Hebrew 1:3)
- He is without sin (John 8:46)
- He does not change (Hebrew 13:8)

As there are descriptions of God, therefore Christ is God.

5. Certain Deeds that Declare Christ Being God.

- He has the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-7)
 - He has control over nature (Matthew 8:26)
 - He gives eternal life (John 10:28 and 17:2)
 - He condemns the world (John 5:22 and 27)
- As only God can do these deeds, therefore Christ is God.

III) The Holy Spirit According to Jehovah’s Witnesses:

The Holy Spirit is the invisible power that “Jehovah” works with in His people. The Holy Spirit does not have a divine character. He is just the energetic power of God

Answering Jehovah’s Witnesses:

- “But when the Helper comes I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” John 15:26
- “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of Judgement.” John 16:8.
- “However, when He, the spirit of truth, has come he will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears he will speak, and he will tell you things to come” John 16:13
- “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26
- “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” Romans 8:11.
- “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation but be filled with the Spirit.” Ephesians 5:18
- “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you?” 1 Corinthians 3:16
- “For there are three who bear witness in heaven; the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit and these three are one.” I John 5:7

IV) Sin According to Jehovah's Witnesses:

- 1 Sin is behaving against the laws of God.
- 2 Adam and Eve both sinned by disobeying God. When they died they went back to earth and eternal non-existence. All the generations that followed inherited the same fate.
- 3 According humans lost any hope for a perfect and pure life on earth.

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses:

--- As it is written "There is none righteous, no, not one" Romans 3:10.

--- Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practice deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips." Romans 3:13

--- "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." I John 1:10

--- "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." I John 1:18

--- "whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness ." I John 3:4

--- "All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death." I John 5:17

--- "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin." Romans 14:23

V) Redemption and Salvation According to Answering Jehovah's Witnesses:

1. Adam and Eve are among those who will suffer. They had the perfect life and the lost it willingly so they cannot be saved. This fact caused all the generations that came after them to live in sin.
2. Jesus Christ sacrificed the perfect life that Adam had lost. Redemption is the price that Jesus the person paid, who died for a sin He did not do.
3. Salvation is for the perfect life for a person here on earth. This is the life that Adam lost which was retrieved by Jesus Christ. But there are 144,000 who are going to be saved and will have a place and position in heaven. The rest of the believers will be resurrected after death then eternal life on earth after being altered to be a paradise.

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses on the Subject of Redemption:

- "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of Sins, according to the riches of His grace." Ephesians 1:7.
- Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." I Peter 1:18-19.

- “From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness the first born from the dead, and the ruler over the Kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us Kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever – Amen. Rev. 1:5-6.
- “According to the law all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Hebrew 9:22
- “By Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Colossians 1:20.
- “But this Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”
- “For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Hebrew 10:12-14

Answering Jehovah’s Witnesses on the Subject of Salvation:

- “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:31
- “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to this who believe in his name.” John 1:12
- “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:18
- “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” John 3:36
- “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.
- “For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
- “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 3:24
- “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Romans 10:4.

VI) Retributions according to Jehovah's Witnesses:

- There is no punishment for the evil after death. The belief that there is such punishment is wrong.
- The person who did evil does not feel anything after his/her death. They become inactive and do not differ from animals. He /She would die without any eternal life.
- On the Millennial judgement day, there will be a war between Jesus Christ and the devil. Jesus will conquer the devil in the place called in Hebrew Armageddon.
- The final test will be when Satan is released from his chains on the millennial year. Those who are with Satan at that time will be thrown in lake of fire where they will be doomed for ever without any resurrection.
- All those who reject the message of Jehovah's Witnesses will be destroyed.
- All the believers in Jehovah's Witnesses will raise at the end of time either to inherit an earthly paradise or if they are from the chosen few, they will have a place in heaven and will be among the 144,000.

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses on the issue of Retribution:

- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 6:23.
- "And many of those who sleep in the dust of earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2.
- "And as it is appointed for man to die once, but after this the judgement ." Hebrews 9:27.
- "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God and books were opened and another book was opened, which is the Book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." Revelation 20:12
- "To give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angles, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power; when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.
- "And if your foot makes you sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched." Mark 9:45.

VII) The End of the World and the second coming of Christ according to Jehovah's Witnesses:

Jehovah's Witnesses concentrate on the issue of the timing of the end of the world,. They predicted it several times with different dates each time.

At the end of the world there will not be a second coming of Christ. Those who expect the second coming of Christ as mentioned in the Bible will be disappointed.

For about 79 Years, Christ is present on earth in an invisible royal image. Only some people feel him.

At the time of the end of the world the following events will take place:

- a) Jesus Christ will rule after the resurrection.
- b) Christ will overcome the devil in the war between them in the place called Armageddon. Rev. 16:16
- c) The chosen 144,000 will be with Jehovah and Jesus Christ in heaven
- d) The rest of the followers will stay in an earthly paradise. Those who do not believe will be destroyed.

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses:

1. "Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him saying, "Lord, will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them. "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." Acts 1:6-7
2. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout. With the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." I Thessalonians 4:16.
3. "After these things, I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia"! Salvation and glory and honour and power to the Lord our God." Revelation 19:1.

5. How can I deal with the preachers of Jehovah's Witnesses.

1. We should not deal with them at all. Close your door and do not allow them to talk because they are "enemies of the Cross of Christ" Philippians 3:18. "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." 2 John 1:10-11
2. Their Bible is not original and is called "*The New World Translation of the Holy Scripture*" and all their writings are wrong. Do not read it.
3. If you had to talk to one of them, keep your own church teaching and your faith that you have received from your fathers. Do not accept any misleading translations. Confront them with the fact that their Bible is not original and their leaders are humans who have nothing to do with God.

ANSWERING THE MORMONS

Introduction:

This is the second book presented to the youth on the issue of answering questions concerning the modern religions known as “cults”. The first book dealt with the Jehovah Witnesses group and this book will answer questions concerning the Mormons who are also known as “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints”.

The Mormon religion is one of the modern religions which attract many people for different reasons, some of which are:

1. They claim that they are presenting a corrected version of Christianity.
2. They approve the possibility of man becoming a god. This goes with the age in which modern man seeks to become a god without any rivalry.
3. They discourage smoking, drinking alcohol and even tea and coffee, to reflect an image of high religious level.
4. They state that everyone is going to be saved and enjoy an eternal life but that there are different levels in heaven and that the Mormons will occupy the highest level.

The reason for the rapid expansion of this cult is that the Mormon Church encourages all the men, who are members of the church, to present a two year volunteering preaching service. There are now about seven million followers of this church.

This subject will cover the following points:

- A Summary about The Mormon beliefs and who they are.
- The Mormon's Sacred Texts.
- Are the Mormons Christians?
- Some of their beliefs and the answers to frequently asked questions.
- Some questions for discussion with our youth in this subject.

A Summary about the Mormon belief and who they are.

Summary about the Mormon belief:

- 1 There is more than one God.
- 2 These gods created all things.
- 3 God has a physical body like all humans.
- 4 Jesus Christ is not born from the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit but as a result of a normal physical relation between Mary and an immortal glorified father.
- 5 Man can become a god like all previous gods such as Abraham and Jacob.

Who Are The Mormons?

As previously mentioned, they are also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-Day (Latter-Day) Saints (LDS). They prefer to be addressed by this latter name. The founder of this religion is Joseph Smith who was born in 1805 in the state of Vermont in the United States. Since his adolescent years, he was said to have experienced heavenly visions.

In 1820, when he was 15 years old, an angel appeared to him and convinced him that all Christian religions and churches are wrong and far from the ways of God. Then the angel handed him golden tablets with certain writings. The angel explained the way these writings should be understood. These writings became the book of Mormons, which was the name given to Joseph Smith by the angel. In 1829, three apostles visited Joseph Smith and gave him the power to establish the true church. The book of Doctrine and Covenants was written by Joseph Smith as an outcome of many visions. He then started correcting the Holy Bible.

The Mormon Church grew rapidly. In 1844 Joseph Smith and his brother were killed. Brigham Young became the new leader and established headquarters for himself in the State of Utah. There was a disagreement on who should be Joseph Smith's successor. Some wanted one of his sons to take his father's position and they rejected the fellowship of Brigham Young. These groups established headquarters to themselves in Missouri under the leadership of Joseph Smith's family and were called the reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and refused to be called Mormons. They rejected the teachings of the headquarters of Utah. Consequently, the Mormons are now divided into two groups: the first big group has its headquarters in Utah and the smaller group is established in Missouri. This smaller group kept the book of Joseph Smith and rejected the beliefs shared by the big group. Consequently they became closer to the Protestant Church in their beliefs.

The Mormons' Sacred Texts:

1. The Book of Mormons: Is considered more important than the Holy Bible. Some writings in this book state that some people came to North America from the region of Israel at the time of building the tower of Babylon i.e. before the coming of Christ. This book also says that the Native Americans belong to the ancient Hebrew people and that Jesus Christ came to America after His resurrection in order to preach the Bible to those who came from Israel.
2. The Book of Doctrine and Covenants: Which was written by Joseph Smith, contains the divine visions that God gave him.
3. The Book of The Pearl of Great Price: This book contains Joseph Smith articles regarding faith and his personal life. N.B. The chief of the Mormon sect can receive special visions from God to translate Joseph Smith's articles.
4. The Corrected Holy Bible: It is the version that includes the changes made by Joseph Smith done under the guidance of the divine visions he received from God.

Are the Mormons Christians?

The Mormons consider themselves Christians. They even think that they are the only real Christians in the world with a true religion. But in reality, they are not Christians because they reject all the fundamental beliefs of Christianity. They reject the traditional concept of the nature of God which is shared by the other Christian churches. They also reject the concept of the nature of Jesus Christ, the principle of the trinity, the existence of the original sin, human salvation through the blood of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some of their beliefs and the answers to frequently asked questions.

- The possibility of the extension of the Bible and the vision according to the Mormons.
- The Mormons say that God will continue giving visions to humans and will speak to them. According to them it is possible to add to the bible as they have added the visions of Joseph Smith and his writings.

The Answer:

- “From Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19).
- “I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints.” (Jude 3).

Creation According to the Mormons:

The gods prepared for the creation of heaven and earth with the leadership of a chief of the committee of gods.

The Answer:

- “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1).
- “You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things on it, the seas and all that is in them, and you preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.” (Nehemiah 9:6).

The many gods of the Mormons:

There are many gods. They have a temple, which is the temple of gods, and they have a chief.

The Answer:

- “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

- “Before Me there was no God formed nor shall there be after me.” (Isaiah 43:10).
- “I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.” (Isaiah 44:6).

There is no Holy Trinity:

The Mormons believe that the Holy Trinity is absurd and that three in one and one in three is a wrong concept.

The Answer:

- “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19).

God is human in the Mormons’ Faith:

God is a physical being like us made of flesh and bones.

The Answer:

- “God is Spirit.” (John 4:24).
- “I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst.” (Hosea 11:9).

Jesus Christ was not born of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit:

Jesus Christ was born from Mary through a normal marriage to a great, immortal and glorified person.

The Answer:

- “After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:18).
- “Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” (Luke 1:34).
- “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35).

The Blood of Christ does not cleanse us from our sins:

According to the Mormons, the blood of Christ does not cleanse us from our sins: the sinner should be punished and die.

The Answer:

- “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (John 1:7).
- “To Him who love us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Revelation 1:5).
- “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.” (Hebrew 9:28).

The Holy Spirit is a Limited Person:

The Holy Spirit has a personality as a man. He has the ability to be present in one place and cannot change his appearance to any other image.

The Answer:

- Peter said: “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit ... You have not lied to men but to God.” (Acts 5:3-4).
- “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.” (Psalm 139:7-8).

A Human Being Can Become a God:

A person can learn how to become a god like all the previous gods; i.e. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Answer:

- “Therefore, You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.” (2 Samuel 7:22).
- “I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst.” (Hosea 11:9).

There is no salvation outside the Mormon Church where heavenly visions are continuous:

There is no salvation for humans outside the Mormon Church where the heavenly visions are continuous and all the blessings and the new teachings are available.

The Answer:

- “For the grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- “Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regenerating and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5).

There are no eternal sufferings even for the wicked:

Even those who live in evil will be saved after suffering in hell.

The Answer:

“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”(Matthew 25:46).

Some Questions for Discussion with our youth on this subject:

- What is Celestial marriage? How is it compared with marriage in our church?
- Do you believe that couples stay married in heaven after departing from this world?
- Please read Matthew 22:23-33.
- What is the principle of baptism in the Coptic Orthodox Church? How is it compared to the baptism in the Mormon Church – The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints?
- Are there circumstances when you cannot enter the church according to the Coptic Orthodox Church? How could this be compared to the same situation in the Mormon Church?

RESPONDING TO SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Introduction:

One of the most important issues that the Christian individual needs to be aware of is “comparative theology”, since the number of cults in the world has increased and these cults have deviated from the true faith, “which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3). Such cults claim that they are Christians despite the deviation of their doctrines, faith, and worship from the first Apostolic Church.

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father *and* the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring you this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” (2 John 7-10).

For this reason, we must understand these new cults and study them with our faith unshaken, so that we are able to answer anyone who asks, but as the Holy Bible says: “Do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

In our discussion about the seventh day Adventists, we will cover the following points:

- 1) Who are the Seventh Day Adventists?
- 2) What are their beliefs?
- 3) The response to their beliefs
- 4) Conclusion

The sources of all of these points are nine sermons by H.H. Pope Shenouda III, may God extend his life, for the students of the Theological Seminary, year 2001.

1) **Who are the Seventh Day Adventists?**

They appeared in the nineteenth century through the leadership of a man named William Miller who was born in the year 1782 and died in 1849. However, the movement started around the year 1818.

Then, many leaders succeeded William Miller such as Hiram Edson, Joseph Bates, and Ellen White. Each one had a role in the Adventist movement. At the beginning, the movement focused on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and Miller talked about the coming of the Lord Christ. When the exact timing could not be determined, Hiram Edson spoke of the heavenly sanctuary. O.R.L. Crosier published a research paper about the heavenly sanctuary. Then, Joseph Bates spoke about the Sabbath day. Since then, the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday was added to their doctrine and were thus termed the Seventh Day Adventists. Finally, Ellen White, who was born in 1827 and died in 1915, took leadership. She lived 88 years and is known as the founder. White excelled over her predecessors and became the leader. She was described as a visionary, in the literal sense as she spoke of seeing visions.

She said that her visions were the source of the Adventist teaching. The Adventist movement started by William Miller teaching that the world will end after 25 years from the year 1818 or that the world will end in the year 1843 and Christ will come in 1843. This belief had spread to an extent where students would not attend school and believers cast off their responsibilities, however Christ did not come. Ellen

White explained to them that He came and ruled in the heavenly Jerusalem. Of course, Christ rules in the heavenly Jerusalem ever since the creation of man and there is no specified time because He rules in heaven eternally.

2) **What are their beliefs?**

- a) They believe that the Sabbath is the holy day and the person who does not observe it will not enter the Kingdom of God
- b) They believe in three advents of the Lord Jesus Christ and with a heavenly sanctuary.
- c) They believe that the Lord Christ is the Archangel Michael and they agree on this along with Jehovah's witnesses. They claim that Jesus Christ was born with the original sin, that His knowledge is incomplete, that He is susceptible to falling, that His sacrifice on the cross is insufficient, that He was separated from the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is the delegate of Christ on earth.
- d) They do not believe in the imperishability/eternity of the spirit.

3) **The response to their beliefs:**

- a) They believe that the Sabbath is the holy day and the person who does not observe it will not enter the Kingdom of God:

The law of the Sabbath was written with the finger of God on the tablets of the law and thus it is a divine commandment and God says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments". They say that the Sabbath is the oldest religious day known to man, so the observance of the Sabbath was founded during God's creation of this world before the original sin-they mention this phrase:

"God rested on the seventh day and this refers to the creation before there was human life on earth and before there were human sins."

Response:

† There is a difference between the phrase "seventh day" and the word "Sabbath". Every day of the creation days ended except for the seventh day. The Holy Bible only mentions that the night and the morning of a seventh day started and did not mention an end. In Leviticus 23:3, "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation.

You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings". Also in Exodus 20:8, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

† The word seven means "rest". God hallowed this rest when the Sabbath was exchanged with Sunday. Here the holy Church explains the importance of the true rest. God was not exhausted

in creating the world for by one word of His mouth, a certain part of the creation came about, e.g. “let there be light” and light came about. The true exhaustion was in the act of redemption as a result of sin; in the victory over death as a result of sin. Therefore, if we are speaking of the Sabbath of the Lord, we mean the true rest of the Lord, which was during redemption and abolishing of death as a result of sin.

† Another point is that there is a difference between the understanding of the Sabbath in the Old Testament and the understanding of the Sabbath in the New Testament. Those who speak about the Sabbath currently, speak about the letter of the law against which stood the Lord Jesus. For the brethren who speak about observance of the Sabbath saying “no work is to be done”, is it possible that this can be applied in these generations? If they say that the person who does not observe the Sabbath does not have an inheritance in the Kingdom, then what about those who do not have the Sabbath as a holiday? The Lord Jesus responded practically to this for He was working miracles during the Sabbath and these miracles He was able to do at any time. He chose the Sabbath specifically to correct the understanding people had about the Sabbath. Therefore, the Lord Jesus did not agree that no work is to be done on the Sabbath.

Therefore, it is a non-practical doctrine and people bear its offenses. The Sabbath day in Old Testament was a symbol of Sunday in the New Testament because Sunday in the New Testament is the true rest and the Sabbath in the Old Testament is a symbol of the eternal rest in the other world.

† This commandment is one of the commandments, and every commandment on the two tablets the Lord commented on during the Sermon on the Mount-- “you have heard that it was said 'You shall not murder' and this is one of the commandments “But I say to you..... “ “You have heard that it was said 'You shall not commit adultery' “But I say to you..... “ etc. (Matthew 5).

Therefore, we must go into the spirit of the commandment and not only the letter of the commandment.

† Just because it is a divine commandment does not mean that we currently offer burnt offering, sin offering, iniquity offering, peace offering, and all other sacrifices pertaining to different issues? Truly it is a commandment but it was a symbol for what was going to happen in the New Testament and all sacrifices were symbolic for Christ’s sacrifice. All these feasts were symbolic for the new feasts in Christianity. When Christianity started, some Jews who embraced Christianity wished to Judaize the Christian faith so that they would bring all the Jewish rituals and feasts to Christianity. St. Paul stood against them in the epistle to the Hebrews, to Romans, to Galatians and in Col. 2:17-18, “Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ”; St. Paul meant that it was a symbol and it ended with the rise of the Christian faith.

† The Lord Jesus Christ resurrected on Sunday and His resurrection became a token for our resurrection and the core of the disciples’ preaching. The resurrection was the evidence of the divinity of Christ and thus, in Ps. 118 or in Ps. 117 depending on differences in the numbering, it is said: “This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it” Therefore, the day that the Lord made was a day of joy. The resurrection of Christ was on Sunday and He appeared to His disciples on Sunday and gave them the grace of Priesthood when He appeared

to them in the upper room with the doors closed. Also, Christ established His Church on the fiftieth day of the Pentecost, which is a Sunday, and bestowed upon His disciples the first of the spiritual gifts which is speaking in tongues. Thus, Sabbath day was replaced with Sunday. We rejoice in it. Is it possible that we keep the Sabbath and we celebrate the Sabbath during which the Lord Christ was in the tomb and His disciples were in deep sorrow and fear, hidden in the upper room? No.

b) **They believe in three advents of the Lord Christ and a heavenly sanctuary:**

The second coming:

† They believe that Lord Christ came in the year 1844 A.D. and He ruled in heaven during which Christ completed the act of salvation in the heavenly sanctuary and purified it.
The third coming:

† They believe that Christ will come so that the righteous will rise and He will take them with Him and ascend with them to heaven and they will rule with Him in heaven for a thousand years. (All protestants and Jehovah's witnesses believe that the 1000 years are on earth during which Christ will rule with people on earth) but Adventists say that He will take the righteous and ascend with them to heaven so that they will rule with Him for 1000 years and the wicked will perish and the earth will remain vacant: no righteous in it because they ascended to heaven and no wicked ones in it because they perished and the devil will find himself without work because he is bound. After 1000 years, Christ will descend and with Him the righteous and the heavenly Jerusalem to earth.

The devil will have with him a huge army (the wicked ones that arose and their number is very large) and will attack the holy city. God will bring down fire from heaven and it will burn them, destroy them and leave no trace of them. The fire will burn the earth also, and purify it from every past sin. Then the righteous will leave the holy city and live on this earth, settle in it, and this will be the new earth.

Response:

† It is not possible to determine precisely the time of the coming of Christ. Why?

† In Acts 1:7, when the Disciples of Christ asked about His coming, "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.'" So it is not the right of any individual to determine its specific date.

† In Matthew 24:36 also when He spoke about the last days, He said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

† In Matthew 24:42, The Lord Christ said, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."

† Concerning the reason of Christ's coming, we say in the Orthodox Creed, "He is coming to judge the living and the dead". But they say that He is coming in His third coming to take the righteous and raise them with Him to heaven so that they can rule with Him in heaven for 1000

years then He will bring them down to earth. There is not one verse in the whole Bible which says so. It is clear in the Holy Bible that Christ, in His second coming, will come for judgement; Matthew 16:27 “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works”. Also review Matthew 25:31, and Matthew 13:40-42, and in Revelation 22:12 for more on the second coming.

† In Revelation 21:1, he says: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” Therefore, it vanished and it ceased to exist but it was not burned with fire or become purified to become suitable for the inhabitant. It ceased to exist. The Lord Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount, “heaven and earth will pass away” and also in Isaiah 65:17, He said, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.”

c) They believe that Christ is the Archangel Michael:

They agree concerning this issue with Jehovah's witnesses. They assume that Christ was born with the original sin. They also claim that His knowledge is incomplete and acquired and that He was liable to fall. They believe that His sacrifice on the cross is not enough, that He was separated from the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is the delegate of Christ on earth.

Response:

i) Perhaps what caused the mistake of the Adventist believing that Christ is the Archangel Michael is that the Holy Bible sometimes used the phrase “angel of the Lord” or “angel of God” in referring to God Himself, meaning that God appeared in the form of an angel. No angel appears but God does appear in the form of an angel, and they say that the angel of God is God Himself.

Examples:

† The story of Hagar in Genesis 16, Abraham's story in Genesis 22, appearance of God to Moses in the burning bush in the form of an angel in Exodus 3, appearance of God to Jacob in Genesis 32, reappearance of God to Balaam in Numbers 22, appearance of God to Gideon in the form of an angel in Judges 6, and also appearance of God in the book of Judges to the wife of Manoah in Judges 13

Therefore, God appeared in the form of an angel in many situations. But this does not mean that God is an angel.

But:

† The angels are creatures as mentioned in Colossians 1:16 and not worshipped. They are sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:13, 14) and Christ, glory be to Him, is better than all the angels “a more excellent name than they” as in Hebrews 1 and in Philippians 2:9. He is above all the angels of heaven as in Ephesians 1:21 and the angels are subject to Him as in I Peter 3:22 and they bow before Him, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth” (Philippians 2:10) and all the angels worship Him as in Hebrews 1:6.

† It was the Lord Christ who was incarnate and it is not possible that the Archangel Michael was

incarnated. Also it is not possible that the Archangel Michael performed the divine works which the Lord performed in creation. It is impossible for the Archangel Michael to have created eyes out of clay for the man born blind for this is an act of creation. Also, there is a new substance found in the miracle of transforming the water into wine and it is impossible that an angel performs such things and unfeasible for Archangel Michael to be omnipresent such as what the Lord Christ said to Nicodemus, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” (John 3:13) For He spoke with Nicodemus when He was on earth while being in heaven at the same time and this is not possible for the Archangel Michael. Also, He stands at every door and knocks, and He says that I am with you all days until the end of the ages, and when two or three gather in My name, I will be amongst them. All this is impossible for Archangel Michael to do.

To summarize this point, we refer to Hebrews 1:5-8, “For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, today I have begotten you?” And again: “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son”? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire” But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom.”

- ii) They claim that the Lord Christ was born with the original sin and that His knowledge is incomplete and acquired and He is vulnerable to fall. They believe that His sacrifice on the cross was not enough and that He was separated from the Father and that the Holy Spirit is the delegate of Christ on earth.

