**DO WE WORSHIP IDOLS**

**IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**By His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy**

Protestants and others accuse us of idol worship. They published this in books, and declared it in counsels that convened all the Protestant leaders at Switzerland after Martin Luther. On the website of the Lutheran Church, under the title, *We Believe and Confess Doctrinal Book of the Reformed Churches,* by Dr. George Sabra, the academic dean of the School of Theology in Beirut, for example, is written that prostrating before the Body and Blood of the Lord during the Liturgy is idol worship, and offering incense to icons is immoral worship. They attack our veneration for saints, their icons and relics, our veneration for the cross, they attack using incense in the church, prostrating in thanks, veneration or apology, even prostration to the Body and Blood of our Lord and consider all of this idol worship.

Lately, a schismatic orthodox joined them. He severely attacks our church and its doctrines repeating the anti-orthodox concepts he learned from them. He publishes books, articles and uses types of media.

For the sake of keeping the genuine teachings we publish this book, lectured its contents in the different branches of our theological seminaries, and in doctrinal conferences.

May our lord grant us benefit through the prayers of H.H. Pope Shenouda III the defender of faith.

**Some Claims and Respond to them:**

1. **Statues and Icons**

They claim that God says in the first commandment of the Ten, “I amthe 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**.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

In Deuteronomy God says, “You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

The second commandment says, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.”[[3]](#footnote-4)

Then the third commandment says: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

In response we say that St. James says, “You believe that there is one God. You do well.”[[5]](#footnote-6) Christianity affirms the oneness of God; we say, “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, **one God**.”

Protestants say that the second commandment says, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth, you shall not bow down to them nor serve them” therefore, both the Catholic and Orthodox churches disobey the second commandment because inside their churches they have images of St. Mary or St. John the Baptist etc..

We need to clarify the following:

**First note that the rest of this commandment says, “You shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” What is prohibited here is bowing down or prostrating to pictures or statues with the intention of worship.**

Some people claim that there is clear contradiction in the book of Exodus between the ten commandments and Exodus 25, however, there is no contradiction.

Let us see what chapter twenty-five says:

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying… And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you [the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments]. You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; **the faces of the** **cherubim** shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony (the ten commandments) that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which areon the ark of the Testimony (God or our Lord Christ is the one who appears in the Old Testament. He appeared to Moses speaking to him from above the mercy seat of the ark from under between the cherubim.), about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

Not only were the cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant, but also all the curtains of the tabernacle of meeting were painted with angels, as we shall see in Exodus:

“You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an **artistic design of cherubim**. You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy. You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy. You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side. You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them..”[[7]](#footnote-8)

The most important phrase is : artistic designs of cherubim”. In other words he makes with gold threads the images of angels woven on the veil dividing between the Holy of Holies and the Holy. Furthermore, they were on all the internal walls of the tabernacle:

“Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine woven linen and blue, purple, and scarlet thread; with **artistic** **designs of cherubim** you shall weave them.”[[8]](#footnote-9)

He has to make the cherubim skillfully and in an artistic way. When you enter the tabernacle, you find beautiful angels skillfully etched in everywhere.

Now, David the prophet comes along saying, “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**.”[[9]](#footnote-10) What is inside this temple in front of which he offered worship?

Inside the temple there is the Ark of the Covenant enclosing the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, and above the mercy seat are the two angels overshadowing with their wings.

The presence of the cherubim gives us impression of the heavenly throne, since angels surround the throne. They also remind us of the angel who told the Virgin, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you.”[[10]](#footnote-11) The cherubim were overshadowing Virgin Mary. (Some people think this is the Holy Spirit. No, he told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. This occurred. He sanctified her, purified her, filled her with grace, and formed the body of Christ without marriage. But, in addition to the coming of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Highest overshadowed her, and we call the angels, “The heavenly powers,”[[11]](#footnote-12) this is the power of the Highest.)

We say in the Sunday Theotokia of the Midnight Praises that the Virgin resembles the Ark, and, “You too O Mary, thousands of thousands, and myriads of myriads, overshadow you,”[[12]](#footnote-13) because the babe was in her womb.