Response:

† They base the belief that Christ was born with the original sin on the verse in Hebrews 2:17, “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Here, we bring forward the danger of making a doctrine based on one verse and this is what the Protestants and other denominations fall in. The Virgin St. Mary is a human being born similar to other humans. When she bore the Lord Christ, the Holy Spirit came upon her and purified her womb from any inherited sin. This means that she inherited sin like other people, and it would have been possible for her to pass it on to Christ but the Holy Spirit came upon her and sanctified her womb so that she does not pass on Adam's sin that she inherited.

† If Christ was born with sin, and He died, He would die on behalf of the sin that He was born with. He had to be without sin completely during His birth and throughout His life. No sin inherited and no sin performed so that when He dies, He dies on behalf of the sins of others and not for His sin and this is a crucial point in the Christian doctrine. How can we benefit from His crucifixion if His crucifixion and death were for the sin in which He was born and not for others' sins? But because He has no sin, thus, His death is for the sins of others. The refore, inheritance of the original sin for Christ destroys the concept of redemption from its roots. In the annunciation about Him, it was said in Luke 1:35, “that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” Thus, He didn't live with only His Divinity free of sin, but He lived with His humanity also free of sin. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

† As for the Lord Christ's knowledge being uncompleted and acquired, God forbid. We read in Matthew 11:27, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the

Son wills to reveal Him.”

† And if He is subject to fall, God forbid. We read in Hebrews 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

† And the saying that His sacrifice on the cross is not enough, we respond and say as in Hebrews 3:1, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.”

† As for the belief that the Lord Christ separated from the Father, we respond and say as in John 14:9-10, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father ... I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.”

† As for the belief that the Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ on earth, we respond and say as in Ephesians 3:16, “That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.”

d) **They do not believe in the imperishability of the spirit.**

† One of the most dangerous issues concerning the Adventist is that they don't believe in the imperishability of the spirit. The Adventist proposes the most degrading image of man and show that man is completely similar to the animal. They do not believe that man has a living aspect to him which is the spirit. They say that animals were created from the dust and man also from the dust. But man, in addition to his creation from dust, God breathed in him the breath of life so he became a living soul, and He did not breathe in the animals the breath of life. What is strange is that they say: this breath of life provided for the animal as it provided for man equally.

† They believe that the body of man does not have feeling or emotion or intellect or will and that the same goes for the soul. We believe that these words are wrong because when a human dies, his/her spirit leaves the body and there are many wonders concerning the departure of the spirit from the body. Therefore, there is another aspect other than the body, which is the spirit.

† They believe that this spirit has no feeling, nor emotion, nor intellect, and that it is far from the body and that is why they don't believe in saints or intercessions of the saints. They disagree with the fact that when a human dies, his spirit goes to paradise; therefore, what is the story of the thief? “Today you will be with Me in Paradise.” How can they avoid it? Also Saint Paul says, “Having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better” So, if once he departs from the body, he does not sense or feel or realize or anything of this sort, what is the meaning of “far better”.

Response:

† Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke a lot about eternal life. One of the stories that are clear and strong in this subject is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. After the rich man and Lazarus died, each of them had sense, feeling, and recognition. The rich man looked and saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham. Hence, his feeling existed and he said to Abraham: “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame.” Therefore, the fact that he was tormented means that he had feelings and the fact that he knew that this was Abraham and this was Lazarus means that he had ability to recognize. The fact that he spoke to Abraham and Abraham understood

him and responded to him emphasizes that there is understanding, recognition, and feeling.

But saying that a human being dies and does not feel, sense, or recognize until the day of resurrection is the worst image of death. It is a very bad picture and the worst state of the human being. He is similar to a donkey except in one aspect and that is the resurrection from the dead. In their view, the spirit, while separated from the body does not feel, recognize, understand anything and there remains no relation for people with the saints. They attacked the Catholic Church because they believe in St. Mary and the saints and they said that the beast in the book of Revelations (ch.16) is the Catholic Church.

† Those Adventists in their assumption that there are no spirits and that the spirits do not feel or recognize, are similar to the Sadducee which the Lord addressed in Matthew 22 and said to them: “God is not the God of the dead but of the living.” So why does He say that I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, He is the God of the living and not of the dead. It is as if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive. Also, St. John in the book of Revelation saw the spirits of the martyrs under the altar crying out to God and He answered them which implies that they recognize and feel.

† Another notable fact is that during the transfiguration on Mount Tabor, we saw Moses the prophet who was dead appear with the Lord Christ before the resurrection of the dead. So how did he appear with the Lord Christ while he is dead? Also, he was speaking with Elijah. Elijah did not die, but how did Moses speak with Elijah while he was dead and the dead does not feel or sense anything?

Conclusion:

- 1) We must study comparative theology so that we can be familiar with these heresies and answer with confidence and understanding
- 2) We must not be deceived with these heresies but be cautious from them and avoid fellowship with such examples.
- 3) The danger of relying on one verse concerning the doctrine is very clear. We must understand the entire Bible (both Testaments) and put all the verses and situations together. Then, with the guidance of God we will be able to reach the sound doctrine and this is what the Coptic Orthodox Church does.
- 4) The Adventists are from a protestant origin.
- 5) The Seventh Day Adventist is one of the contemporary cults that appeared in the 19th Century.
- 6) The Adventists believe in observing the Sabbath and celebrate the festival of booths like the Jews and they follow the Old Testament more than the New Testament.
- 7) The Adventists believe that the Lord Christ is the Archangel Michael and other false teachings about Him.
- 8) The Adventists believe in three advents of Christ and other false teachings outlined.
- 9) The Adventists do not believe in the imperishability of the spirit.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: THE HERESY OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESS – WEB LINK

[HTTP://WWW.SAINT-MARY.NET/BOOKS/THE%20HERESY%20OF%20JEHOVAHS%20WITNESSES.PDF](http://www.saint-mary.net/books/the%20heresy%20of%20jehovahs%20witnesses.pdf)

WORLD RELIGIONS

JUDAISM & ISLAM

Introduction:

The world is no longer a group of nations, each of which having its own language, culture and religion. Migration and travel from one place to another have resulted in a diversity of languages, cultures and religions all co-existing in the same country or even within the one city.

The aim of this booklet is to try to outline -with absolute impartiality- the basics of the Jewish as well as the Islamic religions. The benefit of this attempt is two-fold:

Firstly, to enable the Christian Youth to grasp the fundamentals of the other religions around them so that, with a discerning eye and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit existing within each of them, they would be capable of socializing with their friends of other faiths without bias of fanaticism.

Secondly, to provide an insight into the principles of other religions, so the Christian Youth would be able to understand, more intelligently, the motives behind the behaviour and way of thinking of friends belonging to different religion. It is now an established fact that the religion and belief of the individual play an important role. Although the importance varies in the moulding of a person's personality and in his or her attitude towards their compatriots as well as individuals of other nationalities.

JUDAISMA

Introduction:

Today, the Jewish population is very small. But they have the most ancient religious belief, which is considered by many to be the parent of both Christianity and Islam. The present estimate of the world Jewish population is thirteen million. Of these, five million are in North America, a similar number is in Israel and the rest mainly in Europe.

What is he Jewish belief?

- 1) The Jews believe that there is only One God. "SHEMA" is the prayer they recite many times, especially in the morning and evening service. It is the opening word in Hebrew of their confession, which says: "Hear, O Israel!: The Lord our God, the Lord is One." (Deuteronomy 6:4). It is very true indeed that "Monotheism" (the belief that there is one supreme God who contains all the attributes and characteristics of divinity) is the greatest contribution of Judaism to the human culture.
- 2) For most Jews, the name of God "YHWH (Yahweh)" is very sacred, be it in pronunciation or in writing. Hence they refer to Him by another name: "Adonai", or "Lord".
- 3) The Jews believe that God created the world. He created man in His own image and after His likeness, hence man has his own free-will, he is responsible and of high value. They do not believe that the first sin committed by the first Adam was inherited and transmitted to subsequent generations. They believe that man is God's creation, and therefore he is good and free from sin. Their concept is that people were created to preserve God's creation, and are required to lead a holy and undefiled life.

- 4) They believe that God made covenants with man, and in every covenant, it is God's promise to His people that he will be their God and will guard them if they adhered to His commands in various aspects:
 - > God made a covenant with the entire human race and with all His creation through Noah (Genesis 6:9).
 - > God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (the Jews) to bless everything for them (Genesis 15-17).
 - > God renewed His covenant with the Jews by giving them the "Torah" through the prophet Moses (Exodus 19 & 20). The most important covenant between God and the Jews was the "Ten Commandments", in which God says: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exodus 20:2). Therefore, every Jew is required to adhere rigidly to the Ten Commandments as written in Exodus 20:3-17.
- 5) The Jews believe that they are the chosen people of God. He endowed them with special gifts and talents, and entrusted them with certain responsibilities. In return, He made it incumbent upon them to endure in some sufferings and afflictions for His sake.
- 6) The Jews reject and abhor that Jesus Christ is "God manifest in the flesh"

Judaism as a way of life:

Judaism is a defined way of practical life rather than a mere belief and theology. A Jew is recognized by his or her way of life, more than by his or her beliefs. For example there is not a defined concept concerning eternal life. They still live in the hope of the coming of a Messiah, but they disagree as to the manner in which he will come. Some believe that his coming will be like a person, but most believe that, in the messianic era, the world that we live in will be renewed, and all people will live together in peace.

Jewish Holy days and festivals:

- 1) Jews celebrate in various ways and observe certain periods as holy. First and foremost is the "**Sabbath**". They uphold the belief that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. One of the commandments of God to the Jews is to "keep" the Sabbath and celebrate it as a day for rest and worship. From sunset Friday till sunset Saturday, the Jewish people do no work. The definition of "work" differs from one Jew to another. But all agree that no work should be done on Saturday. It is the day for worshipping God in their synagogues.
- 2) **Passover or "Pesach" and Feast of Unleavened bread:** It is a seven-day spring festival, commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from the slavery in Egypt by the power of God. It is the greatest of the Jewish festivities.
- 3) **The "Fifties" or "Feast of the Weeks"** is a spring harvest festival.
- 4) **The New Year's feast** known as "Rosh Hashanah" (meaning 'head of the year'). This occurs in Autumn, preceding the "Yom Kippur" (The Day of the Atonement) by ten days. On this day the Jews

repent and ask God's forgiveness, as they also forgive one another. It is the season for improvement in spiritual rebirth. Following the "Yom Kippur" is the Feast of the Tabernacles, known also as Feast of Booths. It is primarily a feast for fruit harvest.

- 5) **Hanukkah:** (Festival of Lights). This is celebrated in December. The popularity of this feast has been on the increase. It is the feast of freedom and commemoration of the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem after having been destroyed by the Romans in the Second Century A.D.
- 6) The life of the Jewish individual is marked by personal celebrations: At thirteen years, a ceremony is held for the boy, called "Bar Mitzvah", when he becomes a Son of the Commandment, i.e. a full member of the Jewish community. A ceremony is also held for the girl at thirteen, called "Bat Mitzvah". On this occasion, the family celebrates their son's or daughter's reaching the age of legal maturity and thereby becoming obligated to observe all the commandments as an adult. Other occasions for personal celebration are: The birthday of children: male-circumcision at eight days of age; wedding anniversaries; requiems for the deceased.

The place of Worship and Study:

The Jews were dispersed throughout the entire Roman Empire since the first century A.D. Their temple in Jerusalem which was the main place for offering sacrifices, was destroyed and they were deprived of their Promised Land. As a compromise for the Temple of Jerusalem that had been desecrated, Jewish synagogues were established in numerous locations in the world, becoming the centre of Jewish life. At these synagogues, the "Rabbi" (meaning 'My master') was the responsible religious teacher and interpreter of the TORAH and Talmud. Since 1948, however, the State of Israel became the centre for all the Jews worldwide.

The Jewish Tradition and Cultural Evolution:

With the participation of the Jews in present-day activities, a question poses itself: "Is it practicable for the Jew as an individual to live in this modern world whilst upholding the tradition and rituals of the Torah and Talmud?" Throughout the world today, there are three distinct groupings of Jews:

- 1) "Orthodox Jews": They adhere strictly to the teachings of the Torah and Talmud. In their synagogues, they use only the Hebrew language in conducting the service of worship.
- 2) "Liberal Jews": They regard the Torah as a symbol, but do not adhere literally to its teachings. They take from the Torah the principles and values, and they use the English language in conducting the service. They now ordain women rabbis.
- 3) "Conservative Jews": These take a middle stand between the two groups abovementioned. They neither adhere strictly to the teachings of the Torah, nor are they on the Liberal side. They use both the Hebrew and English languages in conducting the service in their synagogues. Recently, they started ordaining women as rabbis.

The relation between Judaism and other religions:

- 1) The Jews consider that they have a uniquely special relation with God through the Covenant. However, they do not object to others having a relation with God as well.

- 2) Judaism is an Ethnic Religion. The Jews make no attempt to entice others towards their grouping. They do not oppose other religions nor do they express an opinion. They demand, however, freedom of worship and they detest any encroachment or interference.
- 3) It is difficult to understand a great deal about Judaism as a central authoritative body does not exist, neither does a definition of Judaism that is recognized by all the factions.

ISLAM

Introduction:

Islam is one of the major religions in the world. Its followers are estimated at three-quarters of a billion. The origin of Islam is attributed to the Middle East, where it started. Most of the people of the Middle East are Muslims. Great numbers are to be found also in Africa and Asia. Indonesia has the largest Islamic Population, and in certain countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, almost 100% are Muslims. In addition to the above countries, Muslims are also found in East Europe, India, China, Philippines and in Republics of the previous USSR.

The origin of Islam:

Islam is considered by the Moslems as both modern and ancient. It is considered as modern because it started as late as the Seventh Century A.D. and ancient because it started since the creation of Adam, who is considered by the Muslims as a prophet.

In Islam, the name given to God is “Allah”, which is the Arabic translation. The word “Islam” means complete submission of every person to the true God “Allah”.

Muslims emphatically reject the Christian belief of a “Triune God”. They believe that Jesus was a prophet like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David.

They strongly believe that Mohamed was the last prophet to be sent by God, and that the Koran is the final book of God. Mohamed is a Prophet, not a God or son of God. Prophet-hood was consummated and finished with him.

Mohamed’s life:

Mohamed is the founder of the Religion. He was born in 570 AD and died in 632 AD. He lived between the cities of Mecca and Medina, in what was called at the time “The Arabian Peninsula” (present-day “Saudi Arabia”). He became an orphan at an early age, and was brought up by his uncle. After he got married, he became manager of his wife’s trading business that she had inherited. He spent most of his time in prayer and meditation. At the age of 40, Mohamed felt that God was calling him to be His prophet. At this stage, he had a revelation of the Koran in a vision and this continued throughout the rest of his life at the hands of Archangel Gabriel.

Mohamed started his mission by preaching in Mecca, proclaiming that there was only one God, without a partner, warning of torment for those who followed a religion that believed in many gods. This angered the leaders of Mecca, so he was obliged to leave it for Medina in the year 622 AD. (This event

- the “Higra”- marks the start of the Islamic Calendar). In Medina, he formed the first Islamic grouping (The Ummah) and gathered around him sizeable forces. Prior to his death, he had taken the whole of Mecca and instituted the Pilgrimage as one of the basic principles of Islam.

Muslims believe Mohamed to be:

1. The last prophet sent by God. There will be no prophet after him.
2. The means for imparting the Koran to the world. All prophets performed miracles, but Mohamed’s miracle was the Koran, which, according to the Muslim belief, is the last book sent by God.
3. The first founder of an Islamic nation at Medina, which he ruled for ten years.
4. The highest example -by his deeds and words- for the Muslim life. Mohamed’s life, his sayings and his acts are known in the “Hadith.” This is the body of traditions based on what the prophet said or did regarding various issues and memorized by the closest of the advocates of Islam.

Islamic Beliefs:

There are six and can be summarized as follows:

- 1) There is only One God – there is no partner with Him.
- 2) Believing in all the prophets sent by God.
- 3) Acknowledging that there are angels who carry God’s messages.
- 4) Accepting all the books that were given by God.
- 5) The Last Day of Judgement.
- 6) That the destiny of everyone is in God’s hand.

The question that poses itself now is: What are the conditions for living as a Muslim?

- 1) To declare the Profession of Faith (the Shehadah): “There is no god but Allah, and Mohamed is the Messenger of God”, which, when professed by the tongue and with full assent of the heart, makes the person a real Muslim.
- 2) Muslims pray five times a day, at fixed times. When praying, they must set their face towards Mecca. They kneel down, put their forehead to the ground, and recite certain verses from the Koran. The person may pray alone, with his family, within a group, or at the mosque. At noon on Fridays the Muslims congregate at mosques for communal prayer and for listening to the sermon.
- 3) Giving alms to the poor or paying 2.5% of their income into the fund of “Zakat”.
- 4) Fasting for a month which is the month of “Ramadan”. They abstain strictly from eating, from sunrise till sunset.

- 5) Muslims who have the financial means must go to Mecca for the Pilgrimage (Haj) at least once in a life-time.
- 6) The “Jihad” or “holy war” is the sixth pillar of a Muslim’s personal life. This issue is the subject of controversy-and enmity between some Islamic Groupings and Western countries. “Jihad”-in the strict sense- implies the striving of the individual against his personal evil inclinations. It is also interpreted as the struggle by Muslims in their opposition against any evil action committed by another nation or group of nations against Muslim. The Westerners believe that a certain proportion of Muslim use the pretext of “Jihad” to become terrorists and assassins in many places. Many Muslim, however, disapprove of the use of armed force, of “Jihad” or terrorism in settling differences.

Islam as a way of life:

- 1 Many research scholars believe that Islam is a way of life rather than merely a religion. The Muslim must, of necessity, obey the Koran (i.e. the word of God), and the Sharia (i.e. the law of God), in all his personal, family, social and economic affairs.
- 2 In Islam there is no “priesthood” or “sacraments”. There are festivities, such as the one following the “Ramadan” fast and others.

There are rules in Islam that must be strictly adhered to, such as refraining from:

- 1) Eating or touching pork.
- 2) Drinking or handling alcoholic drinks.
- 3) Gambling.
- 4) Borrowing or lending money against usury (interest). However, profit sharing is permissible.
- 5) Keeping more than four wives at a time.

Present Muslim Sects:

Islam has spread over to many countries of the world. The never changing principles, as already stressed heretofore are: One God; Mohamed is the Messenger of God; the Koran. These principles unify the entire Muslim world, and are used to illustrate Muslim unity. In spite of this, however, there are sects and factions within Islam, which may be summarize as follows:

- 1) Nearly 85% of the Muslims of the world are “Sunnis”, denoting the “Orthodox” Muslims who adhere to the traditional teachings (of the four rightly-guided caliphs).
- 2) The “Sufis” who follow the path of the mystical movement of pious Muslims and are faithfully dedicated to it. They believe that through ascetic practices, the knowledge of God and communion with Him would be directly achieved by the soul that loves God. “Sufis” can be found in various parts of the world.

- 3) The “Muslim Brotherhood” (The “brotherhood” movement), existing mainly in Saudi Arabia.
- 4) The “Shiites”, who believe that Ali- the cousin of the Prophet Mohamed ought to have succeeded after his death (being a blood-relation). They exist mainly in Iran.
- 5) The “Ismailis”, who are a branch of the Shiites, though considered more radical, and are regarded as extremist Muslims. They are to be found in several countries in Asia and North Africa.

HINDUISM & BUDDHISM

Introduction:

Hinduism is the religion of about eighty-five percent of the people in India. Hindu is actually a name given to the religion by people who are not Indians. The people of India usually refer to it as Sanatana Dharma or Eternal Truth. As Eternal Truth, the religion is universal. Anyone who seeks the Eternal Truth is Hindu, no matter what his or her religion or rational affiliation. However, the two most common criteria for identifying a Hindu are: He or she accepts the authority of the sacred scriptures known as the Vedas, and he or she belongs to one of the castes of India.

To be a Hindu:

Hinduism is a religion, actually a way of life that has no historic founder and has flourished in India for thousands of years. Hinduism and Indian culture are so inextricably intertwined that it is almost impossible to differentiate between them.

Hinduism is not a missionary religion, and it is difficult for a person who is not an Indian to become a Hindu. Hinduism has undergone many changes in its history, but is still a strong and growing religion among the people of India. Hinduism has no central church or authority or creed. Hindus have many different beliefs, and they worship different gods and read different scriptures; but they all affirm that the highest calling of all Hindus is to fulfil their social role to the best of their ability, to strive for their liberation in the way appropriate to their disposition and needs, and to grow ever closer to the Eternal Truth.

The Concept of God:

Most Hindus believe in god, but the word means different things to different people. For some philosophical mystics, god is the highest reality and the deepest truth. God is impersonal and beyond name and form. The philosophers call god Brahma. For others, god has a name, form, and personality.

Some of the most popular gods are Brahma (creator), Shiva (destroyer), Vishnu (Sustainer) and the mother goddess Shakti, all of whom appear in many forms. Shiva is a powerful, but loving god. Vishnu appears in the world in many forms for the purpose of preserving good and destroying evil. The best known human forms of Vishnu are Rama and Krishna. Rama is the ideal human being; Krishna is portrayed as an infant, a boy, a handsome youth, a husband, and a prince. Hindus worship god in female form as the goddess for they believe that god is greater than human ideas of gender. Some forms of god are animals. The worship of god is called puja. In worship, a priest chants scriptures; the devoted offer gifts of food and flower, and they dress and decorate an image of the god. Though they express devotion to a variety of gods, Hindus realize that all the names and forms of god they worship are really expressions of the one true reality (Brahman), which is beyond name and form.

Ultimate Reality, Karma and Salvation:

Hindus do not believe in one creation and destruction of the world; they believe in endless cycles of creation and destruction. Each cycle begins with creation by the god Brahman. The universe is maintained by the god Vishnu, although conditions gradually decline until finally when it is beyond repair, the god Shiva destroys it. Then another creation occurs and the process starts all over again. The cycles have no absolute beginning and will have no final end. Hindus believe that Ultimate reality is one, eternal, and changeless. In the universe, the ultimate reality is called Brahman (world soul). The

name reality in every being is called Atman (individual soul). Hindus affirm that Brahman and Atman are not different. That is, the essence of each living being is the same as the essence of the universe.

Hindus believe that the Atman lives in a body and that a person's Atman is reborn again and again according to his or her past Karma. The cycle of rebirth is known as the transmigration of souls (not as reincarnation, since incarnation generally refers to the various forms taken by gods and goddesses).

Hindus believe that in the cycle of rebirth their present condition is caused by their previous actions and that their future state will be determined by the actions they take in the present. The total effect of a person's action is known as Karma and determines his or her destiny. The ultimate goal of Hinduism is to attain moksha (freedom), when a person's karma is perfect (all good works and no evil) and he or she leave the wheel of life. In salvation, the Atman is set free for all limitations to be one with Brahman again. Moksha can be pursued in various ways or margas. Often the ways are meshed. People are to choose the way or ways that best suit their temperament and needs.

The Way of Activity: KARMA MARGA:

Activity, or doing good work, is practised daily by millions of Hindus. The way of activity centres chiefly on offering gifts and sacrifices to the gods, goddesses, or spirits, through worshipping (puja) in the temple or at home shrines.

In the temple is where the stored power of the gods resides. The priest or Brahmin is in charge of temple ceremonies that feed, bathe, decorate and commune with deity. Brahman can set free the power of the deity. Wealthy Hindus may build their own ornate temples as signs of devotion; thus aggregating greater works or merits.

The Way of Knowledge: JNANA MARGA:

The way of knowledge is a more difficult path than the way of activity, for it requires a single-minded devotion and great sacrifice to attain the final step of becoming a holy man.

A Hindu man's life has traditionally been divided into four stages: student; householder; forest dweller; and, for a few individuals, holy man. Virtually all Hindus will take the first two steps, but the man who pursues the way of knowledge is required to take the third and fourth steps as well. The stages of the way to knowledge are somewhat blurred today, although there are still a sense in which each stage of life defines a person's attitude. The duty of a student is to study and learn the sacred literature, while the duty of a married householder is to be a responsible husband, father, and citizen. The third stage, forest dweller, is not a duty, like the first two stages, but a choice. If a man continues on the way of knowledge, he leaves his home, business, and family in the good care of his sons and becomes a forest dweller.

He becomes the disciple of a guru and leans the meditative and ascetic life. The fourth stage is becoming a holy man, using the meditative techniques (yoga) learned from the guru. One of the techniques of the ascetic life is self-mortification, such as lying on a bed of thorns. Self-mortification helps the Hindu man achieve the necessary concentration for yoga. Through his intense concentration, he hones the virtues needed to attain the final level of holiness that will lead to salvation or moksha. Since the way of knowledge is so intense, not many choose to follow it.

The Way of Devotion: BHAKTIMARGA:

The third way is through devotion and is the most popular pursuit of moksha. One need not build a shrine or enlist the aid of a priest to offer devotion. The Hindu chooses one of the gods or goddesses as his personal deity and the object of his love and devotion. In return, the gods offer grace to provide good karma, which then breaks the cycles of transmigration of the souls. Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, and Krishna (or one of their incarnations) are the gods most often chosen.

The Caste System:

For centuries in Hindu society, caste has been the basis of social relationships, contact between members of different castes, or social classes, is strictly controlled.

At the present time, discrimination on the basis of caste is illegal in India; and in the urban areas and among more progressive Indians; caste is of little importance. However, in the rural villages of India and among the more traditional people, the caste system defines the way people relate to one another, especially in intimate relationships, when people eat together or marry.

Caste also plays a significant part in the Hindu pursuit of moksha. Hindus believe that in the transmigration of the soul, a person's karma determines his or her caste. There are five castes or classes in Hindu society. The most privileged is the Brahmin or priest. The second is Kshatriya, the warrior or governing class, followed by Vaisya, the middle class of merchants and tradesman. The fourth caste is Indra, the peasantry, farmers and normal labourers. The lowest caste is outcastes or untouchables, who perform the lowliest occupations and have no access to the rituals of the other classes.

Being in one caste or another is not unjust; a person's karma determines his or her social standing. And while there is no intermingling, a faithful Hindu, through the pursuit of Moksha and the attainment of good karma, may reach a higher caste in the next transmigration of his or her soul.

BUDDHISM

Introduction:

Buddhism is a world religion that is found primarily in Southeast and East Asia. In the Twentieth century, Buddhism has suffered from the advance of Communism, especially in China, Tibet, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. At the same time, Buddhism is growing in North America because of refugees from Tibet and through the work of missionaries from other Buddhist countries. Many Theravada, Zen, and Tibetan monasteries, temples and meditation centres have been established in North America, bringing the number of Buddhists in the world to over three hundred million.

The Three Divisions of Buddhism:

Buddhism is divided into three main groups:- Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.

Theravada means the way of elders or monks, and it offers salvation to monks alone. People in this group see themselves preserving the true teachings of Buddha and transmitting them faithfully from the time of Buddha until today, 2500 years later. Theravada is located primarily in Burma (Myanmar),

Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Thailand. Though Theravada is the older form of Buddhism, it is known as the little vehicle.

Mahayana, or the Great Vehicle, developed around the beginning of the Christian era. It incorporated new beliefs and practices, added more writings to the scriptures, and expanded the community to include laity as well as monks. Mahayana elevated the figure of Buddha to a transcendent and divine being and affirmed the presence of many Buddhas beyond the earthly Buddha, Gautama. Mahayana developed the human ideal –Bodhisattva-, a being whose life is characterized by wisdom and compassion and who remains in the world, forgoing Nirvana, to save a suffering humanity. Mahayana is found primarily in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Zen is the popular school of Mahayana Buddhism.

Vajrayana is the most recently developed form of Buddhism, and it emphasizes elaborate rituals and rigorous meditation. It is found mainly in Tibet, although its leader, the Dalai Lama, now lives in exile in India. Despite the fact that the three forms of Buddhism are quite different, they all believe in the Buddha, his teachings and the community of monks and nuns.

The Beginnings of Buddhism:

Who is the Buddha? His name was Siddhartha Gautama, and he lived from about 563 to 483 BC, in the northern part of India. He grew up as an Indian prince in privileged and sheltered circumstances.

But as a young man, he ventured out and saw the negative aspects of life, such as sickness, old age, and death. He also learned about people who renounced the world in order to search for an answer to the problems of human suffering.

Gautama was well acquainted with the precepts of Hinduism and eventually reformed it into a new movement under his leadership. At the age of twenty-nine, Gautama decided to follow the Hindu course of renunciation. Leaving his wife and young son, he spent six years wandering, begging, fasting, studying, thinking, and meditating. Finally, after great struggle and temptations and after rejecting an unsatisfactory some of his Hindu beliefs, he became enlightened; he woke up. (Buddha means enlightenment or one who has awakened). After his enlightenment, he gathered followers and taught them until his death at eighty years of age.

Buddhists believe that because of this enlightenment, he was not reborn but entered into a state of peace called Nirvana (Buddha was a pathfinder, an example, a teacher, and an inspiration, but he was not a god or a Savior). The most holy pilgrimage sites of Buddhists are the places in northern India where the Buddha was born, where he was enlightened, where he preached his first sermon, and where he died.

The Teachings of Buddhism:

The Buddha's teachings are contained in the scriptures called Tipitaka (three baskets). Buddhism is known as Middle Way, the avoidance of extreme asceticism and self-denial on the one hand and of luxury and self-indulgence on the other.

Central to the teachings are four Nobles:

Truth: which describe Buddhism's view of the world. The first is that life in this world is precarious, undependable, changing, decaying, and temporary; it has no eternal essence. In short, life is full of suffering. Buddhists believe in seeing life realistically. The second is that people suffer because they desire something that life cannot give. They became attached to the things of the world, which are unreliable, so people are always disappointed. The human problem is that we always want what we cannot have; and if we could have what we want it would not satisfy us.

The first two truths are the bad news, but the third is good news. Giving up desire and attachment to the things of the world can end suffering and bring about joy. Nirvana is the state of bliss brought about by the end of suffering. (Nirvana is not a place like heaven. It is the absence of desire, attachment suffering, greed, anger and delusion.)

The fourth Nobel Truth explains that by walking the Noble Eightfold path a person can resolve suffering and attain Nirvana. The Noble Eightfold Path is divided into right beliefs or resolves, the moral life, and the mystical or meditative life.

The Eightfold Path:

I. Right Belief:

- 1) Right Understanding: which knows the truth, seeing the world as it really is.
- 2) Right Thought: This is purity of mind with no thought of hate, lust, jealousy, or illusion. Instead it is purity of mind with positive thoughts of love and truth.

II. Right Morality:

- 1) Right Speech: which is purity of words and speech avoiding lies, gossip, and meaningless Chatter. (If you do not have something good to say, do not say anything).
- 2) Right Action: which is purity of behaviour and involves following the five moral and ethical Precepts. Do not kill (respect all life). Do not lie (speak only the truth). Do not steal or take what does not belong to you. Do not misuse sex. Do not use intoxicants.
- 3) Right Livelihood: which is purity of vocation and involves making sure that your job or career does not cause you to harm anyone.

III. Right Meditations:

- 1) Right Effort: This is setting goals and striving for them with energy.
- 2) Right Meditations.
- 3) Right Concentrations: which means, by right of meditation, purifying the mind, controlling and disciplining the mind, focusing the mind and becoming fully attentive to everything that you do.

By following the Eightfold Path, a person can increase in wisdom, morality, and mediation and thus move closer to the experience of Nirvana. Otherwise, he or she will continue in the endless cycle of death and rebirth. Perhaps the simplest statement of the Eightfold Path is this: Avoid evil, do good, purify your mind. As people mature in their progress on the earth toward Nirvana, Buddhism calls them to four kinds of love: (1) Loving kindness for all creatures (human, animal, and otherwise) and wishing well-being for all creatures in all things; (2) Compassion for those who are less fortunate than they are; (3) Joy and respect for those who are more fortunate than they are; and (4) Equanimity in the face of upsetting and troubling situations.

Buddhism as a way of Life:

Buddhism is not so much a formal religion as a way of life, which is open to anyone who experiences suffering and wishes to find peace of mind. An adherent of Buddhism does not join an organization; he or she chooses to walk the noble path and to conform to the discipline of the noble truths. Buddhism does not believe in an almighty creator god to whom one prays for benefits. The problems people experience are their own problems; they caused them, and they alone can solve them. Buddhism believes that things happen as a result of person's past actions (karma); not because of God's punishment and not because of fate. In addition, a person's future is determined, at least in part by his or her present actions, not by the grace or the wrath of God. Buddhism is a radical way of self-help in which a person depends entirely on his or her own efforts to stop personal suffering.

Buddhism in the Community:

There is also in Buddhism the community of monks and nuns (primarily monks today), who have given up their lives for worldly involvement (marriage, family, career, position, and wealth) and have taken upon themselves the monastic life. They have vowed to live a disciplined life dedicated to their own spiritual growth as well as to teaching and serving the laity.

Because of their separation from worldly activities, they are dependent on the laity for food, shelter, clothing and medical care. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the dedication and sacrifice of becoming a monk, one of the most meaningful events in the life of a boy and his family is his entering to the monastery. He may become a monk for a short period of time or for his lifetime. The event is like an invitation into manhood, and it brings great merit on the family. Most Buddhist festivals celebrate events in the life of the Buddha. For example, in Southeast Asia, the celebration of the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha is on the day of the full moon in May.

CHRISTIANITY

Introduction:

Christianity is the largest religion in the world. Over 1.7 billion people around the globe believe that Jesus Christ is their Savior. Jesus is the unique self-revelation of God to man, Who lived among humankind and Who conquered death and sin by sacrificing Himself for us and by rising from the tomb. Rooted in Judaism, Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promises made in the Jewish Scriptures.

Christian communities were at first persecuted for following Christ Jesus, Who died like a criminal. But the blood of the martyrs watered the seeds of this new religion until, by the fourth century, Christianity was the dominant religion in Europe, the Middle East, and Northern Africa. Like all other religions, tragic divisions split the Christian Church, separating Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Anglicanism.

Today, the ecumenical movement is trying to heal the rifts and bandage the wounds in the one Body of Christ.

Victory over Death:

Little is known about Jesus' life from His infancy until He was about thirty years old. But in the three short years that followed, Jesus caused such public turmoil in Palestine that in the 33AD, people demanded His death as a traitor and a blasphemer. His preaching challenged the religious power structure of His day. Some factions of influential Jews thought that He was disloyal to the Law of Moses and that He blasphemed by allowing Himself to be called "Lord". Nationalistic Jews were disappointed that He was not leading the people to a military victory over the Romans. The Romans, like any colonizer, were worried about Jesus because of His power to influence people's lives.

If Jesus had simply been a prophet or a religious fanatic – depending on a person's point of view at the time – His teachings and deeds would probably have been quickly forgotten after His humiliating death by crucifixion. But something happened that was completely unique and that showed to those who believed in Jesus Christ that indeed He was the Messiah, the Son of God, the "Word made flesh".

The followers of Jesus recount his Resurrection:

"After the Sabbath, and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdalene and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And all at once there was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow.

The guards were so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke: and he said to the women, "there is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said He would.

Come and see the place where He lay, then go quickly and tell His disciples...." Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples" (Matthew 28:1-8) In the Nativity story, the angel promised the shepherds a great "joy to be shared by the whole people" (Luke 2:10). Here, in Matthew's story of the Resurrection, we see that promise fulfilled.

Jesus had conquered death. From this moment, the Resurrection of Jesus became the cornerstone of Christian belief. Paul, who was converted from his persecution of the Christians to become a great apostle, points out how central the Resurrection is: “..... I taught you what I had been taught myself, namely that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures; that He was buried; and that He was raised to life on the third day ...; that He appeared first to Cephas (Peter) and secondly to the Twelve.

Next He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died; ... and last of all He appeared to me too; it was as though I was born when no one expected it. ... Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ Himself cannot have been raised, and if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless; indeed, we are shown up as witnesses who have committed perjury before God, because we swore in evidence before God that He raised Christ to life. For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins. And what is more serious, all who have died in Christ have perished. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 12-19).

Most religions have central persons who teach ways of escaping the endless cycle of life, suffering, and death. In the case of Christianity, the central person is Jesus, Who, through His sacrificial death and Resurrection, brought humankind to the possibility of eternal joy, if they only follow in His way.

Jesus the Person:

Who was this person Jesus? If you want to get to know someone, you look at what she or he does and says, and what others say about her or him.

What did Jesus really do in His lifetime? His birth, death, and Resurrection are central events, but they are important because of what He did between these events.

First, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. At this point John recognized Jesus as Christ. Initially, He went into the Wilderness to pray. After this, He walked throughout Palestine healing, working other miracles, and preaching; and what He preached, He practised.

Love into Action:

The writings about Jesus are filled with stories that describe His acts of healing: the lepers were cleansed; the blind saw, paralyzed people walked, devils were cast out. Jesus calmed the storm on the sea, and the people said: “Even the winds and the sea obey Him” (Matthew 8:27). When the people were hungry, He fed them from few loaves and two fish. All these acts showed the power of God – but power in the form of love. By becoming human, God showed humans how to love and thus how to be godlike.

Jesus also challenged people to think in new ways about their relationship with God and with other human beings. He was condemned for curing on the Sabbath by those who placed strict observance of the written laws of Moses above the law of love. As this story demonstrates, Jesus showed what sort of life God wanted:

“While He was at dinner in the house it happened that a number of tax collectors and sinners came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?” when He heard this He replied, “It is not the healthy that need the doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: What I want is mercy, not sacrifice. And indeed I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:10-13). Repeating the theme from the angel’s proclamation at His birth, Jesus made it clear that God was a loving God for “the whole people” – not just for the rich, the powerful, and the law-abiding.

Jesus loved in personal ways. For instance, Jesus received a message from Martha and Mary saying: “Lord, the man (Lazarus) You love is ill” (John 11:3). When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. “Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw Him she threw herself at His feet, saying, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died”. At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, “Where have you put him?” they said, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept: and the Jews said, “See how much He loved him!” (John 11:32-36).

Then Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead. This was an act of love and was considered proof that Jesus was the Son of God.

The Law of Love: A Moral Code:

The law that Jesus followed and taught was contained in the Jewish Scriptures: “Jesus said, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Deuteronomy 6:5), ... You must love your neighbour as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also” (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus’ acts showed the people how to put love into action.

Of special concern to Jesus were the poor, the sick, sinners and children. He knew that they acknowledged their dependence on God and relied on God more than did the rich, the healthy, and the righteous. In fact, Jesus gave His sternest warnings to the rich and the hypocrites. The rich often depend on their money and power instead of on God’s gifts. In addition, Jesus’ ideal of loving others requires that the wealthy share with the needy. Hypocrisy received Jesus’ harshest words: “Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who pay your tithe of mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law – justice, mercy, good faith! These you should have practiced, without neglecting the others. You blind guides! Straining out gnats and swallowing camels!” (Matthew 23:23-24).

Jesus taught that love was much more demanding than doggedly keeping only dietary laws and ritual observances.

The Beatitudes:

Jesus summarized His moral teaching in the Beatitudes, which were given in what is now called the Sermon on the Mount. These short statements reflect the law of love and the need for reliance on God’s love for humankind: “How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage. Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied. Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown to them. Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God. Happy those who are

persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.” (Matthew 5:3-12).

The Christian Name for “God”:

In the pamphlet on ‘Judaism’ it was mentioned that Moses’ vision of God as Supreme was signalled by the use of the new name “Yahweh”. Likewise, Jesus’ understanding of God also required a new name. The name that Jesus used was “Abba”, a name that must have shocked Jews who heard Him utter it. Any name for God was upsetting to devout Jews, but a word that suggested such great personal intimacy was entirely forging to their faith. For “Abba” – which means “papa” or “dada” – is the term that was used by infants for their fathers.

Theologians place great weight on Jesus’ use of this name because it suggests that Jesus was well aware of His special relationship to God. By calling God “Papa”, Jesus implied that in His teachings and deeds, God was present in an obvious and immediate sense. This relationship was made clear in the Resurrection, after which Christians understood that the Father and Son, along with the Holy Spirit, were a single and indivisible Deity.

Jesus was not only the Christ or the Messiah; He was also the Lord. As if Jesus’ use of God’s new name were not challenging enough, in the prayer “Our Father”, Jesus taught His followers to address God using the same name. In effect, Jesus offered them a share in His Sonship and invited them to approach God in the same familiar, trusting way that He did.

The name “Abba”, it seems, suggests things about God and about ourselves that we find difficult to accept. How can God be so loving and close? Is it possible that we are as dear as children to God? Perhaps that is why Saint Paul said that one sure sign of a person’s conversion is the bold use of God’s new name: “When we cry “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:15-17).

The Early Christians:

After the Resurrection and the Apostles’ experience of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Christian Community in Jerusalem grew in strength. As Jews from around the Roman Empire came to the Temple in Jerusalem, they met the Apostles and followers of Jesus. There were many converts. Soon these new Christians were converting others to a belief in “the Way”, as Christianity was referred to in those times. Despite persecutions, new members continued to join.

One of the most important converts was Paul. He had been sent on a mission to persecute the Christians in Damascus, Syria. As described in the “Acts of the Apostles” (9:3-6), Paul had a vision of Jesus. This powerful experience turned Paul into the zealous apostle who crisscrossed the Mediterranean countries preaching and setting up Christian Communities, who was shipwrecked, thrown into jail, and finally killed for his faith.

Ironically, rather than being wiped out by persecutions, Christianity continued to grow and spread. Christian Communities became better organized under local bishops, or supervisors, and deacons assisted the bishops by looking after the temporal needs of the communities.

Worship:

Forms of Christian worship became more regularized too. Christians met on Sunday, the day of the Resurrection. Each community shared prayers and hymns, readings from the Letters of Paul or of one of the other Apostles and the celebration of the Last Supper, or the Breaking of the Bread. Often the Lord's Supper was followed by a fellowship meal in which the community strengthened its bonds of love and faith.

To become part of the Christian Community, candidates had to go through an extensive training period – that may extend up to one to two years in duration. This lengthy initiation was needed to help the candidates fully appreciate the Way, to weed out possible Roman spies, and to ensure that the candidates were fully willing to be part of a community that was always subjected to persecution. At the end of their training period, the candidates were baptized. Their previous lives were washed away; they put on a new way of life and were welcomed into the Community.

Gradually, Christians began to set aside certain days for celebrating the most important events of Jesus' life: the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and Pentecost. Much later, a date was set to remember Jesus' birth. Local communities established other special days to honour the memories of martyrs or members of their communities who had died.

The Word of God Recorded:

Like the believers of all great religions, the followers of Jesus collected writings by or about the founder of their religion. The earliest of the writings about Jesus that form the Christian Scriptures were letters by the Apostle Paul to various communities that he had started.

In approximately 51 AD, Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessaloniki, instructing them not to expect an immediate Second Coming of Christ. A few weeks later, Paul had to write to them again. Eventually, his letters to other communities were collected along with these first ones. The letters were copied and distributed throughout the congregations of believers in the Way. Paul's letters were read on Sundays as part of the liturgy. Other such letters were attributed to Peter, John, and James.

Eventually, the Christian Scriptures were completed when the four Gospels – literally meaning “good news” – were added to the Letters, or Epistles.

The first Gospel was written by Mark. Most likely, Mark completed his Gospel in the mid-sixties. Matthew, writing in the early seventies, recorded many of the same stories recorded by Mark, but Matthew wrote his Gospel with a more Jewish audience in mind. Luke, a companion of Paul in the later years, wrote the Third Gospel, which was clearly intended to help the Gentiles, or non-Jews, understand that Jesus had come to save everyone, regardless of race. The last of the Gospels is attributed to the Apostle John. It was finished about 100 AD. John's Gospel puts stress on the mystery of Jesus' being God made flesh.

The Christian Church and The Roman Empire:

The fate of the Christian Church was bound to the fate of the Roman Empire for many centuries. At first the persecution of Christians was common practice for Roman emperors. All this ended in 313 AD when Constantine the Great took over the reign of the Empire. Constantine believed that his most

important victory in battle was due to Jesus. Consequently, he legalized Christianity. When he built his “New Rome” in the eastern part of the Empire, he placed Christians in important positions of power. His successor made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. These emperors gave the Christian Church land for buildings and money for its support.

When disputes within the Christian Church arose, the emperors frequently interfered, calling councils to settle issues. Constantine had established the pattern for this when he called the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which condemned the teachings of Arius. At this council, the bishops wrote perhaps the most important statement of Christian belief: the Nicene Creed is recognized even today by most Christians.

As the centuries wore on, the structure of the Christian Church became much more definite, and missionaries spread belief in Jesus throughout Europe and Northern Africa, and into Russia and even China. Dioceses were established, headed by bishops. Besides deacons, who still took care of temporal affairs, priests were ordained to carry out sacramental functions. In addition, Christianity had hermits who lived in the deserts, praying and fasting. Christian monasteries were founded with well-defined rules of life that focused their members’ attention on God.

During its first ten centuries, the most critical challenge to Christianity came with the spread of Islam throughout the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Spain, and into Eastern Europe. Indeed, the Christian Church in the East lost huge territories and a large share of its membership. The Roman Empire, which had for centuries been divided into eastern and western parts, really ceased to exist. While there were still emperors of the East and the West, their power was challenged on all sides.

In addition to the division between the Eastern and the Western empires and the losses in the East to Islam, tensions grew between the Christian Church in the East and in the West. These tensions climaxed in the first major division of the Christian Church.

The Fracture of Christianity:

Christianity developed in different ways in the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. The Roman Catholic Church, in the west, split in the eleventh century from what is now the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the sixteenth century, it was fractured as a result of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Protestant reformers rebelled against the authority of the Pope of Rome and tried to correct and to change church practices of their time. They affirmed the Bible as the sole authority for Christian faith and life, salvation by faith alone by the grace of God, and the priesthood of all believers (the idea that every person is a priest to everyone else).

Four main factions grew out to the Reformation:

1) “Lutheranism” Referring to its founder “Martin Luther”. It is a major Protestant denomination which originated as a 16th century movement led by a German Augustinian monk and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg. His goal originally was to reform the Western Christian church, but because he was excommunicated with his followers by the Pope, the movement developed in a number of separated national and territorial churches, thus initiating the breakup of the organizational unity of Western Christendom. Of its main beliefs is “Justification by faith only”.

2) “Reformed & Presbyterian” Referring to a faction of “Protestantism” according to the teachings of “Calvin and Zwingli”, a breakaway faction of “Lutheranism” in the same century.

3) “Anglican” Referring to the “Church of England”.

4) “Anabaptist” A branch of “Zwinglianism” founded in Switzerland around 1520, the name meaning “one who baptizes again”; a reference to the Anabaptists’ practice of adult baptism, even of persons who had been baptized in infancy.

About two hundred years later, the Methodist movement which was begun by John and Charles Wesley, appeared as a reform movement within the Anglican Church. Methodists affirmed the authority of Scripture and tradition and emphasized the warm heart, Christian experience, and the enlightened mind, Christian learning. The Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches became the main churches on the American frontier. America has proven to be a haven for religious people of all persuasions and is home to Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christians as well as to new American religious groups such as the Disciples of Christ and the Pentecostals.

A Common Heritage and Beliefs:

In spite of differences among Christian religious groups, they all have certain beliefs and practices in common. All agree that Jesus Christ is the centre of the Christian faith, that God is Triune (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, and that the church is the people of God in Christ.

Human beings stand in need of salvation, and salvation is available through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church has many Sacraments, but two are generally accepted: Baptism and the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper.

The Church is the Body of Christ, God’s continuing presence in the world: the Holy Spirit works through the Church to accomplish God’s will. The church is called to be an instrument of God’s love, working in the world, as Jesus did, to serve the needy. The Church exists in every country in the world, and it sees as its mission nothing less than proclaiming the Gospel to every human being. There are more than 1.7 billion Christians in the world.

**SO MANY YEARS WITH THE PROBLEMS
OF PEOPLE. BY LATE HH POPE
SHENOUDA III**

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE: QUESTIONS PRT 1 – WEB LINK

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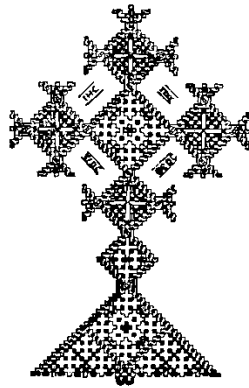
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Πατριάρχης Ἡμετέρας Ἐκκλησίας
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Τορόντο - Καναδά

Coptic Language Made Easy Self-Teaching Program



PART ONE

The Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
St. George and St. Rueiss Church
Toronto - Canada

Lesson One
ΠΙΣΟΥΙΤ ΝΩΩ

Coptic letters which are similar to English letters in shape and pronunciation:

COPTIC LETTERS	ENGLISH LETTERS	PRONUNCIATION
Ⲛ	N	N
Ⲕ	K	K
Ⲧ	T	T
Ⲙ	Z	Z
Ⲑ	O	O

All letters in Coptic word are to be pronounced, i.e., there is no silent letter as in English or French.

Read the following:

ⲚⲐ **ⲔⲐ** **ⲦⲐ** **ⲘⲐ**
ⲐⲚ **ⲐⲔ** **ⲐⲦ** **ⲐⲘ**

There are: Small letters

Capital letters which are usually similar in shape to the small letters but bigger in size.

The sign (*) indicates the starting point in writing the letters;

*Ⲛ *Ⲕ *Ⲧ *Ⲙ *Ⲑ

Memorize the following words:

ⲦⲐⲦ: hand

ⲐⲚ : also

ⲔⲐⲦ: circle

Exercise: Read the following syllables:

1. **ⲦⲐⲚ**
2. **ⲚⲐⲦ**
3. **ⲦⲐⲚⲔ**
4. **ⲔⲐⲚⲦ**
5. **ⲘⲐⲚⲦ**
6. **ⲔⲐⲦⲔ**

Lesson Two
Πρω ἠμαρ ἕνα

Coptic letters similar to English letters in shape and pronunciation with slight modification of shape :

Coptic	English	Pronunciation
*ⲁ	a	a (as in car)
*ⲓ	i	i (as in machine) or y (as in yet)
Ⲉ*	E	e (as in ten)
*ⲙ	M	m (as in man)

N.B. the sign (*) indicates the starting point of writing the letter.

& Read the following and notice the difference between

the letters (ⲓ , Ⲉ) in pronunciation

ⲙⲈ Ⲉⲙ
 ⲙⲓ ⲓⲙ
 ⲙⲁ ⲁⲙ

The Jinkim (˘) ΠΙϨΙΝΚΙⲙ

& It is a dot or a short line which is placed on the consonant.

It will be pronounced as if it is preceded by the letter (Ⲉ).

e.g. ⲥ˘ ⲛ˘ ⲕ˘ ⲙ˘ ⲗ˘
Pronunciation: et en ek em ez

when it is placed on a vowel, it will be pronounced separately.

Read the following :

1. **ⲕⲐ** **ⲕⲈ** **ⲕⲓ** **ⲕⲁ**
2. **ⲛⲐ** **ⲛⲈ** **ⲛⲓ** **ⲛⲁ**
3. **ⲮⲐ** **ⲮⲈ** **Ⲯⲓ** **Ⲯⲁ**
4. **ⲗⲐ** **ⲗⲈ** **ⲗⲓ** **ⲗⲁ**
5. **ⲙⲐ** **ⲙⲈ** **ⲙⲓ** **ⲙⲁ**

Reversing the letters we'll read:

1.	OK	EK	IK	AK
2.	ON	EN	IN	AN
3.	OT	ET	IT	AT
4.	OZ	EZ	IZ	AZ
5.	OY	EY	IY	AY

Exercise:

Read, write and memorize the following words :

YA	:	place
AN	:	not
NIY	:	who
NEY	:	and (used to join nouns)
ANOK	:	I
ANON	:	we
NI	:	Definite article (Plural feminine & masculine)
NE	:	Are (Plural feminine & masculine)
TE	:	Is (Singular, feminine)

- Write the following in Coptic : **Mom** - **Monica**

Lesson Three
Πρω ἡμᾶρ πομτ

Coptic letters similar to English in shape only

Coptic	English	Pronunciation
Ϣ* e.g. Ϣⲟ Ϣⲉ Ϣⲓ Ϣᲁ	C	S as in see
*Ϥ e.g. Ϥⲟ Ϥⲉ Ϥⲓ Ϥᲁ	P	R as in road
*Ϩ e.g. Ϩⲏ Ϩⲏ	H	ee as in feet
*Ϭ e.g. Ϭⲟ Ϭⲟ	W	O as in hope
*Ϣ	B	B or V (will be explained in lesson 5)
*Ϩ	X	K or Sh or Kh (will be explained in Lesson 7)

N.B. The sign (*****) indicates the starting point of writing the letter.

Read the following :

Ϩⲏ Ϩⲏ Ϭⲟ Ϭⲟ
ⲏϨ ⲏϨ ⲟϬ ⲟϬ

Notice the difference in pronunciation between the letters

(**ⲏ < Ϩ**), Letter (**ρ**) takes double the time of letter (**ⲏ**)

Also, notice the difference in pronunciation between the letters

(**ⲟ < Ϭ**), Letter (**ⲟ**) takes double the time of letter (**ⲟ**)

Then, we mention (**ⲟϤ**) pronounced (**ou**) as in tool.

Now we know 13 letters which can be divided into two groups :

• Consonants : **ⲏ, Ϣ, Ϥ, Ϩ, Ϭ, Ϣ, Ϩ**

• Vowels : **ⲟ, Ϣ, ⲏ, Ϩ, Ϩ, Ϭ**

Read the following :

1. **Να Κα Τα Ζα υα Γα Πα**
2. **Νε Κε Τε Ζε υε Γε Πε**
3. **Νι Κι Τι Ζι υι Γι Πι**
4. **Νη Κη Τη Ζη υη Γη Πη**
5. **Νο Κο Το Ζο υο Γο Πο**
6. **Νω Κω Τω Ζω υω Γω Πω**
7. **Νοϣ Κοϣ Τοϣ Ζοϣ υοϣ Γοϣ Ποϣ**

Reversing the order of the letters, we read :

1. **ΔΝ ΔΚ ΔΤ ΔΖ Δυ Δϙ Δρ**
2. **ΕΝ ΕΚ ΕΤ ΕΖ Ευ Εϙ Ερ**
3. **ΙΝ ΙΚ ΙΤ ΙΖ Ιυ Ιϙ Ιρ**
4. **ΗΝ ΗΚ ΗΤ ΗΖ Ηυ Ηϙ Ηρ**
5. **ΟΝ ΟΚ ΟΤ ΟΖ Ου Οϙ Ορ**
6. **ΩΝ ΩΚ ΩΤ ΩΖ Ωυ Ωϙ Ωρ**
7. **ΟϣΝ ΟϣΚ ΟϣΤ ΟϣΖ Οϣυ Οϣϙ Οϣρ**

Exercise :

1) Write the following names in Coptic :

Mina Amir Anthony Irene

2) Read, write and memorize the following words :

Ρο	:	door
Ρω	:	mouth
Ρι	:	room
Ρη	:	sun
Οϣ	:	What?
υοϣ	:	death
Γα	:	side
Γε	:	sixty
υητ	:	ten

3) Read, write and memorize the following words :

ⲙⲓϢⲓ	:	give birth
ⲣⲁⲛ	:	name
Ϣⲙⲟⲩ	:	bless
Ϣⲱⲙⲁ	:	body
ⲟⲩⲣⲟ	:	king
ⲣⲱⲙⲓ	:	man, human being

Lesson Four
Πρω Πιμαε Ψτον

A group of letters which are not similar to any English letters in shape or pronunciation.

Coptic Letter	Pronunciation
*λ	L
*π	P
*φ	F
*ψ	SH
*ϥ	F
*ϣ	KH
*ϥ	H

The sign (*) indicate the starting point of writing the letter.

Let us write and read these consonants joined to the previous vowels :

λα	πα	φα	ψα	ϥα	ϣα	ϥα
λε	πε	φε	ψε	ϥε	ϣε	ϥε
λι	πι	φι	ψι	ϥι	ϣι	ϥι
λη	πη	φη	ψη	ϥη	ϣη	ϥη
λο	πο	φο	ψο	ϥο	ϣο	ϥο
λω	πω	φω	ψω	ϥω	ϣω	ϥω
λον	πον	φον	ψον	ϥον	ϣον	ϥον

Reverse the order of the letters and read :

αλ	απ	αφ	αψ	αϥ	αϣ	αϥ
ελ	επ	εφ	εψ	εϥ	εϣ	εϥ
ιλ	ιπ	ιφ	ιψ	ιϥ	ιϣ	ιϥ
ηλ	ηπ	ηφ	ηψ	ηϥ	ηϣ	ηϥ

ⲟⲗ	ⲟⲡ	ⲟⲪ	ⲟⲩ	ⲟⲑ	ⲟⲛ	ⲟⲒ
ⲱⲗ	ⲱⲡ	ⲱⲪ	ⲱⲩ	ⲱⲑ	ⲱⲛ	ⲱⲒ
ⲟⲩⲗ	ⲟⲩⲡ	ⲟⲩⲪ	ⲟⲩⲩ	ⲟⲩⲑ	ⲟⲩⲛ	ⲟⲩⲒ

& Read, write and memorize the following :

ⲩⲁ	Until
ⲩⲉ	100
ⲩⲟ	1000
ⲱⲩ	Read
ⲡⲉ	Is (singular, masculine)
ⲡⲓ	The (definite article, singular, masculine)
Ⲓⲟ	Face
ⲒⲘⲧ	Heart
ⲒⲁⲎ	Indefinite article, plural
Ⲫⲉ	Heaven
ⲛⲉⲎ	In, With
ⲗⲁⲒ	Tongue
ⲁⲑ	Meat
ⲟⲩ	Indefinite article, singular : masculine or feminine

Exercise :

Read, write and memorize the following words :

- | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| 1. ⲩⲟⲙⲧ | : Three | 5. ⲙⲁⲡ | : Thirty |
| 2. Ⲓⲧⲟⲩ | : Four | 6. Ⲓⲙⲉ | : Forty |
| 3. ⲩⲁⲩⲑ | : Seven | 7. ⲛⲁⲙⲉ | : Eighty |
| 4. ⲩⲙⲘⲎ | : Eight | 8. ⲩⲘⲣⲓ | : Son |

Lesson Five

Πρω ἄλλα ἴτιον
The Letters of The Two Sounds

These are the letters which are pronounced in two ways :

***Β *λ θ* *Ϡ**

The sign (*****) indicates the starting point in writing the letter.

i. Letter Β

1 - Is pronounced (**V**) when it is followed by a vowel.

e.g. **Βα Βε Βι Βη Βο Βω Βοϣ**

Ex. Read, write and memorize the following words :

Βαλ : eye

Βωκ : servant

Ποβι : sin

2 - Is pronounced (**B**) when it is at the end of the word :

e.g. **Πηβ :** master

or if it is followed by a consonant :

e.g. **λωβω :** explanation / exposition.

or if it is in proper names (name of person, city ... etc.)

e.g. **Βασιλι :** Basil

∴ **B** + Vowel pronounced (**V**) except in proper names.

B + Consonant → pronounced → (**B**)

B at the end → pronounced → (**B**)

ii. Letter Δ :

1 - Is pronounced (**D**) in proper names :

e.g. ΔΙΝΑ : Dina

Read : Δα Δε Δι Δη Δο Δω Δοϣ

2 - Is pronounced (**TH**) ...as in " The "

e.g. Δωρον : present

Read : Δα Δε Δι Δη Δο Δω Δοϣ

iii. Letter Θ :

1 - Generally it is pronounced (**TH**) as in " thanks "

e.g. Θωκ : yours

εθεε : for the sake of

2 - Pronounced (**T**) when it is preceded by **C**, **ϣ**, **Ϛ**

e.g. Ϛθοι : smell

ϣθαι : shut , close

ματθεοc : Matthew

iv. Letter Χ :

1 -Is pronounced (**J**)as in " Joy " when it is followed by **ε**, **ι**, **η**

Read : Χε Χι Χη

e.g. Χε : because

Χηρ : to be examined

2 -Is pronounced (**G**) ...as in " go " in any other case.

Read : Χα Χο Χω Χοϣ

e.g. Χαχι : enemy

Χω	:	say
αχπ	:	watch (N)
Χου	:	power

EXERCISE:

Read, write and memorize the following words:

ΥΗΒ : finger	ΔΙΑΚΩΝ : deacon
ΞΗΒϸ : lamp	Δε : but , and
ΒΑΚΙ : city	ϸΘΕΡΤΕΡ : trembling
ΥΕΒΙ : fifty (50)	ΨΘΕΖ : street
ΨΒε : seventy (70)	ΜΑΤΘΙΑϸ : Matthias
ΧΩΜ : book	ΣΙΧΕΝ : on
ΧΩΒΙ : leaf	ΖΕΜΧ : vinegar
ΧΟΥΤ : twenty (20)	ΧΙΧ : hand

Lesson Six
Πρω ἀμαρτοσ

The Double Letters

These are the letters which are composed of the sound of two letters in pronunciation:

Coptic Letter	Components	Pronunciation (English)
*Ⲫ	ⲕⲐ	ex
*Ⲫⲥ	ⲡⲐ	eps
Ⲫ*	ⲧⲱ	ch
*ⲪⲒ	ⲧⲒ	ti

The sign (*) indicates the starting point in writing the letter.

Ⲫ is pronounced (ex).

Read and write the following syllables:

Ⲫⲁ	Ⲫⲉ	ⲪⲒ	ⲪⲒ	ⲪⲐ	Ⲫⲱ	Ⲫⲟⲩ
ⲁⲪ	ⲉⲪ	ⲒⲪ	ⲒⲪ	ⲐⲪ	ⲱⲪ	ⲟⲩⲪ

Read, write and memorize:

Ⲫⲟⲩⲣ: ring ⲁⲪⲒⲐⲐ: worthy

Ⲫⲥ is pronounced (eps)

Read and write the following syllables:

Ⲫⲥⲁ	Ⲫⲥⲉ	ⲪⲥⲒ	ⲪⲥⲒ	ⲪⲥⲐ	Ⲫⲥⲱ	Ⲫⲥⲟⲩ
ⲁⲪⲥ	ⲉⲪⲥ	ⲒⲪⲥ	ⲒⲪⲥ	ⲐⲪⲥ	ⲱⲪⲥ	ⲟⲩⲪⲥ

Read, Write and memorize :

ⲪⲒⲧ : Nine (9)

ⲪⲁⲒⲐⲐ : Psalm

Ϫ is pronounced (ch)

Read and write the following syllables :

Ϫⲁ	Ϫⲉ	Ϫⲓ	Ϫⲏ	Ϫⲟ	Ϫⲱ	Ϫⲟⲩ
ⲁϪ	ⲉϪ	ⲓϪ	ⲏϪ	ⲟϪ	ⲱϪ	ⲟⲩϪ

Read, write and memorize :

Ϫⲗⲏ : Scorpion

ϪⲓϪⲓ : To lift up, to exalt

ϪⲟⲓϪ : Lord

ⲧ is pronounced (Ti) :

Read and write the following syllables :

ⲧⲁ	ⲧⲉ	ⲧⲓ	ⲧⲏ	ⲧⲟ	ⲧⲱ	ⲧⲟⲩ
ⲁⲧ	ⲉⲧ	ⲓⲧ	ⲏⲧ	ⲟⲧ	ⲱⲧ	ⲟⲩⲧ

Read, write and memorize :

ⲧ : definite article, singular, feminine.

ⲧⲙⲓ : village

ⲏⲁⲗⲧ : to believe

Ϫⲓⲧ : to garden

Exercise :

Read, write and memorize the following words :

- 1. Ⲓⲁⲣⲗ : body
- 2. ⲧⲏⲟⲩ : now
- 3. ⲱⲁⲗⲓⲁ : song / hymn.
- 4. ⲧⲡⲓ : taste
- 5. ⲱⲱⲧ : salvation
- 6. ⲧⲗⲟ : to ask
- 7. Ϫⲱⲙ : garden
- 8. ⲧⲙⲁⲧ : good pleasure
- 9. Ϫⲁⲗ : a swallow
- 10. ⲗⲟⲙⲏ : ruler (to measure)
- 11. Ϫⲓ : to take
- 12. ⲁⲗⲓⲁ : worthy (fem./sing.)

Lesson Seven
Πρω ἕμαρ παρω

The letters of multiple sounds

*ϯ *ϫ *Ϥ

The sign (*) indicates the starting point in writing the letter.

Coptic Letter	Condition	Pronunciation	e.g.
ϯ	0ϯ	ou (as in soup)	ϩ0ϯ : death
	αϯ	v	αϯIC : to bring ϩαϯ : mother
	εϯ	v	εϯα : Eve ϩεϯI : to remember
	The Consonants +ϯ	ee (as in deep)	KϯTOC : whale
	The jinkim \ +ϯ	ey	ϯIOC : son (G)

N.B. We will indicate Greek origin words with the letter (G)

Coptic letter	Pronunciation	e.g.
ϫ	<p>all Coptic Words (K)</p> <p><u>Greek origin words</u> + (e, i, /, u) → (sh)</p> <p>+ any other letter → (Kh) (ϫ)</p>	<p>ϫω : put ϫΗΛΙ : Egypt ϫΡΩΛ : fire</p> <p>ϫερε : Hail ϫΙΩΝ : Ice ϫΗΡΑ : widow ΙϫΥΡΟϫ : mighty</p> <p>ϫΑΡΙϫ :</p> <p>grace ϫΟΡΟϫ: choir / chorus</p> <p>ϫΩΡΑ : district</p> <p>ΠΙϫΡΙϫΤΟϫ: The Christ</p>

Coptic Letter	Condition	Pronunciation	e.g
Ϩ	+ ε ι η ϣ	G (as in go)	Ϩε : Truly ϨΗ : Earth ⲁϨⲓⲐⲐ : Holy / Saint Ϩⲣⲙⲛⲁⲥⲓⲁ : physical exercise
	+ any other vowel i.e. ⲁ, Ⲑ, ⲱ or + consonant	Gh (ξ)	Ϩⲁⲣ : because ⲁϨⲟⲣⲁ : market ⲁϨⲱⲛ : war, strife ϨⲣⲁϥⲬ : book of scriptures
	+ Ϩ, ϫ, Ⲙ, Ϯ	N	ⲁϨϨⲉⲗⲟⲥ : angel ⲥⲁⲗⲡⲓϨϫ : trumpet ⲁⲛⲁϨⲕⲬ : necessity ⲉϨϫⲟⲥ : spear

EXERCISE :

Read, write and memorize the following words :

- | | | | |
|----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. ⲉϨⲱ | : I (G) | 6. Ϩⲛⲁⲣ | : two (2) |
| 2. ⲁⲣⲗⲬ | : hall , house | 7. ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲁⲣ | : ninety (90) |
| 3. ⲉⲣϫⲬ | : prayer (G) | 8. ϨⲓⲐⲣ | : five (5) |
| 4. ϫⲣϫⲬ | : soul | 9. ⲥⲟⲟⲣ | : six (6) |
| 5. Ϩⲁⲙⲟⲥ | : marriage | 10. ⲁϨⲓⲁ | : saint (fem.) |
| | | 11. Ϩⲉⲛⲟⲥ | : race |

Lesson Eight
Πρω ἄμαρ ῶμην
The Coptic Alphabet

Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Α / α αλφα a	Β / β βητα b, v	Γ / γ γαμμα g, gh, n	Δ / δ δελτα the, d
Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Ε / ε ει e	Ϛ / ϛ σοον so	Ζ / ζ ζητα z	Η / η ητα ie
Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Θ / θ θητα th	Ι / ι ιωτα i	Κ / κ καπα k	Λ / λ λαρλα L
Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Μ / μ μι m	Ν / ν νι n	Ξ / ξ ξι x	Ο / ο ο o
Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Π / π πι p	Ρ / ρ ρο r	ϸ / Ϲ σιμα s	Τ / τ ταρ t
Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Υ / υ επκυλον v, i	Φ / φ φι f	Χ / χ κι k, sh, kh	Ψ / ψ επσι ps
Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Ω / ω ω oo	Ϙ / ϙ ωαι sh	Ϡ / ϡ φα f	Ϣ / ϣ ϣαι kh
Coptic Letter Capital / Small Name Pronunciation	Ϫ / ϫ χορι h	Ϭ / ϭ χανχα g, j	Ϯ / ϯ ϣωια ch	ϰ / ϱ τι ti

Lesson Nine
Πρω μμαζ ψιτ
The vowels

These are seven letters : **α ε Η ι ο ϣ ω**

Short Vowels	Long Vowels	e.g
α	Η	ωηρι : son μικι : give birth
ε	ω	Ι + Vowel (= Y)
ο	οϣ	Ιομ : sea
	ϣ	Ιωτ : father
	(ϣ is considered a vowel in Greek words)	Ια : wash Ιε : or φαι : this ψαι : feast μει : to love ερφει : temple Ηι : house οι : become ωικ : bread εξωι : on me οϣι : one (single fem.) φηοϣι : heavens

Table (1)

Read, write and memorize the following words :

1. **οϣαι** : one (singular, masculine)
2. **φοοϣ** : day
3. **ερωοϣ** : on them

Vowels at the beginning of words

ⲁ	e.g. ⲁⲭⲠ : watch ⲁⲪⲐⲦ : chalice
ⲉ	ⲉⲙⲓ : knowledge
Ⲏ	ⲎⲣⲠ : wine
Ⲓ	Ⲓ : to come
Ⲯ	ⲮⲒⲐⲐ : son (G)
Ⲑ	ⲐⲎ : also
Ⲩ	ⲨⲠ : calculate / count
ⲐⲮ	ⲐⲮⲐⲨ : and (to join verbs) ⲐⲮⲣⲐ : king

Table (2)

Exercise:

Read and memorize the words given as examples in table (1) & table (2).

Practice writing each word a few times.

Lesson Ten
Πρω ἄμαρ μητ
The Pronunciation of Coptic
Letters in Greek words

Ϣ + Ϡ = Z	πλᾶσμα : creation
Ν + Ϩ = D	ἐντολὴ : commandment ἅεντιον : handkerchief
Ϩ + ᾶ, ο, ω, ᾷ = KH (خ) + Ϣ, Ι, Η, Ϯ = SH (ش)	Χάρισμα : grace (gift) Χερε : Hail
Ο + Ι = e	λοιπον : also
ᾶ + Ι = a	Και : and

Exercise (1)

Read and memorize the examples in the table.
 Practice writing each word a few times.

Few hints to differentiate Coptic words from Greek words

Coptic Words	Greek Words
1. contain one or more of the Demotic ¹ letters : Ϡ, ϣ, ϥ, ϧ, Ϩ, ϩ, ϫ	Demotic letters do not exist in Greek alphabet.
2. ----	Contain letters Ϯ, ᾶ
3. ----	Most of the time : end with the syllable : ᾶC, OC, HC, ON or letters : ᾶ or H
4. One word only contain letter (ϫ) : ᾶΝΖΗΒ : school	Contain letter ϫ

¹ The Egyptian original script (Hieroglyphic) was time consuming because it required elaborate drawings. A simplified version of the Hieroglyphic script, invented and used by the priests and authorities, was called the "Heratic" script. For the purpose of exchanging written texts among people, a more simplified version of the script -- called the Demotic script -- was derived and used during the intermediate Kingdom. At about 200 BC, Greek was understood in places like Alexandria due to the influence of the Greek culture and religion. In fact many Greek words entered the Egyptian (Coptic) language at that time. The Egyptians adopted a phonetic Greek alphabet for their language since about 200 BC. To suit their language, they incorporated some Demotic letters, that varied from 5 to 11 and finally settled for seven Demotic letters, forming a 32 alphabet for the Coptic language.

Exercise (2)

Read, write and memorize the following words :

1. ΛΟΓΟΣ : word
2. ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ : prophet
3. ΔΟΞΑ : glory
4. ΑΡΧΗ : chief , beginning.

Lesson Eleven

Πρω ἡμαρ μὴτ οὔαι

The Similar Coptic Sounds

Some Coptic letters give the same sound under certain conditions which are summarized in the following table :

Sound	Coptic letter & condition	Examples
1. V	B + vowel α / ε + ϣ	ba, be, b/, bi, bo, bw αϣ, εϣ
2. G as go	ϣ + ε, ι, η, ϣ j + a, o, w	ϣε, ϣι, ϣη, ϣϣ χα, χο, χω
3. N	ϣ ϣ + ϣ, κ, ζ, χ	e.g. αϣϣελοϥ, ϥαλπισϣ, ανανϣκη, εϣχοϥ
4. T	ϣ ϣ, ω, ϥ + θ	e.g. ϥθοι, ὠθαι, μαϣθεοϥ
5. F	ϣ ϣ	
6. D	Δ in proper nouns n + ϣ in Greek words	Δαυιδ : David ονϣωϥ : likewise
7. Z	ζ ϥ + μ in Greek words	κοϥμοϥ : world

Lesson Twelve

Πρωω ἕμαρ μητ ἕνατ

Syllables

The Coptic word may consist of one or more syllables.

Types of syllables:

1. Open syllable which ends with a vowel : e.g. **μα** : Place

2. Closed syllable which ends with a consonant :

e.g. **ωρ** : to read

A syllable is a part of a word which consist of :

1. A vowel
2. Two vowels compounded into one sound (**αι**).
3. Consonant and a vowel.
4. Consonant with jinkim (**π̣**).
5. Consonant and a compound sound (**ψαι**).
6. More than one consonant and a vowel (**ωοματ** : three {3}).

Dividing the word into syllables facilitates reading.

Examples :

- 1) Two syllable word : **βα|κι** : city
- 2) Three syllable word : **ωο|να|χοc** : monk
- 3) Four syllable word : **ὠ|ϕ|ρη|τ** : like, as
- 4) Five syllable word : **ετ|λο|ση|με|νοc** : blessed

Exercise: Divide the following words into syllables and write them:

1. μαρτυρος

6. θεος

2. ἄταυρος

7. μετμαρτυρος

3. εθοναβ

8. αρχη

4. πῆριςτος

9. αγγελος

5. ιεροναλμ

10. πεναγγελικτης

Lesson Thirteen

Πρω ἄμαρ μητ ρουτ

The Abbreviations

* Frequently used words are written in a short form.

* This form consists of the first and the last letters and a line above them.

* Sometimes a third letter is added in order to differentiate between two words (Maximum is four letters).

* The most common abbreviations are listed in the table in alphabetical order.

NB: (G) indicates the Greek origin words

Word	Abbreviation	Meaning
ΑΛΛΗΛΟΥΙΑ	Ἀλ	Alleluia
ΕΘΟΥΑΒ	εθϑ	Holy
Θεος (G)	Θς	God
Θεου (G)	Θϑ	God
Ιεροσολημ	Ιλμ	Jerusalem
Ιησους (G)	Ιης	Jesus
Ισραηλ	Ιςλ	Israel
Ιωαννης (G)	Ιωα	John
Κυριε (G)	Κε	The Lord
Κυριος (G)	Κς	The Lord
Κυριου (G)	Κϑ	The Lord
Κυριον (G)	Κν	The Lord
Κυριε ελεησον(G)	κε	Lord have Mercy
Μαρτυρος (G)	`	Martyr
Π̄σ̄οις	Πσ̄ς	The Lord
Πῑχ̄ρις̄τος (G)	Πχς	The Christ
Π̄νευμα (G)	Πνα	Spirit
σωτηρ (G)	σωρ	Savior
σταυρος (G)	σϑ	Cross
Υιος (G)	Υς	Son
Υιου (G)	Υϑ	Son
Φνοϑ†	φ†	God
Χριστος (G)	χς	Christ
Ψᾱε̄βολ	ψβλ	etc....
Ψηλ	ψλ	pray
Θ̄οις	θς	Lord

N.B.

- 1 There is no line in (ϥ†).
- 2 The short form can be used in writing words derived from the original word.

Example :

A- $\overline{\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha}$ → $\overline{\pi\nu\alpha}$: spirit
 → $\overline{\pi\nu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\nu}$: spiritual
 → $\overline{\pi\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\phi\omicron\rho\omicron\varsigma}$: clothed with the spirit

B- $\overline{\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma}$ → $\overline{\chi\varsigma}$: Christ
 $\overline{\mu\epsilon\tau\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma}$ → $\overline{\mu\epsilon\tau\chi\varsigma}$: Christianity

- 3 Some sentences which are frequently used are abbreviated to one word :

Example :

- A- $\overline{\Delta\rho\iota\pi}$: $\overline{\Delta\rho\iota\pi\rho\epsilon\varsigma\beta\epsilon\upsilon\iota\eta\iota}$ $\overline{\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}\rho\eta\iota}$ $\overline{\epsilon\chi\omega\eta}$
 Intercede on our behalf.
- B- $\overline{\tau\omega}$: $\overline{\tau\omega\beta\epsilon}$ $\overline{\mu\pi\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}\rho\eta\iota}$ $\overline{\epsilon\chi\omega\eta}$
 Ask the Lord on our behalf.
- C- $\overline{\eta\tau\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha}$: $\overline{\eta\tau\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha}$ $\overline{\eta\epsilon\eta\eta\omicron\beta\iota}$ $\overline{\eta\alpha\eta}$ $\overline{\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda}$
 To forgive our sins.

- 4 Numbers are also letter(s) with a line above it.

Exercise:

& Read and write the following sentences:

1. $\overline{\eta\epsilon\eta}$ $\overline{\phi\upsilon\alpha\eta}$ $\overline{\mu\grave{\epsilon}\phi\iota\omega\tau}$ $\overline{\eta\epsilon\mu}$
 $\overline{\eta\psi\eta\eta\iota}$ $\overline{\eta\epsilon\mu}$ $\overline{\pi\iota\pi\eta\alpha}$ $\overline{\epsilon\theta\omicron\upsilon\alpha\beta}$
 (In the name of the Father and the son and the Holly Spirit)
2. $\overline{\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon\eta\omicron\upsilon\omega\psi\tau}$ $\overline{\mu\pi\epsilon\eta\varsigma\omega\rho}$ (Let us worship our Saviour)
3. $\overline{\chi\epsilon\rho\epsilon}$ $\overline{\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\alpha\eta\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\pi\iota\omega\omicron\rho\pi}$ $\overline{\mu\grave{\epsilon}\mu}$
 (Hail to Stephen The first martyr)
4. $\overline{\Upsilon\varsigma}$ $\overline{\Theta\varsigma}$ $\overline{\eta\theta\omicron\kappa}$ (You are the Son of God)
5. $\overline{\theta\alpha\iota}$ $\overline{\tau\epsilon}$ $\overline{\iota\eta\eta\mu}$ $\overline{\epsilon\pi\omicron\lambda\iota\varsigma}$ $\overline{\mu\pi\epsilon\eta\eta\omicron\upsilon\tau}$
 (This is Jerusalem the city of our God)
6. $\overline{\omicron\upsilon\omega\eta\epsilon}$ $\overline{\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda}$ $\overline{\mu\pi\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\eta\tau\epsilon}$ $\overline{\eta\iota\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\alpha\lambda}$
 (Give thanks to the Lord of lords, Alleluia)

Lesson Fourteen
Πρω̅ μ̅μα̅λ̅ μη̅τ̅ ρ̅το̅ν

The Numbers

Table One From 1 - 9

		Masc.	Fem.
1	ⲁ̅	ⲟⲩⲁⲓ	ⲟⲩⲓ
2	Ⲃ̅	Ⲙ̅Ⲏⲁⲩ	Ⲙ̅Ⲏⲟⲩⲧ
3	Ⲅ̅	ⲱⲟⲙⲧ	ⲱⲟⲙⲧ
4	Ⲇ̅	ⲣ̅ⲧⲟⲩ	ⲣ̅ⲧⲉ
5	Ⲉ̅	ⲧ̅ⲓⲟⲩ	ⲧⲓⲉ
6	Ⲋ̅	ϥⲟⲟⲩ	ϥⲟ
7	Ⲍ̅	ⲱⲁⲱϥ	ⲱⲁⲱϥⲓ
8	Ⲏ̅	ⲱ̅ⲙⲎⲎ	ⲱ̅ⲙⲎⲎⲓ
9	Ⲑ̅	ⲱ̅ⲓⲧ	ⲱ̅ⲓⲧ

N.B. Nouns preceded by a number include the prefix
 (Ⲏ̅) or (ⲱ̅)

e.g. Four books : ⲣ̅ⲧⲟⲩ Ⲏ̅ϫⲟⲙ

Table Two : From 10 – 90

10	ī	ⲙⲏⲧ/ⲙⲏⲧ(ⲑ)
20	ī̅ⲕ	ϫⲟⲩⲧ
30	ī̅λ	ⲙⲁⲡ
40	ī̅ⲙ	ϩ̅ⲙⲉ
50	ī̅ⲛ	ⲧⲉⲃⲓ
60	ī̅ϯ	ϥⲉ
70	ī̅ⲟ	ϣ̅ⲃⲉ
80	ī̅ⲡ	ϩ̅ⲁⲙⲛⲉ
90	ī̅ϥ	ⲡⲓϥⲧⲁⲩ

Table Three : From 11 – 19

11	ī̅ⲁ	ⲙⲏⲧⲟⲩⲁⲓ
12	ī̅ⲃ	ⲙⲏⲧϥⲛⲁⲩ
13	ī̅ϣ	ⲙⲏⲧϣⲟⲙⲧ
14	ī̅ⲅ	ⲙⲏⲧϥⲧⲟⲩ
15	ī̅Ⲇ	ⲙⲏⲧⲧⲓⲟⲩ
16	ī̅ϥ	ⲙⲏⲧϥⲟⲟⲩ
17	ī̅ϫ	ⲙⲏⲧϣⲁⲩⲣ
18	ī̅ⲏ	ⲙⲏⲧϣ̅ⲙⲏⲛ
19	ī̅Ⲑ	ⲙⲏⲧϣⲓⲧ

Table Four: From 100 – 9000

100	ⲡ̅	ⲱⲈ
200	Ⲙ̅	ⲱⲈϸⲚⲁⲮ
300	Ⲯ̅	ⲱⲐⲙⲧⲱⲈ
400	Ⲯ̅	ϸⲓⲧⲐⲮⲱⲈ
500	Ⲭ̅	ϸⲓⲐⲮⲱⲈ
600	Ⲭ̅	ϸⲐⲐⲮⲱⲈ
700	Ⲯ̅	ⲱⲁⲱϥⲱⲈ
800	ⲱ̅	ϸⲙⲬⲚⲱⲈ
900	ⲱ̅	ⲮⲓⲧⲱⲈ
1000	ⲁ	ⲱⲐ
2000	ⲃ	ⲱⲐϸⲚⲁⲮ
3000	Ⲅ	ⲱⲐⲙⲧⲱⲐ
4000	ⲅ	ϸⲓⲧⲐⲮⲱⲐ
5000	Ⲇ	ϸⲓⲐⲮⲱⲐ
6000	ⲇ	ϸⲐⲐⲮⲱⲐ
7000	Ⲉ	ⲱⲁⲱϥⲱⲐ
8000	ⲉ	ϸⲙⲬⲚⲱⲐ
9000	Ⲋ	ⲮⲓⲧⲱⲐ
10,000		ⲉⲃⲁ
1,000,000		ⲱⲐⲚⲱⲐ

Days of The Week
 ⲚⲓⲈⲃⲐⲐ ⲚⲧⲈ ⲚⲓⲁⲚⲱⲁⲱϥ

- ⲚⲓⲐⲮⲓ : ⲧⲕⲮⲣⲓⲁⲕⲬ : Sunday
 ⲚⲓϸⲚⲁⲮ : Monday
 ⲚⲓⲱⲐⲙⲧ : Tuesday
 ⲚⲓϸⲓⲧⲐⲮ : Wednesday
 ⲚⲓϸⲓⲐⲮ : Thursday

Πικοοϣ :Friday
Πιωαϣϣ : **Πικαββατον** :Saturday

Order of numbers : Order numbers are preceded by "ααζ"

Πιζοϣι† : the first (M) **†ζοϣι†** : the first (F)
Πιωαζβ : the second (M) **†ιωαζβ†** : the second (F)
Πιωαζβ : the third (M) **†ιωαζβ†** : the third (F)

Selected Readings from the Holy Gospel and the Psalmody Book

(1) **δεν φραν υφιωτ** In the name of the Father, and the
νευ ηωηρι νευ Πιπνα εοϣ Son, and the Holy Spirit one
οϣνοϣ† νοϣωτ λμην. God ... Amen.

(2) **Αριτεν νεμηωα** Make us worthy to pray
ηϣοϣ δεν οϣωεπεμοϣ : thankfully:

(3) **Χε Πενιωτ ετ δεν νιφνοϣι :** μαρεϣτοϣβο ηϣε πεκραν : μαρεϣι
ηϣε τεκμετοϣρο : πετεζνακ μαρεϣωπι υφρη† δεν ιφε νευ ριϣεν
πικαζι : πενωικ ητε ραϣ† μηϣ ναν υφοοϣ : οϣοζ χα νηετερον ναν
εβολ υφρη† ρων ητενχω εβολ ηνηετε οϣον ηταν ερωϣ οϣοζ
υπερεντεν εδοϣν επιραϣμοϣ : αλλα ναζμεν εβολζα πιπετρωϣ : δεν
Πιϣριϣτοϣ Ιηϣοϣ Πενβοιϣ : ϣε θωκ τε ιμετοϣρο νευ ιϣομ νευ
πιωοϣ ωα ενεζ : Αμην .

Our Father, who art in heavens, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, through Christ Jesus our Lord, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever . Amen.

(4) **αρεωαν α :** ινιατϣ υμο: If (any) one contemplated you, O
ω ιπαρθενοϣ εθϣ : οϣοζ holy virgin, and mother of God.
υμαϣνοϣ†

(5) **Νιβιϣι ητε Φ† ετϣη δεν** The high praises of God are in
τοϣωβωβι αλ : ρανϣηϣ ηροβ their mouths Alleluia ... two edged
ετϣη δεν νοϣϣιϣ. swards are in their hands.

(6) **Ἰωβελ ὑπὸς ἐξ ῥηι εζων :** Ask the Lord on our behalf, O the
ὠ πιῖ ἵαλον ἵασιος : Σεδρακ 3 holy youths, Sedrach, Misach,
Μισακ Ἀβδνεατω : ἵτερχα Abdnego, that He may forgive us
νενοβι ναν ἐβολ. our sins.

(7) **Ἀριπ.. :** **πιῖ ἵζων** Intercede on our behalf O four
νασωματος : ἵλιτογρτος ἵψαε incorporeal beasts, the servants
ἵχρωμ : ἵτερχα **νενοβι ναν** burning with fire, ... that He may
ἐβολ. forgive us our sins.

(8) **Ἐ ταρ ἵεροον ἀκαμιὸ** In six day You created all the
ἵτκτῆσις τῆρε Παῶς Ἰης Πχς: creation My Lord Jesus Christ
ἀριβοῆοιν ἐροι. help me.

(9) **Ἐ ἵαρχη ἀστειλος σεῶε** Seven archangels standing,
ἐρατον εφερεγμνος : ὑπεῦθο praising before the Pantocrator
ὑπιπαντοκρατωρ : εγωεμωι serving the hidden mystery.
ὑμνστηριον ετηηπ

(10) **Χερε Ἰωαννης :** **πινιψ†** Hail to John the great forerunner
ὑπροδρομος : **χερε πιῖβ :** Hail to the twelve apostles.
ἵαποστολος.

(11) **Ἀριπ :** **νιογηβ** Intercede on our behalf O the
ἵτε τμεομηι : **πικῶ** priests of the truth, the 24
ὑπρεβγтерος : ἵτερχα presbyter ... that He may forgive
νενοβι ναν ἐβολ. us our sins.

(12) **Ἰῶ :** **νιαθλοφορος** Ask the Lord on our behalf O
ὑμαρτηρος : **πιμ εθογαν ἵτε** athletes martyrs, the 40 holy (ones)
σεβαστε : ἵτεεγ ... of Sebaste, that he forgive us our
sins.

(13) **Ἰῶ :** **πιῦθ ὑμαρτηρος** Ask ... on our behalf O 49 martyrs
νιβελλοι ἵτε ωιρητ ἵτεεγ ... the elders of Shihit that He may
forgive us our sin.

(14) **Ἐ ἵρομπι ἀρχοκον** Seven years, St. George completed
ἐβολ : ἵχε φνεογ **Σεωρσιος :** and the 70 lawless kings judged
ἐρεπι ὀ ἵογρο ἵανομος : εγ†εαπ him always.
ἐρογ ὑμηνη.

(15) **Ἰῶ :** **πιῖπ ἵταγ-** Ask...O 318 who gathered at
θων† : **ῥεν Νικεᾶ εεβε** Nicea for the sake of the faith, that
πινεε† : ἵτεεγ..... He ...

- (16) **Ⲡⲱ̅ : ⲡⲓⲣ̅ⲛ̅ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ** Ask...O 150 of Constantinople
ⲕⲟⲥⲧⲁⲛⲧⲓⲛⲟⲩⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ : ⲛⲉⲙ ⲡⲓⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ & the 200 of Ephesus, that He ..
ⲈⲢⲉⲥⲟⲥ : ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲓⲉⲛ̅
- (17) **ⲉⲁⲛⲁⲛⲱⲟ ⲛ̅ⲱⲟ : ⲛⲉⲙ** Thousands of thousands and ten
ⲉⲁⲛⲉ̀ⲃⲁ : ⲛ̅ⲉ̀ⲃⲁ : ⲛ̅ⲁⲣⲭⲏⲁⲥⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ : thousands of ten thousands
ⲛⲉⲙ ⲁⲥⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲑⲟⲩⲃⲁ. archangels and holy angels.
- (18) **ⲁⲣⲓⲡ̅ : ⲱ̅ ⲡⲓⲣ̅ⲙ̅ⲁ̅ ⲛ̅ⲱⲟ : ⲛⲉⲙ** Intercede on our behalf O 144
ⲡⲓⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲉⲛⲁⲥⲧⲉⲗⲓⲥⲧⲏⲥ thousands and the virgin
ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲓⲉⲛ̅ evangelist, that He may forgive us
our sins.
- (19) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲥ̅ⲃⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ** I am the door of the sheep
ⲛⲓⲉⲥⲱⲟⲩ
- (20) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲫ̅ⲟⲩⲱⲛⲓ** I am the light of the world
ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ
- (21) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲱⲓⲕ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ** I am the bread of (the) life
ⲓ̀ⲱⲛ̅ⲥ̅
- (22) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲙⲁⲛ̅ⲉ̀ⲥⲱⲟⲩ** I am the good shepherd
ⲉⲑⲏⲁⲛⲉⲓ
- (23) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲉⲙ** I am the resurrection and the life
ⲡⲓⲱⲛ̅ⲥ̅
- (24) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲙⲱⲓⲧ** I am the way, the truth and the life
ⲛⲉⲙ ⲧ̅ⲙⲉⲑⲙⲏⲓ ⲛⲉⲙ ⲡⲓⲱⲛ̅ⲥ̅
- (25) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲧ̅ⲃⲱ ⲛ̅ⲁ̀ⲗⲟⲗⲓ** I am the true vine
- (26) **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲁⲗⲫⲁ ⲛⲉⲙ** I am the alpha and the omega, the
ⲡⲓⲱ ⲧ̅ⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲛⲉⲙ ⲡⲓⲁⲱⲕ beginning and the end
- (27)
Ⲣⲛⲟⲩⲧ̅ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛ O God have mercy on us
Ⲣⲧ̅ ⲥⲱⲧⲉⲙ ⲉ̀ⲣⲟⲛ O God hear us
Ⲣⲧ̅ ⲥⲟⲙⲥ ⲉ̀ⲣⲟⲛ O God see us
Ⲣⲧ̅ ⲭⲟⲩⲱⲧ̅ ⲉ̀ⲣⲟⲛ O God look at us
Ⲣⲧ̅ ⲱⲉⲛⲉⲛⲧⲏⲧ̅ ⲩⲁⲣⲟⲛ O God have pity on us
ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲩⲁ ⲡⲉⲕⲗⲁⲟⲥ We are your people
ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲩⲁ ⲡⲉⲕⲓⲧ̅ⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ We are your creation
ⲛⲁⲗⲙⲉⲛ ⲉ̀ⲃⲟⲗ ⲩⲉⲛ ⲛⲉⲛⲭⲁⲭⲓ Save us from our enemies
ⲛⲁⲗⲙⲉⲛ ⲉ̀ⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲁ ⲟⲩⲉ̀ⲃⲱⲛ Save us from famine

<p>ΔΝΟΝ ΣΑ ΝΕΚΕΒΙΑΙΚ ΥΙΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ ΝΘΟΚ ΔΗΝΑΖ† ΕΡΟΚ ΧΕ ΑΚΙ ΑΚΩ† ΜΜΟΝ ΧΕΜ ΠΕΝΩΙΝΙ ΣΕΝ ΠΕΚΟΥΧΑΙ ΟΥΟΖ ΧΑ ΝΕΝΝΟΒΙ ΝΑΝ ΕΒΟΛ Κεριε ελεησον</p>	<p>We are your servants You are the son of God</p> <p>We believed in you For You came and saved us Visit us with Your salvation And forgive us our sins Lord have mercy</p>
<p>(28) Psalm 150 ΣΜΟΥ ΕΦ† ΣΕΝ ΝΙΕΘΩ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΤΑϞ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise God, in all His saints ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΣΕΝ ΠΙΤΑΧΡΟ ΝΤΕ ΤΕϞΧΟΥ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise Him, in the firmament of His power ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΞΡΗΙ ΖΙΧΕΝ ΤΕϞΜΕΤΧΩΡΙ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise Him, for His mighty acts... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΛΩΑΙ ΝΤΕ ΤΕϞΜΕΤΝΙΩ† ΔΛ..</p>	<p>Praise Him, according to the multitudes of His greatness Alleluia</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΣΕΝ ΟΥΨΜΗ ΝΣΑΛΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise Him, with the sound of the trumpet ... Alleluia</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΣΕΝ ΟΥΨΑΛΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΝΕΜ ΟΥΚΥΘΑΡΑ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise Him, with psaltery and harp ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΣΕΝ ΖΑΝΚΕΚΕΜ ΝΕΜ ΖΑΝΧΟΡΟΣ ΔΛ..</p>	<p>Praise Him, with timbrel and chorus ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΣΕΝ ΖΑΝΚΑΠ ΝΕΜ ΟΥΟΡΣΑΝΟΝ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise Him, with strings and organ ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΣΕΝ ΖΑΝΚΥΒΑΛΟΝ ΕΝΕΣΕΤΟΥΨΜΗ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise Him, with pleasant- sounding cymbals ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΣΕΝ ΖΑΝΚΥΒΑΛΟΝ ΝΤΕ ΟΥΕΨΛΗΛΟΥΨΙ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Praise Him, upon the cymbals of joy ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΝΙϞΙ ΝΙΒΕΝ ΜΑΡΟΥΨΜΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΦΡΑΝ ΜΠΩ ΠΕΝΝΟΥ† ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Let everything that has breath praise the Name of the Lord Our God ... Alleluia.</p>
<p>ΔΟΞΑ ΠΑΤΡΙ ΚΕ ΥΙΩ ΚΕ ΑΓΙΩ ΠΝΑΤΙ ΔΛ.</p>	<p>Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.</p>

Κε νυν κε ἀϊ κε ιςτοϋς Now, and forever, and to the age of
ἐὼνας τῶν ἐὼνων ἀμην ᾠλ. ages. Amen ... Alleluia.
Πιῶον φα Πεννοϋ† πε ᾠλ. Glory be to our God ... Alleluia.

Glossary

Α

ᾠ, οϋαι	: one	ἀνασκη	: necessity, compulsion (f)
ᾠ, α, ψο	: thousand	ἀνζηβ	: school (f)
α, ψοῆψο	: million	ἀνοκ	: I
ασαπη	: love, brotherly love	ἀνον	: we
ασσελοσ	: angel	ἀζια	: worthy (f)
ασια	: saint (f)	ἀζιοσ	: worthy (m)
ασιοσ	: saint (m)	αρχη, αρχι	: leader, beginning
ασορα	: market	αϋισ	: bring
ασων	: struggle / agony	αψλη	: courtyard, house
αλληλοϋια, ᾠλ	: alleluia	αφοτ	: cup, sacramental "chalice"
αλολι	: grape	αϥ	: meat
αν:	no, not, (Negative Particle)	αϥπ	: watch, hour

B

β, ὀναϋ	: two	Βασιλι	: Basil
βακι	: city	βω	: tree
βαλ	: eye	βωκ	: servant

Ϛ

Ϛ, ψομτ	: three	σενοσ	: kind, generation
σαμοσ	: marriage, wedding	ση	: earth, land, soil
σαρ	: conj. For, because	σραψη	: book, book of scripture
σε	: indeed	σϋνασια	: bodily sport

Δ

Δ̄ , ρ̄ϣⲟⲩ : four Δ̄ΙΝΑ : Dina (name)
Δε : particle But, now, moreover Δ̄ΟΞΑ : glory
ΔΙΑΚΩΝ : deacon Δ̄ΩΡΟΝ : gift , present

Ε

Ε̄ , ϣ̄ⲓⲟⲩ : five ε̄ρφει : temple, sanctuary
ε̄βολα : from , away from ε̄ρωϣ : on them
ε̄σϣοc : spear ε̄ϣ̄ⲓ : they come
ε̄σω : am ε̄ϣ̄Δ̄Ο̄Σ̄Η̄Μ̄Ε̄Ν̄Ο̄C : blessed
ε̄θε̄ε : about , concerning ε̄ϣ̄ϣ̄Η : prayer
ε̄θ̄ο̄ϣ̄ᾱβ̄ , ε̄θ̄ϣ̄ : Holy , pure , saint ε̄ϣ̄ω̄ⲓ : on me , upon me
ε̄μ̄ⲓ : v. know, n. knowledge, science

Ϛ

Ϛ̄ , ϣ̄ⲟⲟⲩ : six no other utilization in the words construction.

ϛ

ϛ̄ , ϣ̄ᾱϣ̄ϣ̄ : seven

Η

Η̄ , ϣ̄μ̄Η̄Η̄ : eight
Η̄ⲓ : house
Η̄ρ̄π̄ : wine

Θ

Θ̄ , ϣ̄ϣ̄ⲓⲧ : nine
θ̄β̄α : ten thousand
Θ̄ε̄ο̄c , Θ̄c̄ : God
Θ̄ε̄ο̄ϣ̄ , Θ̄ϣ̄ : God
θ̄ω̄κ : yours

I

Ἰ	: to come	Ισραηλ, Ἰσλ	: Israel
Ἰ, ἡντ	: ten	ἰσχυρος	: mighty
ια	: wash	ἰωαννης-ν, ἰωα	: John
ιε	: or	ιωι	: washed
ἱεροσαλημ, ἱλημ	: Jerusalem	ἰωσ	: speed
Ἰησοϋς, Ἰης	: Jesus	ιωτ	: father
ἰου	: sea		

K

Κ, χοντ, χωτ	: twenty	Κυριον Κν	: Lord
κε	: and	Κυριος Κς	: Lord
κοσμος	: world	Κυριον Κν	: Lord
κοτ	: circle	Κντος	: whale
Κυριε Κε	: Lord		

λ

λ, μαπ	: thirty	λοιπον	: henceforward, hereafter
λας	: tongue	λυχνια	: lamp stand
λεντιον	: handkerchief	λωβω	: explanation
λοσος	: word, logos		

μ

μ, εμε	: forty	μα, μετοναι	: eleven
μα	: place	μενι	: thought
μαπ	: thirty	μηνα	: Mina (name)
μαρτυρος, μ	: martyr	Ἰ, ἡντ, μετ	: ten
μασι	: calf	μικι	: gave birth
ματθεος	: Matthew	μοναχος	: monk
ματθιας	: Matthias	μον	: death
μαν	: mother	μορ	: filled
μει	: loved	μφρητ	: like, as

N

ⲛ , ⲧⲉβⲓ : fifty	ⲛⲓ : the
ⲛⲁⲗⲁ † : believed	ⲛⲓⲙ : who
ⲛⲉ : v. to be (plural)	ⲛⲟβⲓ : sin
ⲛⲉⲙ : and , with	ⲛⲟϣ † : God
ⲛⲏβ : Master , Mistress	ⲛ̀ⲧⲉ : of - prefix of conjunctive

Z

ⲗ , ϥⲉ : sixty	ⲗⲟϣⲣ : ring
ⲗⲟⲙⲏ : ruler	

O

ⲟ , ϣⲉ : seventy	ⲟϣ : what
ⲟⲓ : became	ⲟϣⲁⲓ : one
ⲟⲛ : also	ⲟϣ̀ⲓ : one (f)
ⲟⲛⲧⲱϥ : likewise	ⲟϣⲟⲗ : and (to be used with verbs)
ⲟϣ : interrogative pronoun	ⲟϣⲣⲟ : king

Π

ⲡ , ϩⲁⲙⲛⲉ : eighty	ⲡⲓϫⲣⲓϥⲧⲟϥ , ⲡⲓϫ̅ : Christ
ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ : Almighty	ⲡⲗⲁϥⲙⲁ : creation
ⲡⲉ : is	ⲡⲛⲉϣⲙⲁ , ⲡⲛⲁ : spirit
ⲡⲓ : the	ⲡⲣⲟϥⲏⲧⲏϥ : prophet
ⲡ , ⲣⲓϥⲧⲁϣ : ninety	ⲡⲃⲟⲓϥ , ⲡⲃ̅ : The Lord

P

ⲣ , ϣⲉ : hundred	ⲣⲓ : room
ⲣ , ϥⲉ : nine hundred	ⲣⲟ : door
ⲣⲁⲛ : name	ⲣⲱ : mouth

ρ̄ᾱϥ† : tomorrow ρ̄ω̄μ̄ι : man , human
ρ̄η : sun

ϸ

ϸ̄ , ϣ̄ε̄ϸ̄ⲛⲁⲩ : two hundred ϸ̄ι† : throw
ϸ̄ⲁ : side , part ϸ̄ⲙⲟⲩ : bless
ϸ̄ⲁⲗⲡⲓⲥⲩⲥ : trumpet ϸ̄ⲛⲁⲩ : two
ϸ̄ⲁⲗⲡⲓⲥⲩⲥⲟϸ : trumpet ϸⲟⲛ : brother
ϸ̄ⲁⲣⲥ : body , flesh ϸⲟⲟⲩ : six
ϸ̄ⲁⲥ̄ : teacher ϸⲧⲁⲩⲣⲟϸ , ϸ̄ϣ̄ : cross
ϸε : sixty ϸⲱⲙⲁ : body
ϸε : yes ϸⲱⲧⲏⲣ , ϸⲱⲣ : savior
ϸⲉⲣⲧⲉⲣ : to tremble ϸ̄ϣⲟⲥⲩⲟϸ : sponge
ϸⲉⲟⲓ : smell

Ϩ

Ϩ̄ , ϩ̄ϣ̄ε : three hundred Ϩ̄ιⲟⲩ : five
Ϩε : is (f) Ϩⲟⲩ : hand
Ϩεβ̄ι , Ϩ̄ : fifty Ϩⲟⲩϸ : chair
Ϩⲏβ̄ : finger

ϩ

ϩ̄ , ϩ̄ϣ̄ε : four hundred
ϩ̄ιⲟϸ , ϩ̄ϣ̄ : Son

ϫ

ϫ̄ , ε̄ϣ̄ε : five hundred ϫ̄ⲛⲟⲩ† : God
ϫ̄ⲁⲓ : this ϫ̄ⲟⲟⲩ : today
ϫ̄ε : heaven , sky ϫ̄ⲣⲏ : the sun
ϫ̄ⲏⲟⲩⲓ : heavens (Pl. of ϫ̄ε)

Ⲭ

Ⲭ̄ , Ⲭ̄ϣⲉ	: six hundred	Ⲭⲏⲣⲁ	: widow
Ⲭⲁⲣⲓϥ , Ⲭⲁⲣⲓϥⲙⲁ	: heavenly gift	Ⲭⲣⲓϥⲧⲟϥ , Ⲭⲥ	: Christ
Ⲭⲉⲣⲉ	: peace	Ⲭⲟⲣⲟϥ	: choir
Ⲭⲓⲱⲛ	: ice	Ⲭⲣⲱⲙ	: fire
Ⲭⲏⲙⲓ	: Egypt	Ⲭⲱ	: to place , put

Ⲯ

Ⲯ̄ , Ⲯ̄ϣⲉ	: seven hundred	Ⲯⲣⲧⲏⲛ	: soul
Ⲯⲁⲗⲓⲁ	: praise	Ⲯⲱⲧⲏⲣ	: the savior
Ⲯⲁⲗⲙⲟϥ	: psalm	Ⲯⲱⲧ	: salvation
Ⲯⲓⲧ	: nine		

Ⲟ

Ⲟ̄ , Ⲟ̄ϣⲉ	: eight hundred	Ⲟⲡ	: to count
Ⲟⲓⲕ	: bread	Ⲟϣ	: to read

ⲟ

ⲟ̄ , ⲟ̄ⲣ , ⲟ̄ϣⲉ	: nine hundred	ⲟ̇ⲑⲁⲙ	: to close
ⲟⲁ	: till (time)	ⲟ̇ⲑⲉⲗ	: street
ⲟⲁ ⲉ̀ⲃⲟⲗ , ⲟ̇ⲃⲗ	: till the end	ⲟ̇ⲗⲏⲗ	: to pray
ⲟⲁⲓ	: feast	ⲟ̇ⲙⲏⲛ	: eight hundred
ⲟⲁϣⲣ	: seven	ⲟⲟ	: thousand
ⲟ̇ⲃⲉ	: seventy	ⲟⲟⲙⲧ	: three
ⲟⲉ	: hundred	ⲟ̇ⲡⲏⲣ	: friend
ⲟⲏⲣⲓ	: son		

ϥ

ϥ̄ , ⲡⲓϥⲧⲁϥ	: ninety	ϥ̇ⲧⲟϥ	: four
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ⲃ

ⲛⲁ : on behalf of ⲛⲉⲛ : in
ⲛⲁⲙⲛⲉ : eighty ⲛⲁⲃⲉ : lamp

Ⲅ

Ⲅⲁⲛ : indefinite article for plural Ⲅⲙⲉ : forty
Ⲅⲉⲙⲁ : vinegar Ⲅⲟ : face
Ⲅⲛⲧ : heart Ⲅⲡⲙⲛⲟⲥ : hymn
Ⲅⲓⲗⲉⲛ : upon (preposition) Ⲅⲱⲥ : to sing (make music)

ⲅ

ⲅⲁⲗⲓ : enemy ⲅⲱⲧ , ⲅⲟⲩⲧ : twenty
ⲅⲉ : because ⲅⲱ : say
ⲅⲛⲡ : pillar ⲅⲱⲃⲓ : paper, leaf
ⲅⲓⲗ : arm ⲅⲱⲙ : book
ⲅⲟⲙ : power

Ⲇ

Ⲇⲁⲗ : swallow (small bird) Ⲇⲗⲛ : scorpion
Ⲇⲓ : take Ⲇⲟⲓⲥ : Lord
Ⲇⲓⲥⲓ : lift Ⲇⲱⲙ : garden

ⲇ

ⲇ : definite article (f) (s) ⲇⲛⲟⲩ : now
ⲇⲙⲁⲇ : good will ⲇⲡⲓ : taste
ⲇⲙⲓ : village ⲇⲗⲟ : asked

Answers

Lesson 3 - Exercise (1) - page 7

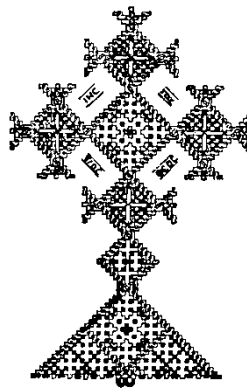
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|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. ⲙⲁⲣ ⲧⲩ ⲣⲟⲥ | 6. Ⲑⲉ ⲟⲥ |
| 2. ⲉ̇ ⲧⲁⲩ ⲣⲟⲥ | 7. ⲙⲉⲧ ⲙⲁⲣ ⲧⲩ ⲣⲟⲥ |
| 3. ⲉⲑ ⲟⲩ ⲁⲃ | 8. ⲁⲣ ϫⲏ |
| 4. ⲡⲓ ϫ̇ ⲣⲓⲥ ⲧⲟⲥ | 9. ⲁⲥ ⲥⲉ ⲗⲟⲥ |
| 5. Ⲓⲉ\|ⲣⲟⲩ\|ⲥⲁ\|ⲗⲏⲙ | 10. ⲡⲓ\|ⲉⲩ\|ⲁⲥ\|ⲥⲉ\|ⲗⲓⲥ\|ⲧⲏⲥ |

Pima Mpatriar, /c Nremn>/mi Npryodoxoc
} ekkb/cia>Nje
Pi& Gewrgioc nem Abba Tej i
Toronto - Kanada

Coptic Language Made Easy Self-Teaching Program



PART TWO

The Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
St. George and St. Rueiss Church
Toronto - Canada

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Lesson 1
Pihouit nws
Definite and Indefinite Articles
Nien, ai nɛwoun ouh natcwoun

(1) Indefinite Articles: "a"

Singular	Ou
Plural	han

Example: 1) The Offeratory

<p>Ouwou¹ nem² outaio³ : outaio nem ouwou: nɔ̄panagia⁴ tɛiac⁵ Vɪwt⁶ nem Pš/ri⁷ nem Pipneuma⁸ eyouab⁹. Ouhir/n/¹⁰ nem oukwt¹¹ ejɛn¹²]oi> mmauatc¹⁴ eyouab nɛayol ik/¹⁵ napoctol ik/¹⁶ nekktɔ̄/cia¹⁷ nɛe¹⁸ Vɲou] ¹⁹ : am/n.</p>	<p>Glory and honor, honor and glory, to the All-holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Peace and edification to the one, only, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of God. Amen.</p>
--	--

Word Analysis

	Coptic word	Meaning	Grammatical analysis
1	Ou wou	A Glory	Indefinite article, singular. Noun, masculine.
2	nem	And/with	Joins nouns.
3	Ou T aio	A Honor	Noun, masculine.
4	n panagia	Of All holy (G)	Short form of nɛe
5	tɛiac	Trinity (G)	
6	V* lwt	The Father	Definite article, masculine, singular. Noun.
7	P* S/ri	The Son	Definite article, masculine, singular.
8	Pi Pneuma	The Spirit	Definite article, masculine, singular.
9	Ey Owab	That Holy, pure, saint	Relative pronoun.
10	Ou Hir/n/	A Peace (G)	Indefinite article, singular. Noun, feminine.

11	Ou Kwt	A to build	Indefinite article, singular. Verb.
12	eɣen	To, on, onto	Preposition.
13	] oui>	The One	Definite article, feminine, singular. Feminine.
14	m̄auatc	Alone, single	Third person, adjective.
15	n Kayol /k/	Catholic, universal	Adjective article. Greek word.
16	n Apoc̄tol /k/	Apostolic	Adjective article. Greek word.
17	n Ekkl /cia	Church	Adjective article. Greek word.
18	n̄e	Of	
19	∇* Nou]	The God	Definite article, masculine, singular.

Example 2) Psalm 148- the forth canticle

Han ¹ qel siri ² nem han ³ paryenoc ³ aŋ ⁴ hanqel l oi ⁴ nem hanal woui ⁵	Young men and virgins alleluia, elders and boys.
--	---

Word analysis

1	han qel siri	Indefinite article, plural Young men
2	paryenoc	Virgins
3	aŋ ⁴	Alleluia, short form
4	qel l oi	Elders
5	al woui >	Boys, irregular plural

(2) Definite Articles: "The"

Singular masculine	Pi	p>	v*	the
Singular feminine	]	t>	y	the
Plural	Ni	nen		the

1- Singular Masculine

pi	p>	v*
the		

Example: Doxology of the Lady Virgin:

Kata ¹ v>r/] ² etafj oc ³ : n]e ⁴ Daid ⁵ qen ⁶ pi' ⁷ al moc ⁸ : j e ⁸ acohi e ⁹ atc ⁹ n]e ¹⁰]ourw ¹¹ : ca ou ¹² nam ¹² m ¹³ ok ¹³ pouro ¹⁴ .	As in the likeness that was said : by David in the Psalms : the queen stood : at Thine right hand O (the) King.
--	--

Word Analysis

#	Coptic Word	Meaning	Grammatical Analysis
1	kata	As	
2	v> r/]	The Likeness/manner	Definite article, singular, masc.
3	etafj oc	Which he said	
4	n]e		Sign of the subject
5	Daid	David	Pronoun
6	qen	In	Preposition
7	pi ' al moc	The Psalms	Definite article, singular, masc.
8	j e	For	
9	acohi e ⁹ atc	Stood	Simple past tense
10	n]e		Sign of the subject
11	]ourw	The Queen	Definite article, singular, fem.

12	Ca ouĩnam	Side At the right hand	
13	m̄ok	Thine	
14	p> ouro	The King	Definite article, singular, masc.

2- Singular Feminine

] | t> | y
the

Example:

The Theotokia of Sunday, Part (8)

} yeotokia m̄p̄ēoou n̄]kuriak/ (8)

<p><ere ne Maria : p̄taj ro n̄lwb piȳ/i : , ē^: piw̄ai nanam/i : , ē^ ȳmau m̄p̄imenrit : , ē^ t̄seri m̄p̄ouro David.</p> <p>, ē^]s̄veri n̄sol omwn : , ē^ p̄xīci n̄aidikeon : , ē^: p̄ouj ai n̄ʒ̄ca/ac : , ē^: p̄tal [o n̄eremiac.</p>	<p>Hail to you O Mary, the stability of Job the righteous, Hail..., the precious stone, Hail ..., the mother of the Beloved, Hail..., the daughter of King David.</p> <p>Hail ..., the friend of Solomon, Hail ...,the exaltness of the righteous, Hail..., the salvation of Isaiah, Hail...,The healing of Jeremiah.</p>
---	---

Word Analysis

1	<ere	Hail to	Greek
2	ne	You	second person, feminine, singular
3	Maria	Mary	
4	p> taj ro	The Stability	definite article, masculine, singular
5	n lwb	Of Job	
6	pi	The	definite article, masculine, singular

	yṁ/i	Righteous	
7	, e	Hail to	short form of <ere ne Maria
8	Pi wṁi	The Stone	definite article, masculine, singular
9	n Anam/i	Precious	adjective article
10	y mau	The Mother	Definite article, feminine, singular ---
11	m> pi menrit	Of The Beloved	--- definite article, masculine, singular ---
12	t> seri	The Daughter	definite article, feminine, singular noun
13	m> p> ouro	Of The King	-- definite article, masculine, singular noun
14	Dauid	David	proper name
15	]ṁ sveri	The Friend	definite article, feminine, singular noun
16	n Col omwn	Of Solomon	preposition proper name
17	p> [ici	The Exaltation	definite article, masculine, singular noun
18	n ni dikeon	Of The Righteous	preposition definite article, plural Greek
19	p> ouj ai	The Salvation	definite article, masculine, singular noun
20	n ?ča/æc	Of Isaiah	preposition proper name
21	p> tal [o	The Healing	definite article, masculine, singular noun
22	n leremiac.	Of Jeremiah	preposition proper name

3- Plural

Ni	nen
the	

Example 1) The Intercessions

Hiten ¹ ni ² p̄secbia ² n̄e]yeotokoc ³ eyouab Maria: P̄[oic ⁴ arih̄mot ⁵ nan ⁶ m̄pi, w ⁷ ebol n̄e ⁸ nennobi ⁹ .	Through the intercessions of the mother of God, St. Mary, O Lord, grant us the forgiveness of our sins.
---	--

Word Analysis

1	Hiten	Through	
2	ni	The	definite article, plural
	p̄secbia	Intercession	Greek
3	]yeotokoc	The Mother of God	definite article, feminine, singular Greek
4	P* [oic	The Lord	definite article, masculine, singular
5	arih̄mot	Please make favor	verb, imperative mode
6	nan	to us	first person, plural pronominal
7	m> pi , w ebol	-- the forgiveness	sign of the object definite article, masculine, singular noun
8	n̄e	Of	
9	nen nobi	Our Sin	first person, plural possessor

Example 2) The exposition of the First Canticle.

Varaw̄nem nefharma : auwmc epec/t : nens/ri m̄Pic̄ ^ auerj inior m̄v̄iom.	Pharoah and his chariots: sank down: the children of Israel: crossed the sea.
---	---

Word analysis

1	V araw	Pharoah	
2	nem	And	
3	nefharma	his chariots	
4	auwmc	Sank	Verb, simple past tense.
5	epec/t	Down	
6	nen s/ri	The Children	Definite article, plural.
7	m> picʔ ^	Of Israel	
8	auerj inior	Crossed	Verb, simple past tense.
9	m> v> iom	The Sea	Sign of the object. Definite article, singular, masculine.

Lesson 2
Piws m̄ah c̄au

Conjunctions
Ouoh - nem
"and"

(1) ouoh :

It means “and”. It is used to join verbs, sentences and adjectives as shown in the following examples:

(i) Joining verbs: The Forth canticle.

N̄yof ¹ afhonhen ² ouoh ³ aucwnt ⁴ aλ\: aftahwou ēs̄atou sa ēneh nem sa ēneh n̄e pieneh.	He commanded and they were created. Alleluia. He established them till ages of ages.
---	--

Word Analysis

1	n̄yof	He
2	afhonhen	Commanded (verb)
3	ouoh	And (conjunction article)
4	aucwnt	Created (verb)

(ii) Joining sentences:

Alleluia of Fasting (Ps 75:10 Septuagint & Coptic versions)

All /l ouia j e v̄meui> n̄ourwmi Efeouwnh nak ebol P% ¹ : ouoh ² p̄ewj p ³ n̄e oumeui> efeēsai nak. Niyucia n̄ip̄ocvora sopou ēok: aλ\	Alleluia, the thought of man confesses to thee (the Lord) and the rest of thought feast to thee. The offerings, the oblations accept them to thee. Alleluia.
--	--

Word analysis:

1	P%	The Lord	The end of a sentence.
2	ouoh	And	Conjunction article.
3	p̄ewj p	The rest (remaining)	The beginning of another sentence

(iii) Joining adjectives: The thanksgiving prayer.

Marensēph̄ot m̄p̄ireferpeynanef ¹ n̄n̄a/t ³ V̄ñou] m̄P̄en[oic ⁴ ouoh Pennou] ⁵ ouoh Pencwt/r ⁶ I/couc Pi, ꝑictoc.	n̄t̄otf ouoh ² V̄ñwt	Let us give thanks to the Good-Maker and the Merciful, the God, the Father of our Lord and our God and our Savior Jesus Christ.
---	---------------------------------------	---

Word analysis

1	m> pireferpeynanef	Sign of the object The good-maker	----- Adjective
2	Ouoh	And	Conjunction article
3	n̄n̄a/t	Merciful	Adjective
4	m̄P̄en[oic	Our Lord	Adjective
5	Pennou]	Our God	Adjective
6	Pencwt/r	Our savior	Adjective

(1) nem :

It means “and”. It is used to join nouns.

Example : The sign of the cross.

Qen V̄ran ¹ m̄V̄wt ² nem P̄s̄/ri ³ nem pip̄r̄euma ⁴ eyouab. Ounout] n̄ouwt. Am/n.	In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. One God. Amen.
---	---

Word Analysis

1	V̄* ran	The Name	Definite article, singular, masculine.
2	M* V̄* iwt	Of The Father	Short form of n̄t̄e Definite article, singular, masculine. Noun
3	P* s/ri	The Son	Definite article, singular, masculine. Noun
4	Pi p̄r̄euma	The Spirit	Definite article, singular, masculine. Noun

Lesson 3
 Piws m̄ah somt
Preposition (of)
 n̄e - n> m>

Examples:

1- Verses of the Cymbals:

<p>< ere]ekkb̄/cia: p̄i¹ n̄e² niaggel oc³: , ere]paryenoc: ēacmec Pencwt/r.</p>	<p>Hail to the church, the house of the angels, hail to the Virgin who gave birth to our Savior.</p>
--	--

1. p̄i : the
 /i : house
2. n̄e : of
3. ni : the
 aggel oc : angels

2- Verses of the Cymbals

<p>< ere lwann/c: pinis] m̄p̄odromoc: , ere pioui/b p̄uggen/c: n̄Emmanou/I .</p>	<p>Hail to John, the great forerunner, hail to the priest, the cousin of Emmanuel.</p>
---	--

- n> is a short form of n̄e
- Emmanou/I : Emmanuel

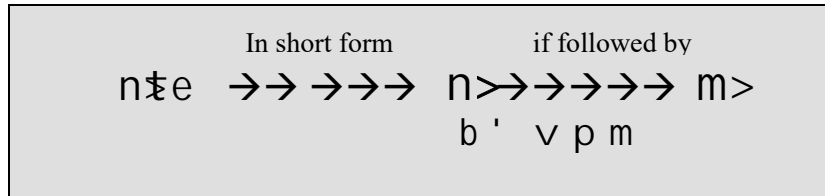
3- The introduction of the Glorification Hymns:

<p>Qen v̄an¹ m>V̄wt² nem P̄s/ri nem Pip̄neuma eyouab:] t̄riac eyouab non̄ooucic.</p>	<p>In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity of one essence.</p>
--	--

1. V̄an : the name
2. m> : of (short form of n̄e when followed by v̄)
 V̄wt : the Father

Note:

- n~~æ~~e can be abbreviated to `n
- n~~æ~~s replaced by m~~æ~~ if the word starts with one of the following letters:
b - ' - v - p - m



Lesson 4
 Piws m̄ah f̄ou
Demonstrative Adjectives
 Nic̄ot n̄wrem

I. <u>Connected</u> ettomf	II. <u>Disconnected</u> Etvorj f	
Pai	Vai	This, singular, masculine
Tai	Yai	This, singular, feminine
nai	Nai	These, plural, masc. & fem.

Exmaples:

1- The Morning Doxology

Qen tekmet, ꝥ/ctoc: akcob] nan m̄iej wrh: arihmot nan m̄paieħouu: eħoi n̄aynobi.	In Thy goodness, Thou prepared the night for us, grant us this day (and) we are without sin.
--	--

m̄paieħouu:

m>sign of the Object.

Pai: connected demonstrative adjective, singular, masculine.

eħouu: day, noun.

2- "This Censer"

Taisouri n̄oub n̄kayaroc etfai qa piarwmata : etqen nenj ij n̄Aarwn piou/b eftal e oucyoinoufi ep̄swi ej en pimanersowousi.	This censer of pure gold, which (is) bearing the aroma, that (is) in the hands of Aaron the priest offering incense upon the altar.
---	--

Taisouri:

Tai: this, connected demonstrative adjective, singular, feminine.

Souri: censer

3- The First Canticle

Vai pe panou]]na]wou naf: V] mpaiwt]na[acf.	This is my God, I will glorify Him, the God of my father, I will exalt Him.
---	--

Vai : this, disconnected demonstrative adjective, singular, masculine.

4- The Psalia of Sunday

Ete yai te Maria: etaciñi saron: n]ee]uyeria: newñion.	This is Mary who brought unto us the everlasting freedom.
---	--

Yai : this, disconnected demonstrative adjective, singular, feminine.

5- The conclusion of the Theotokias Adam

& Nai kiñi mpoumeui: w> Penn/b P, c^ ekeswpi qen tenm/]: ekws ebol ekj w mñoc. & Je tahir/n/ anak:]] mñoc nwten thir/n/ mpaiwt:], w mñoc nemwten.	These, make remembrance of them, O our Lord the Christ, be in our midst crying out (and) saying, 'For My peace, I give to you, the peace of My Father, I leave with you.'
--	--

Nai: these. Disconnected demonstrative adjective, plural.

Note:

The disconnected demonstrative adjectives are used for persons and objects. When the words are defined, the verb proceeds the noun. But when the noun is undefined, the verb follows the noun.

e.g. vai pe pikas.

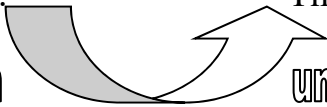
This is the pencil.

verb + defined noun

vai oukas pe.

This a pencil is.

undefined noun + verb



Lesson 5
 Piws m̄ah t̄iəu
Imperative Mode
 Pir/] m̄p̄ihwn

Imperative Mode Pir/] m̄p̄ihwn Takes one of the following forms: The verb in the infinitive form. a➔ the verb. ma+ the verb. The irregularr verbs.
Negative Imperative Mode pihwn n̄j>wl m̄p̄er + the verb

1- The verb in the infinitive is used for singular and plural.

Example: A prayer from the vespers.

V] nai nan: yes ounai ēson: senh/t qaron: cwten ēson: c̄m̄ou eron: āseh ēson: aribo/yin ēson: w̄bi m̄pekj wnt ebol haron: j empensini qen pekouj ai: ouoh , a nennobi nan ebol .	God have mercy on us, settle Thy mercy on us, have compassion on us, hear us, bless us, guard us, help us, lift Thy anger away from us, care for us by Thy salvation and forgive us our sins.
--	--

Word Analysis

1.	nai	have mercy, pity – verb, imperative mode.
2.	yes	appoint, lay out – verb, imperative mode.
3.	Senh/t	pity have compassion – verb, imperative mode.
4.	cwtem	hear – verb, imperative mode.
5.	c̄m̄ou	bless – verb, imperative mode.
6.	āseh	keep – verb, imperative mode.
7.	aribo/yin	help – verb, imperative mode.
8.	w̄bi	lift – verb, imperative mode.
9.	j empensini	care for, concern – verb, imperative mode.
10	, a	put – verb, imperative mode.

To change these verbs to the negative form add the prefix *mper* to the verb.

Example: The Doxology of Fasting (1)

<p>&]twbh mæok w>Pa[oic I/ĉ^ <i>mper</i>ercohi mæoi qen pekj wnt: oude on qen pekmbon: <i>mper</i>]cbw ntametaæemi. & Eybe vai]twbh mæok: P[oic V] Pacwt/r: <i>mper</i>iæi nõuhap nem/i: anok qa pij wb næfernobi.</p>	<p>&I ask thee O my Lord Jesus, do not rebuke me by Thy anger, neither (also) by Thy Wrath, do (not) Thou discipline (lit. teach) my ignorance. &For this I ask thee, the Lord God my Savior, do not judge me, I the weak sinner.</p>
--	--

1.	<i>mper</i> cohi:	do not rebuke, reproof	verb, negative imperative mode
2.	<i>mper</i>]cbw	do not teach, discipline	verb, negative imperative mode
3.	<i>mper</i> iæi:	do not make	verb, negative imperative mode

2- a + the verb

e.g. aj oc - anau - aouwn
 say look open

Example: The Theotokia of Sunday

<p>Hiten neceu, /: nem necpæcbia: <i>aouwn</i> nan P% ^ mæso næe]ekkb/cia.</p>	<p>Through her prayers and her intercessions, open to us O Lord, the door of the church.</p>
---	--

ouwn: to open, verb.

aouwn: open, verb in the imperative mode.

3- ma + the verb

Example: The Ending of Doxologies

<p><i>Ma]ho</i> mæ/etaremacf: Pencwt/r nagayoc: næfwþi næaiqici ebol haron: næefcemni nan næefhir/n/.</p>	<p>Ask Him, whom you borne, our Good Savior, to lift these troubles from us, to affirm His peace to us.</p>
--	---

Ma]ho: ask, verb in the imperative mode.

4- The Irregular verbs.

e.g.

amou:	Come (sing., masc.)	auic:	bring
am/:	Come (sing., Fem.)	moi:	give
amwini:	Come (plural)	moin/i:	give me

Examples:

1. The Psalia of Tuesday

Añou ¹ saron m̄oou: w>Penn/b P, ç^ ariouwini ēson: qen tekmeynou] et[oci.	Come to us today, O our Master the Christ and enlighten us with thy exalted divinity.
--	---

2. The verses of the cymbals

Añwini ² marenouwst n̄t̄t̄riac ēyû^ ete V̄wt nem P̄š/ri nem piP̄neuma ēyû^	Come let us worship the Holy Trinity, that is the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit.
--	---

3. The prayer for the sick

' u, / niben ethej hwj ouoh etouauamoni ej wou moi ³ nwou P% n̄ounai: moi ⁴ nwou noumton: moi ⁵ nwou nou, bob: moi ⁶ nwou nouhmot: moi ⁷ nwou n̄oubo/yia: moi ⁸ nwou n̄oucwt/ria: moi ⁹ nwou n̄oumetref, w ebol n̄t̄e nounobi nem n̄ouanomia.	All souls that are distressed and held, give them, Lord, mercy, give hem rest, give them coolness, give them grac, give them help, give them salvation, give them the forgiveness of their sins and their lawlessness.
---	--

1. amou: come , singular, masculine

2. amwini: come, plural

3,4,5,6,7,8 & 9 : moi: give

moi nwou: give them.

Lesson 6
 Piws m̄ah coou
Personal pronouns
 Nimeui>noʊn

Disconnected Personal Pronouns	Singular Masculine		Singular Feminine		Plural	
1 st Person	anok	I	anok	I	Anon	we
2 nd Person	nyok	You	nyo	you	nywten	you
3 rd Person	nyof	He	nyoc	she	nywou	they

I. Singular Masculine Disconnected Personal Pronouns

Examples

1- Exposition of Thursday

<p>J e w> Mw/ε/c w> Mw/ε/c: w> Mw/ε/c pe]mei m̄of: anok pe V] n̄e nekio]: m̄on ke ouai eb/l eʁoi.</p>	<p>O Moses O Moses, O Moses whom I love, I am the God of your father, there is no one (else) except Me.</p>
---	---

2- The Prayer of the Gospel

<p>J e nyok gar pe penwnq t/rou: nem penouj ai t/rou: nem tenhl epic t/rou: nem pental [o t/rou: nem tenanactacic t/ren. Ouoh nyok pe tenouwrp nak eʁswi: m̄piwou nem pitaio nem]p̄ockun/cic.</p>	<p>For thou art all our life, and all our salvation, and all our hope, and all our healing, and the resurrection of us all. And to thee we send up the glory, the honor and the worship.</p>
--	--

4- The verses of the cymbals

<p>I/ĉ^ P, ĉ^ neaf nem voou: nyof nyof pe nem sa ēeh: qen ouh/poctacic n̄uwt tenouwst m̄of ten]w̄ou naf.</p>	<p>Jesus Christ (is) yesterday and today, He He is and forever, in one substance we worship Him (and) glorify Him.</p>
---	--

II. Singular Feminine Disconnected Personal Pronouns

Examples

1- The Theotokia of Friday (7)

} paryenoc Mariam: ws ebol qen piervei: j e paacpacmoc anok : V] petemi erof.	The Virgin Mary, cries out from the temple, ‘For my greeting (of peace) God (only) knows it.
--	--

2- The hymn of The Bread of Life

Nyo hwi Maria arefai qen tenej i m̄pimanna n̄rou/ton etafi ebol qen V̄wt.	You also O Mary carried in your womb the manna of the mind ¹ that came from the Father.
--	--

3- The exposition of Saturday (2nd Shere)

J e nyoc gar pe pensousou: nem tenhel pic nem pentaj ro: qen t̄paroucia m̄Pennou]: Pen% I/ĉ^ P, ĉ^	For you are our pride, and our hope and our stability at the appearance of our God, our Lord Jesus Christ.
--	---

III. Plural Disconnected Personal Pronouns

Examples

1- The Theotokia of Sunday

Anon hwn tentwbh: eyrensasni eunai: hiten nip̄recbia n̄totf m̄pimairwmi.	We also ask to win mercy through your intercessions from (lit. the hand of) the Lover of mankind.
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¹ The intelligible or the comprehensible (Greek)

2- The Prayer of the Gospel

<p>Nŷwten de wəuniatou nætenbal je cenau: nem netenmasj je cecwtem. Marenerpəmsa nəwtem ouoh eisi nækeuaggl ion eŷŰ^: qen nitwbh nŷe n/eŷŰ^nŷak.</p>	<p>But, you, blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear. Let us (may) be worthy to hear and to do according to thy holy gospels through the prayer of thy Saints.</p>
---	---

3- The Second Doxology of fasting

<p>]n/ctia nem piŷt/I : nywou pe pəw] næn' u, /: pitoubo nem]meymi: nywou pe sauranaf mŷ].</p>	<p>Fasting and prayer, (they) are the salvation of our souls, the purity and the righteousness, they usually please God.</p>
--	--

Lesson 7
Piws m̄ah saf
The Sign of the Object
 Nim/ni m̄etouaf
 m> n> e>

1- m>

Examples:

1. The verses of the cymbals

Tenouwst m̄v̄wt nem Pš/ri nem Pipn̄ā^ eyū.^]t̄riac eyū.^ n̄emooucioc.	We worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity of one essence.
--	---

T en : we (subject)
 ouwst : worship (verb)
 m̄> : the sign of the object
 v̄wt : the father (object)

2. The Theotokia of Sunday- Part 7

Tej ol h m̄pitoubo: caqon nem cabol : w>]ck/n/ n̄kayaroc: v̄mans̄wpi n̄aidikeoc.	You are veiled with purity, from within and without, O the pure tabernacle: the dwelling of the righteous.
---	---

Tej ol h : you (subject)
 j ol h : veiled (verb)
 m̄> : sign of the object
 pitoubo : purity (object)

2- n>

Examples:

1. The Hymn of "The King of the Peace"

Pöuro næ]hir/n/: moi nan	O the King of (the) peace, give us
nætkhir/n/: cemni nan	Your peace, affirm to us Your
nætkhir/n/: , a nennobi nan ebol .	peace, forgive us our sins.

moi : give (verb, imperative mode)

n> the sign of the object

tekhir/n/ : Your peace (object)

2. The Exposition of Tuesday

J e areswpi nouyronoc:	You became a royal throne to
m̄bacil ikon: m̄v/etoufai m̄nof:	Him who is carried upon the
hij en ni, eroubim.	cherubim.

are : you (subjec)

swpi : became (verb, past tense)

n> the sign of the object

ouyϕonoc : a throne (object)

3- e>

e>is used with verbs of the senses and a few others. Examples of these verbs are listed below:

anau	to look	cqai	to write	al /i	to ride
swl em	to smell	mou]	to call	areh	To learn
[oh	to touch	nah]	to believe	c̄mou	to bless
]ho	to entreat	sini e	to shake hands	Sini m>	to ask
cwt em	to listen	sari	to hit	hwc	to praise
j oust	to wait				

Examples:

1. The Theotokia of Sunday – Part 18

Acnau eþiaggel oc: efhemci hij en piwai: efws ebol efj w mæoc: j e aftwnf f>/ mþai ma an.	She looked (at) the angel, sitting on the rock crying out (and) saying, 'For He is risen, He is not in this place.'
--	--

Ac : she (subject)
nau : looked (verb)
e> the sign of the object
þiaggel oc : the angel (object)

2. The Doxology of the Morning

Cwtem eþencm/: kata pekniš] nnai: nahmen P% Pennou]: kata nekmetsenh/t.	Listen to our voices according to Your great mercy (and) save us O Lord our God according to thy tendermercies.
---	--

Cwtem : hear (verb, imperative mode)
e> the sign of the object
þencm/ : our voice (object)

3. The Third Canticle

Cmou eþ% niv/oui> hwc eþof arihouo>[acf sa nieneh.	Bless the Lord O the heavens, praise Him, exalt Him unto the ages.
--	---

Cmou : bless (verb)
e> : the sign of the object
Pöc^ : the Lord (object)

Lesson 8
 Piws m̄mah sm̄/n
The Sign of the Subject
 Pim/ni n̄efīi (n̄)e



In the Coptic language as in any other language there are sentences that begin with a noun (nominal sentences) and others that begin with a verb (verbal sentences). In the verbal sentences the subject is preceded by the sign of the subject n̄e .

Examples:

1- The First Canticle (Ex 15:1)

Tote afhwc n̄e Mwuc/c nem nens/ri m̄Picra/l etai hwde n̄e Poc ouoh afj oc eyroj oc: j e marenhwc eP%: j e qen ouwø gar af[iwøu.	Then, sang Moses with the children of Israel this song to the Lord and said (saying), ‘let us sing to the Lord for with glory He is glorified.’
--	--

2- Exposition of the First Canticle

Eñafhwc qaj wou pe n̄e Mwuc/c pip̄ov/t/c san̄ef[itou eqoun hi psafe n̄ina.	Was singing in front of them, Moses the prophet, until he brought them into the desert of Sinai.
---	--

3- The Parallax of Fasting – verse 4

J e peniwt etqen niv/oui> mareftoubo n̄e pekran : mareci> n̄e tekmetouro : j e vwk pe piwøu sa ni eñeh.	Our Father who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy name, (let) come, Thy kingdom come, for Thine is the glory unto the ages.
--	---

To change a verbal sentence to a nominal sentence, remove n̄e and begin the sentence with the subject.

Changing Verbal sentences to Nominal sentences:

Examples:

Verbal Sentence	⇒	Nominal Sentence
1- Afhwc ɲɔ̃ e Mwuɛ/c. praised Moses.	⇒	Mwuɛ/c afhwc. Moses praised.
2- Ac[i ɲɔ̃ e Mariam mɔ̃ikemkem. took Mary the timbrel.	⇒	Mariam ac[i mɔ̃ikemkem. Mary took the timbrel.
3- au[ici ɲɔ̃ e nimwou. rose the waters.	⇒	Nimwou au[ici. the waters rose.

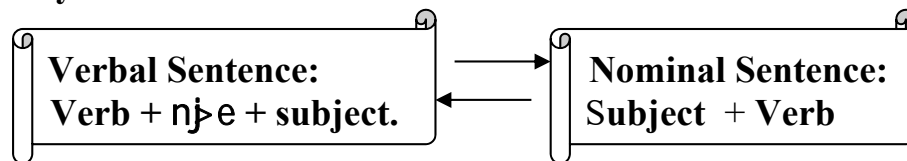
Likewise to change a nominal sentence into a verbal one, start the sentence with the verb and add the sign of the subject **ɲɔ̃**e before the subject.

Changing Nominal Sentences to Verbal Sentences:

Example:

Nominal Sentence	⇒	Verbal Sentence
I/ɛ^P, ɛ^aftwnf. Jesus Christ rose.	⇒	Aftwnf ɲɔ̃ e I/ɛ^P, ɛ^ Rose Jesus Christ.

Summary:



Lesson 9
 Piws m̄ah ' ĩt
The Negative
 at - ay - an

I. The article at or ay is joined to the word as a prefix to change it to negative, commonly used with nouns and adjectives.

Tako	corruption	attako	incorruption/incorruptible
m̄psa	deserve	atm̄psa	undeserving
qici	fatigue	atqici	without fatigue
carx	flesh	atcarx	without flesh
ka]	nderstanding	atka]	without understanding
c/ou	time	atc/ou	timeless
mou	death	aymou	immortal
mounk	ceasing	aymounk	without ceasing
nah]	belief/faith	aynah]	unbelief
Lwm	fade	ayl wm	unfading
nobi	sin	aynobi	without sin

Examples:

1- the Great Aspasmos:

<p>Ere niaggel oc obi ēatou nem niar, /aggel oc: niceravim na pió n̄enh: nem ni, eroubim eymeh mbal: euhwbc n̄rouho eybe eymetcaie n̄e pefnis] nwou: natseryeorin m̄nof ouoh natscaji m̄nof: euhwc qen oucm/ nouwt: euws ebol euj w m̄noc: je agioc agioc agioc kurioc cabawy: p̄/p/c ouranoc ke /g/ t/c agiac cou dox/c.</p>	<p>The angles stand before (him), and the archangels, the seraphim of the six wings, the cherubim full of eyes, cover their faces because of the splendor of the glory of His greatness, which cannot be looked at, and the unutterable, they praise with one voice, crying out and saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of hosts.' The heaven and the earth are full of Thine holy glory.</p>
--	---

2- The Exposition of Tuesday

Ouoh ni, eroubim ceouwst mæof axioc: nem niceravim: qen oumet atmouk .	And the Cherubim worship Him worthily, and the Seraphim without ceasing.
---	--

3- The Morning Doxology

Han, þom natl wm aft/tou nþe P% hij en p>oroc t/rf næe ni&.	Unfading crowns, the Lord gave unto the whole choir of the martyrs.
---	--

II. The article an is used to negate verbs or sentences, it follows the verb.

Examples:

- 1- The response of the commemoration of the saints- the Gregorian liturgy.

Bwl ebol , w ebol aricun, wrin nan V] nænparaptwma: n/etanaitou qen penouws nem n/etan aitou qen penouws an : n/etanaitou qen ouemi nem n/etanaitou qen oumet atemi : n/eth/b nem n/eyouwnh ebol : P% ekekau nan ebol .	Absolve, forgive us our transgressions, O God, Those which we did with our will, and those we did without our will, those we did with knowledge and those we did without knowledge, the hidden and the apparent, Lord forgive (them to) us.
---	--

2- The conclusion of the Theotokias Adam

J e , wous mæmou an mþirefernobi mæf/] næeftacyof: næecwnq nþe tef' ũ, /.	For thou do not want the death of the sinner as his return (and) that his soul lives.
---	---

3- The exposition of Monday.

Pal ac gar etj wj wb: ouoh næfernobi: nasþemj om an eæaj i: mþetaio Maria.	For my weak and sinful tongue will not be able to speak of your honor O Mary.
---	---

Lesson 10
 Piws m̄ah m̄t
Connected Pronouns
 Nimeui>ttomou

In Simple Present Tense

	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
Masc. Sing.	] ]	k>	f
Fem. Sing.	] ]	te	c
Plural	ten	teten	ce

e.g. rasi: to rejoice

] rasi	I rejoice	1 st person
krasi	you rejoice	2 nd person masculine
teras	you rejoice	2 nd person feminine
f̄ rasi	he rejoice	3 rd person masculine
c̄ rasi	she rejoice	3 rd person feminine
ten rasi	we rejoice	1 st person plural
teten rasi	you rejoice	2 nd person plural
cerasi	they rejoice	3 rd person plural

Examples:

1- The Theotokia of Sunday

Anon hwn ten twbh eyrensasni eunai hiten nep̄æcbia ntotf m̄p̄imairwmi.	We also ask to win mercy through your intercessions from the Lover of man kind.
--	---

2- The Third canticle

K ̄m̄arwout P% V] n̄e nenio]: k̄erhouo> c̄m̄arwout: k ̄erhouo>[ici sa nieneh. F ̄m̄arwout n̄je piran eȳu^nt̄e pekwou: f ̄erhouo> c̄m̄arwout: f ̄erhouo>[ici sa nieneh.	You are blessed O (the) Lord God of our fathers, You are praised and exalted unto the ages. Blessed is the holy name of Your glory, praised and exalted unto the ages.
---	---

3- The Doxology of the Heavenly

7 nar, / aggel oc: ce oñi eřatou euerhumnoc: mpemyo mpipantokratwr: eusemsi m̄uct/rion eth/p	Seven archangels stand (before) praising, before the Pantocrator, serving the hidden mystery.
---	---

Note that sometimes the disconnected pronoun is mentioned in the sentence to emphasize the meaning, as in example 1 mentioned above.

Simple Future Tense Pic/ou Eyn/ou

	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
Masc. Sing.	]na	, ña	fña
Fem. Sing.	]na	tena	cña
Plural	tenna	tetenna	cena

e.g. i> to come

]nai>	I will come	1 st person
, ñai>	You will come	2 nd person masc.
tenai>	You will come	2 nd person fem.
fñai>	He will come	3 rd person masc.
cñai>	She will come	3 rd person fem.
tennai>	We will come	1 st person plural
tetennai>	You will come	2 nd person plural
cenai	They will come	3 rd person plural

Examples:

1- The First Canticle

Vai pe Panou]]na]wou naf: V] mpaiwt]na [acf.	This is my God, I will glorify Him, the God of my father, I will exalt Him.
---	--

2- The psalia of Monday

F ñahwtp nje vř/: nem piioh nem pouc/ou: nyok de nyok pe: nekrompi mpaumonk.	The sun will sink and the moon, in their time, but thou thou art, and thine years will not end.
---	---

3- The Psalia of Saturday

T ennaqici an eñeh: tenn ak/n an encrou eřok: Pa% I/ĉ^P, ĉ^ Pacwř^ñagayoc.	We will not be weary, nor will we stop to bless thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ my Good Savior.
--	--

Lesson 11
 Piws m̄ah m̄t ouai
Simple Past Tense & Habitual Tense
 Pic/ou Etcini - Etsousou eʒ-en } kahc

Simple Past Tense

	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
Masc. Sing.	Ai	ak	af
Fem. Sing.	Ai	are	ac
Plural	An	areten	au

e.g. s̄b/l : to pray

ais̄b/l	I prayed	1 st person
aks̄b/l	You prayed	2 nd person masc.
ares̄b/l	You prayed	2 nd person fem.
afs̄b/l	He prayed	3 rd person masc.
acs̄b/l	She prayed	3 rd person fem.
ans̄b/l	We prayed	1 st person plural
aretens̄b/l	You prayed	2 nd person plural
ausb̄/l	They prayed	3 rd person plural

Examples:

1- The Psalia of Sunday

<p>Ainah] eybe vai: aicaj i qen ouj om: eybe pekni] n̄ai: P% n̄e nij om.</p> <p>bo/yin eʒoi Pa%: l/c^ pifsenh/t: eyri]wou n̄a%: tekmay n̄sel et.</p> <p>Ge gar āb/ywc: ac[ici emasw: n̄je tai paryenoc: eymeh n̄aio.</p> <p>Dauid afcaj i eyb/tc: j e aP%</p>	<p>I believed, thus I spoke with power about the greatness of Your mercy, O Lord of the powers.</p> <p>Help me, my Lord Jesus Christ the Comapssionate in order to glorify my lady, Your mother the bride.</p> <p>Because, truly, she is very exalted, this Virgin, who is full of honor.</p>
--	--

cwtp nŕiwn: aŕi>aŕswpi nŕ/tc: sanŕefcw] mmon.	David spoke about her, “The Lord chose Zion, came and dwelled in her, in order to save us.”
---	---

2- The hymn of The Bread of Life

Aremacf a[ne ywl eb: aŕ] nan mŕefcwma: nem pefcŕof ettai/out: anwnq sa eŕeh.	You gave birth without being defiled, He gave us His body and His honored blood, we lived unto ages.
---	--

3- The Theotokia of Sunday - Part 15

Aumokmek ebol : qen pouka] etsom: auerm/neuin mŕoc qen nigŕav/ eyŕ.^	They thought with their lofty understanding, they gave a sign of her with the holy scriptures.
--	--

Habitual Present Tense

	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
Masc. Sing.	sai	sak	saf
Fem. Sing.	sai	sare	sac
Plural	san	sareten	sau

e.g. nehci : to get up

sainehci	I usually get up	1 st person
saknehci	You usually get up	2 nd person masc.
sarenehci	You usually get up	2 nd person fem.
safnehci	He usually gets up	3 rd person masc.
sacnehci	She usually gets up	3 rd person fem.
sannehci	We usually get up	1 st person plural
saretennehci	You usually get up	2 nd person plural
saunehci	They usually get up	3 rd person plural

Examples:

1- the Psalia of Friday

<p>Safounof nje penh/t: safyel /l nje penl ac: eswp an^sanermel etan: epiran nøuj ai næe Pen% I/ĉ^P, ĉ^</p>	<p>Our heart usually rejoices, our tongue usually jubilates as we usually recite the name of salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.</p>
--	---

2- The Psalia of Monday

<p>Sau[ak nøoutenh nje ni, eroubim: ^sauhwc ^sau]wøu: mPa% I/ĉ^</p>	<p>The cherubim usually clap their wings, usually praise, usually glorify my Lord Jesus.</p>
--	--

Lesson 12
 Piws m̄ah m̄t c̄au
Possessive Adjectives
 Pic̄ot namoni

The Possessive Adjectives are always connected to the noun.

Examples:

Possessed Noun (singular masculine)		Possessed Noun (singular feminine)	
π̄aiwt	<u>my</u> father	τ̄amau	<u>my</u> mother
π̄ek̄iwt	<u>your</u> father (m.)	τ̄ek̄mau	<u>your</u> mother
π̄eiwt	<u>your</u> father (f.)	τ̄emau	<u>your</u> mother
π̄eq̄iwt	<u>his</u> father	τ̄q̄mau	<u>his</u> mother
π̄eciwt	<u>her</u> father	τ̄ec̄mau	<u>her</u> mother
π̄eniwt	<u>our</u> father	τ̄enmau	<u>our</u> mother
π̄ōviwt	<u>their</u> father	τ̄ōvmau	<u>their</u> mother

Possessed Noun (plural masculine & feminine)	
π̄aj wm	<u>my</u> books
π̄ek̄j wm	<u>your</u> books (m.)
π̄ej wm	<u>your</u> books (f.)
π̄eq̄j wm	<u>his</u> books
π̄ec̄j wm	<u>her</u> books
π̄enj wm	<u>our</u> books
π̄etenj wm	<u>your</u> books (pl.)
π̄ōvj wm	<u>their</u> books

Possessed Noun (singular masculine)

Examples:

1- The introduction of the midnight prayer

Mare pa]ho qwnt m̄pek̄myo P%: maka] n/i kata pek̄caj i: doxa ci vil anyrwpe.	Let my entreaty come near Your presence O Lord, make me understand according to your word, glory to You Lover of Mankind.
--	--

2- The introduction of the midnight prayer

Efeis> eqoun mpekmyo nje paaxiwma: kata pekcaj i matanqoi: doxa ci vil anyrwpe.	Let my petition (lit. reputation) come into Your presence, according to Your word make me live, glory to You Lover of Mankind.
---	--

3- The response of the psalm in the feasts & the fast of the Virgin- (Psalm 44:10 CV²)

Cwtem taseri anau rek pemasj : ari pws mpeel aoc nem pzi t/pf nte peiwt: je apiouro erepiyimin epecai: je ou/i nyof pe pe%: a↑^	Hear O my daughter, look and (bend) give ear, forget your people and all the house of your father, for the king desire your beauty, for He alone is your Lord. Alleluia.
---	--

4- The Theotokia of Sunday - Part 7

Afvwnh mpenh/bi: nem penhoj hej t/rf: eourasi nh/t: nem ouyel /l epæ/rf.	He turned our grief and all our distress to joy of heart and complete rejoicing.
--	--

5- The hymn of the Three Holy Youths

Tenoueh newk qen penh/t t/rf: tenerho] qatekh/: ouoh tenkw] nea pekho: V] mper]sipi nan.	We follow after thee with all our heart, we fear thee, and we seek thine face, O God do not (lit. shame us) put us to shame.
---	--

Possessed Noun (singular feminine)

Examples:

1- The introduction of the midnight hymns

Marecswpi nje tekj ij evnahmet: je nekentol / aierepiyumin ewou: doxa ci vil anyrwpe.	Let thy hand deliver me, for I desired thy commandments, glory to thee (O) Lover of Mankind.
--	--

² Coptic Version

<p>Ai[isswou mpekouj ai P%: ouoh peknomoc pe tamel et/: doxa ci vil anyſwpe.</p>	<p>I longed to thy salvation O Lord, and my (lit. my study) recitation is thy law, glory to thee (O) Lover of Mankind.</p>
<p>Ecewnq nje ta' u, /: ouoh ececrou eſok: ouoh nekhap eueerbo/yin eſoi: doxa ci vil anyſwpe.</p>	<p>My soul lives, and blesses thee, and thy judgments help me, glory to thee (O) Lover of Mankind.</p>

2- The vespers Doxology of the Virgin

<p>Col omwn mou] eſoc: qen pij w næe nij w: j e tacwni ouoh tasveri: tapol ic mæ/i ll ʌm.ʌ</p>	<p>Solomon called her, in the Song of Songs, “my sister and my friend, my true city Jerusalem.”</p>
--	---

3- The conclusion of the Catholic Epistles

<p>Nacæ/ou mpermenre pikocmoc oude n/etsop qen pikocmoc. Pikocmoc nacini nem tefepiyumia: v/ de etiſi mæðus mæ] fæaswpi sa eæeh am/n.</p>	<p>My brothers, do not love the world nor (the things) which are in the world. The world will pass with its desires but he who does the will of God will remain (lit. be) unto (the) ages. Amen.</p>
--	--

4- The hymn of "This Virgin" (last verse) – A tai Paryenoc:

<p>Aripæcebeuin eæſ/i eþwn: w ten% næ/b t/ren]yeotokoc: Maria yæau næ/æ^P, æ^næef, a nennobi nan ehol .</p>	<p>Intercede on our behalf, O our mistress the lady of us all, the mother of God, Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, in order to forgive our sins.</p>
---	--

Pi' al moc R ³ va Daud	Psalm 102 ³ A Psalm of David
<p>1. Ta' u, / crou eP% : n/etcaqoun mmoi t/rou crou epefran eyouab : ta' u, / crou eP% : ouoh mpererpwbs nrefcrou t/rou.</p> <p>2. V/et, w nnaomia> t/rou ne ehol : v/ettal [o nneswni t/rou: v/etcw] mpewnq ehol qen p³ako.</p> <p>3. V/et], bow ej>w qen hannai nem hanmetsenh/t.</p> <p>4. V/ettio> nteepiyimia> qen hanagayon nje temetaou m³/] nya ouaqwm.</p> <p>5. V/etisi nhanmetna/t pe Poc[^] nem ouhap nouon niben et [ounj>onc.</p> <p>6. Afouwnh nrefmwit e³wue/c: nem pefouws nrens/ri m³lcra/b.</p> <p>7. Ourefsenh/t ouoh nna/t pe Poc[^] ourefwounh/t pe ouoh nase pefnai.</p> <p>8. Fhaj wnt an saqae> oude nrefm³on saeneh.</p> <p>9. Etafisi nan an kata nennobi: oude kata nenaomia> anon af]sebiw>nan.</p> <p>0. Alla kata p³ici n³ve ehol ha p³kahi: aPoc[^] taj re pefnai e³/i ej>en ouon niben eterho] qatefh/.</p> <p>01 Katav³/] ete nimansai ou/ou ehol naimanhwtp afyrououei m³on nje nenaomia></p>	<p>Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his praises:</p> <p>who forgives all thy transgressions, who heals all thy diseases; who redeems thy life from corruption;</p> <p>who crowns thee with mercy and compassion; who satisfies thy desire with good things: so that thy youth shall be renewed like that of the eagle.</p> <p>The Lord excutes mercy and judgment for all that are injured.</p> <p>He made known his ways to Moses, his will to the children of Israel.</p> <p>The Lord is compassionate and pitiful, long suffering, and full of mercy.</p> <p>He will not be always angry; neither will he be wrathful for ever.</p> <p>He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor recompensed us according to our iniquities.</p> <p>For as the heaven is high above the earth, the Lord has so increased his mercy toward them that fear him.</p> <p>As far as the east from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.</p>

³Septuagint.

<p>02. Ouoh mʌʃ/] nœiwt efsensh/t qa nefs/ri: pair/] afsensh/t nʃe Poč^ qa n/eterho] qatefh/: je nyof afcouen penyamio></p> <p>03. Aʀivœui> Poč^ je aʀon oukahi: vʌwmi mʌʃ/] nœucim qen nefēhoou: ouoh mʌʃ/] nœuhʃ/ri nʃe tkoï pair/] safswoui></p> <p>04. Je oupœuma afsancini nq/tf nʌʃwpi oude nʌfcouen pefma je.</p> <p>05. Vnai de nyof mPoč^ icj en pœneh sa eneh eʃen n/eterho] qatefh/: ouoh tefmeym/i eʃen nens/ri nʃ/ri nʌ/etæseh eʃefdiay/k/: nem n/etiʃi mʌœui>nʌfentol / epaitou.</p> <p>06. Poč^afcob] mʌfeyʃonoc qen tʌe: ouoh tefmetouro cœinʌ/b eouon niben.</p> <p>07. Cœou e> Poč^ nefaggel oc t/rou: n/etjor qen toujom: etiʃi mʌfcaji e> pʃincwtem eʃœm/ nʃe nefcaj i.</p> <p>08. Cœou e> Poč^ nefdeunamic t/rou: n/etvwsen nʃaf etiʃi mʌfouws.</p> <p>19. Cœou e> Poč^ nefhb/oui> t/rou: nʃʃ/i qen mai niben nʃe tefj om: ta" u, / cœou ePoč^</p>	<p>As a father pities his children, the Lord pities them that fear him. For he knows our frame: remember that we are dust.</p> <p>As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so shall he flourish.</p> <p>For the wind passes over it, and it shall not be; and it shall know its place no more.</p> <p>But the mercy of the Lord is from generation to generation upon them that fear him, and his righteousness to children's children; to them that keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.</p> <p>The Lord has prepared his throne in the heaven; and his kingdom rules over all.</p> <p>Bless the Lord, all ye his angels, mighty in strength, who perform his bidding, ready to hearken to the voice of his words.</p> <p>Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his will.</p> <p>Bless the Lord, all his works, in every place of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.</p>
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~~APOLOGETIC CHRISTIANITY / THEOLOGY~~

WHY DID GOD ALLOW ALL THOSE WARS AND DEATHS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

(Or is that the God of the Old Testament different from the God of the New Testament?)?

INTRODUCTION:

It is important, both in the spiritual and practical life, that one not base his deduction on one angle and one snapshot of the scene. One must undertake a complete picture.

The question: “Why did God allow all those wars and deaths in the Old Testament?”

(Or is the God of the Old Testament different from the God of the New?” is the same as “is the God of the Old Testament different from the God of the New Testament? If one thinks only about one incident, He thinks that God is not a kind or loving God and, thus, allows all such wars, deaths and bloodshed in the Old Testament; or that the God of the Old Testament was violent, harsh and fond of destruction and killing; while the God of the New Testament is kind and loving and does good things. However, we have to look to the matter from all aspects. To answer this question, we shall cover the following points:

- (1) The state of the society in the Old Testament... The satanic worship and paganism.
- (2) The Commandments of the Old Testament and their necessity to the state of man and the society during that time.
- (3) “God is Just in His love and Loving in His justice” a Saying of Pope Shenouda the third. (9 examples from the Holy Bible).
- (4) God does not change.... He only does good.
- (5) There is punishment in the New Testament.
- (6) The fear of God.
- (7) Summary.

(1) THE STATE OF THE SOCIETY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT - THE SATANIC WORSHIP AND PAGANISM.

+ In the Old Testament, The worship of idols spread all over the world. The practice of such worship involved a lot of child sacrifice, witchcraft and adultery; “When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, a there abominations are also clear: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” [Romans: 1: 18-32].

And because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you.” [Deut: 18: 9-12].

It is clear that He says that because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you; what is the proof for this?

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion.” [Lev: 18: 22-23].

And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech.” [2 Kings: 23: 10].

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot,

who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries” [2 Peter: 2: 4-10].

(2) THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THEIR NECESSITY TO THE STATE OF MAN AND THE SOCIETY DURING THE OLD TESTAMENT.

During the Sermon on the mountain, Christ explained the difference between the Commandments of the Old Testament that suited the situation of the very weak man and the situation of man in the new Testament where the grace of the New Testament exists: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord. But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” [Matt: 5: 21-48].

In the New Testament, Heaven and Earth were reconciled and the original sin was taken away by the Holy Baptism. The Holy Spirit also dwelt in man to give him great spiritual fruits “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” [Gal: 5: 22-23].

DESIRES

- (3) “GOD IS JUST IN HIS LOVE AND LOVING IN HIS JUSTICE.” A SAYING OF POPE SHNOUDA THE THIRD. (9 examples from the Holy Bible).

Example 1:

Out of God’s love, He created man after creating all the other creatures for man’s comfort. God also honored man by making him the only creation to God’s image and likeness “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” [Gen: 1: 26].

Out of God’s Justice, He made it very clear to man That if man ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil , man would surely die “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” [Gen: 2: 17].

Hence, God was just as He forewarned of the punishment that would occur if Adam and Eve did not obey the commandment. Moreover, for the first time, punishment as a result of disobedience to the commandment was introduced. For the wages of sin is death,” [Romans: 6: 23].

Was it possible for God to let Adam and Eve be deceived by the devil and death? He warned them before it happened. ... Out of His love, He would not leave them under the deceit and evil of the devil... So what did He do?

Out of His love, after the fall of Adam and Eve, He looked for them and said: “Where are you?” [Gen: 3: 9]. Then, He promised them salvation “Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” [Gen: 3: 21]. This is a clear sign that He would offer on their behalf a redeeming sacrifice for the salvation of those who desire or accept this salvation.

As a result of God’s justice, there came punishment. God told Adam: “Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” [Gen: 3: 17-19]. He told Eve: “To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” [Gen: 3: 16].

Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise but they were not driven out of the love of God who started to prepare for salvation. Adam no longer enjoyed being in the presence of God as he previously had in Paradise. He submitted to the devil and his evils instead of God and the joy of

being in His presence. However, He is still the focus of God who prepares for his salvation and eternity.

Example no. 2

Out of God's love, after Cain killed his brother Abel, God asked him about his brother Abel. Cain answered: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" [Gen: 4:9]. Cain could not repent or apologize and his answer was irresponsible though God gave him an internal conscience to tell him that he made a mistake by killing his brother as Cain said: "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" [Gen: 4: 13].

Out of God's justice, He told Cain: "And the Lord said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him." [Gen: 4: 15]. "Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden." [Gen: 4: 16].

Hopefully, we can take time to reflect on how Adam's offspring submitted to the devil and his influence. However, God interferes with what might seem to be a punishment to restrain this corruption and the further spread of evil.

Example no. 3

The earth was filled with evils, the worship of idols, paganism, adultery and death, particularly the sacrificing of children during idol worship. The Book of Genesis chapter 6: 5 says: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." [Gen: 6: 5].

How could the earth be filled with evils except for one family which is Noah's family [8 persons]? God wanted to start from scratch and He found Noah obeying His words by building the ark in 120 years and entering into it with all the animals, clean and unclean, for the continuation of life. However, the rest of the people were evil and did not believe Noah. There was no one to repent; for those who repented would have entered the ark.

Out of God's love, He preserved the obedient Noah and his family. God allowed the death of the rest not to increase their evil one day after the other which would entail the increase of their punishment in hell more and more. What then is the benefit of that? God thus chose this timing as there were still few people for the purpose of renewing the creation.

After Noah's coming out of the ark, he offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. It was a good start and God was satisfied with it. God promised not to command the abolishment of humanity again.

Example no. 4

However, evils started to spread quickly with the ferocious pagan worships that multiplied in number. God continued His love allowing His sun to rise on the righteous (very very few numbers) and the evil ones who were the majority. Out of God's justice, He gave them food and the conscience to guide and warn them against evil. They knew that murder or adultery was wrong yet they committed these. The majority did not respond to conscience. Consequently, the majority insisted on doing evil.

Then, an incident happened between the patriarch who is a very kind and a rare sample and his nephew Lot "Now the land was not able to support them, " [Gen: 13: 6].

Lot lived beside Sodom and Gomorrah. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were filled with wickedness. When God informed Abraham that He was going to destroy the two cities that were

filled with evil, there were negotiations between God and Abraham. If God found 10 people, would He destroy the city? [Gen: 18: 32]. God said that he would not destroy the city if there were 10 persons worshipping God. God did not find any but the family of Lot alone. Thus, God does not want to destroy anything but He knows everything. If there was no possibility for repentance, corruption increased daily and homosexuality increased to the extent that the city inhabitants wanted to commit adultery with the two angels sent by God to rescue Lot, then God rescued Lot (God's Love) but not his wife whose heart was not perfect and who looked back and became a pillar of salt [God's Justice].

In the epistle of Jude 7: "as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

It is clear from this verse in the epistle of Jude that this punishment has become an example to all generations and everywhere that God must put an end to evil deeds after they spread widely. If He does not put an end to them, they may affect the very few good [Lot's family].

Examp leno. 5

Amidst this darkness and the spread of evil, there were many who insisted on worshipping Satan and the idols. Meanwhile, there were few people in whom God worked strongly and found a positive response from them. Among them was Joseph who, before the Law of Moses, told the wife of Potiphar that: How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" [Gen: 39:9]; and he did not lie with her. Our Lord took him from the prison to the palace and used him to rescue the People of Israel from famine as they went and settled in Egypt.

We can see God's love and justice with Joseph... and with the Children of Israel.

Examp leno. 6

Slavery in the land of Egypt for about 430 years. God's people were enslaved under harsh servitude by the pagans in Egypt. God sent Moses the prophet and Aaron his brother seeking the exit of the people. However, the Pharaohs rejected their exodus and God inflicted on him ten harsh plagues. HE still did not allow the exodus of the people until God allowed it [Exodus 12]. The people exited through the command of the Lord under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. However, the Egyptian Pharaoh decided to restore the people back to slavery after they crossed the Red Sea. He sent behind them an army with strong knights. The pharaoh and his soldiers represented the power of the devil who worked in them and his despised worship. Would God give His disarmed people to their hands to beat them and restore them back to slavery? Is that God's justice?

Out of God's love, He rescued the people of Israel from them and out of His justice; He defeated the devil and all his soldiers and put an end to their corruption to be an example for any man who does injustice to his fellowman.

Examp leno. 7

Sending the two tablets of the Commandments written by the fingers of God. When Moses the prophet descended from the mountain, he found that the people, led by Aaron the priest, made themselves a golden calf and said about it: "This is your god, O Israel that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" [Exodus: 32: 4]. All people took part in this pagan worship except for Moses, Joshua and Caleb. What is the result? Should not those people whom God rescued from slavery, helped to cross the Red Sea with an immense miracle, supported in the wilderness and now wanted to give them the written Law to help them with their life, be punished? God judged that those

people should vanish but He heard the intercession of Moses the prophet on their behalf just because there was a righteous man, Moses the prophet [Exodus: 32: 11]. Thus, the punishment can include all. This punishment is mixed with Divine Love for the general benefit.

Among the sayings of Pope Shnouda the third: “God is not as concerned with our comfort as He is with our benefit.” What would happen if God overlooked punishing His people who deviated to worship an idol and said this is your god Israel?

Example no. 8

During the entering of the people to the land of Canaan led by Joshua the prophet, it was said in the Book of Joshua: “You have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has fought for you.” [Joshua: 23: 3]. And the Lord your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the Lord your God promised you. Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,” [Joshua: 23:5-6].

- As a result Of the Lord’s defense for His people, the people must adhere to and obey Moses’ Law and get attached to the Lord their God. “Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God.” [Joshua: 23:11].

“When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.” [Joshua: 23: 16].

If they do not worship the Lord their God, they would be subjected to the Wrath of the Lord upon them and the Lord would discipline them.

“Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!” [Joshua: 24: 14].

The end result is the fear of the Lord and the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!” [Joshua: 24: 24].

The end result is also taking away strange gods from man’s life.

Example no. 9

The Lord did not punish the people of Nineveh because they repented due to Jonah’s call. God’s punishment for Achan the son of Carmi [Joshua 7], when he stole the accursed of the Lord.

God’s punishment for Moses the Prophet because he hit the rock though the Lord told him talk to the rock ... So He deprived Moses from entering the promised land but He allowed him to see it from afar. The Lord’s punishment of David by an earthly punishment because of committing adultery and murder- His son Amnon committed adultery with his sister Tamar; the adultery of His Son Absalom with his maidens. He only prepared the materials for constructing God’s house but Solomon built it. God forgave Solomon who worshiped idols with his many women because he repented at the end of his life.

(4) GOD DOES NOT CHANGE.... HE ONLY DOES GOOD.

God does not change in His knowledge, wisdom, mercy and essence “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” [James: 1: 17]. ; And also “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” [Heb: 13: 8].

God only does good and does not do evil because evil is not of His nature Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” [James: 1: 13].

“In the Book of Wisdom chapter 15: 1 “But You, Our God, are Kind, True, patient and govern all things in mercy”

In the prayer of thanksgiving, we pray saying “Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful God...” for God does only good while evil and harm do not suit his Divine and fatherly nature. During the Gregorian Divine Liturgy, we pray saying “Who for goodness alone, brought man into being from what was not. And You placed him in the paradise of joy.”

(5) THERE IS PUNISHMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

“Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy of who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Like what happened with Ananias and Sapphira. We realize it was said: “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit “[Acts: 5: 3].

So it is a serious thing if the devil fills the heart of man. God imposed this punishment so that anyone can learn not to allow the devil to fill his heart, not to lie to the priest represented by Peter, and not to like to appear before people which causes man to have gotten his reward. Also The Lord decreased their eternal punishment before they would indulge more and more in evil.

God also allowed the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem around the year A.D. 69. The Lord Jesus prophesied about this. The Romans came and destroyed the temple and sacked the city to ruins.

Christianity has no wars as Christ said to Peter “Put your sword into the sheath.” [John: 18: 11]. In Christianity, there is no war by the sword because there is the “sword of the Spirit”. This means that in the core of Christianity, there is no launching of armies, military weapons or fighting and death. However, the Lord interferes and defends miraculously his disarmed people as he defended the children of Israel during their exit of the land of Egypt and God’s use of the Red Sea to punish the Pharaohs.

(6) THE FEAR OF GOD

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” [Prov: 9: 10].

“Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;” [1 Peter: 1: 17]

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;” [Philippians 2: 12].

What does the fear of God mean? It is respecting Him; It is being careful not to make Him angry by our stubbornness; it is the children’s fear of their father; It is being assured of His Love and feeling His goodness towards man; it is the feeling of God’s awe, a feeling that God knows everything and that it is not possible or befitting to neglect His fatherhood, Power and Kingdom. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and I am weak and just one of His creation.

(7) SUMMARY

About God’s love: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” [1 John: 4: 7-16].

About God’s Justice: “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;” [Romans: 2: 4-9].

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” [1 Cor: 6: 9-10].

God does not change... God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. However, man’s state changed completely from submitting to the devil, used by him for destruction and corruption, desiring to kill God’s children, to being someone who can, if he has believed in the Holy Trinity, and if the grace of the New Testament works in him, strife and seek God. God will not reject him but will be patient with him to repent. God will help him to do that surrounding him by abundant mercies.

MAJOR REFERENCE
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