The ark of the covenant included the rod of Aaron which blossomed without planting or watering[[13]](#footnote-14) which is symbolic of the incarnation of the Word from the Virgin without human seed. Inside the Ark as well were the tablets of the covenant which is the word of God, and inside the Virgin’s womb was the Word of God incarnate, not simply words written with the finger of God, but the Word Himself. Because the Person of the Word was Incarnate in her womb, therefore the cherubim overshadowed her. This is the scene… God told Moses that He was going to speak to him from above the cover of the Ark from amidst the cherubim. Therefore the entire image of the Ark of the Covenant was symbolic of the divine incarnation, symbolic to the image of the Virgin, surrounded by the cherubim. When she visited Elizabeth: “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,”[[14]](#footnote-15) and John who was to be “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.”[[15]](#footnote-16)

We need to understand that the issue of the cherubim is also linked to the incarnation and the New Testament. The entire psalmody narrates how the Ark of the Covenant refers to the incarnation of the Word from Virgin Mary. This is why, when we draw an icon of Virgin Mary, we draw her carrying Christ with two angels, symbolic of the cherubim, overshadowing the Ark.

Now, whoever comes to worship in the temple prostrates in the presence of the two cherubim…

**Here the question is: Does anyone prostrating in the temple worship these two angels? Or everyone who prostrate only worships God?**

Was it allowed to prostrate outside the tabernacle, where there is no cherubim, in the open air? The answer is: No, this is impossible.. because this is the place the Lord chose for worship at that time. Did our Lord, thus, command the children of Israel to worship idols?

If yes, what then is the explanation of the second commandment: “You shall not make for yourself a carved image [the cherubim were carved statues], or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above [the cherubim are in heaven]”.

**How then does God tell Moses to make these golden angels?**

The explanation is that God told Moses, “You shall not **bow down** to them nor **serve** them,”[[16]](#footnote-17) you shall not fall prostrate before them in worship as to another god, other than the God of Abraham.

Therefore, the presence of statues or pictures in the churches does not mean idol worship, except, if a person worships this statue or picture, and this never occurred (the Catholic Church uses statues but our church only uses icons).

We, as an Orthodox Church, do not permit statues, lest people confuse the idol worship that had existed in Egypt, with venerating saints. We only permit icons. We do not even prefer bringing statues into the church, although they are not forbidden according to the Holy Bible. This is being overly precise (like someone who was asked to fast two days a week, but he fasts four days a week, and is still attacked) Statues and pictures are permitted. We allow only pictures, and are still accused of idol worship.

No one ever thought of worshiping icons..

We do not worship icons rather we venerate them maybe by only lighting a candle…

**Consecration**

When an icon in the church is anointed with Myron it receives special reverence. When the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant, they said, “Rise up, O Lord!Let Your enemies be scattered.”[[17]](#footnote-18) When the Ark of the Covenant was taken out of the tabernacle to the battlefield, the army of Israel shouted while they were fighting the pagans since they were the only people worshiping God at that time, “When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, ‘What doesthe sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?’ Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp.”[[18]](#footnote-19) Wherever the Ark of the Covenant went, it meant that God dwells in the midst of his people; as ‘“Immanuel,’ is translated, ‘God with us.”[[19]](#footnote-20) Also, Uzzah, who was not of the priesthood, fearing that the Ark would fall because the oxen stumbled, touched the ark, and so he fell dead.[[20]](#footnote-21) King David danced before the Ark, but he did not touch it because he was not a priest.

Moses the Prophet had consecrated the entire contents of the tabernacle, before the glory of God appeared in it. Consecration was either with blood and water, or with the holy anointing oil. He anointed Aaron and his sons with the holy anointing oil. He anointed other utensils with water and blood.

The icons that we venerate in the church are consecrated with Myron oil, thus the grace of the Holy Spirit operates within them.

Did not Jacob see the angels ascending and descending on the ladder with the Lord standing above? “Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel.”[[21]](#footnote-22)

This is the house of God. He anointed this place with oil and made a vow to God saying, “If you return me to the land of my fathers, I will worship You in this place.

Anointing with Myron gives only energy meaning grace, but not the essence of the Holy Spirit or else we or the icons become Gods, which is against the Christian faith.

We pray before icons by energy, since a Christian is anointed by the Holy Spirit. Icons are only a means of communication with the saint of the icon through the Holy Spirit with energy not essence. However, it is the Holy Spirit that offers this energy.

**Why do we Light a Candle before an Icon:**

Long ago, the churches were low to the ground with no side windows, only apertures in the domes, and so the churches were dark. If you visit the ancient churches in Old Cairo for example, this is what you will find. There is no electricity, and so the icon is not visible in the dark; with the light of the candle the icon lights up. Christ said, “You are the light of the world,”[[22]](#footnote-23) thus we venerate the saint in the icon with the light of a candle so that the icon lights up.

St. Paul the Apostle wrote: “Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith… We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses… let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.”[[23]](#footnote-24)

Lighting up a candle infront of an icon is as if we say to the saint that he/she was light of the world.

What is wrong if we light up an icon, attesting to the saint?

Note that we should not place a candle before an ordinary picture, but only before an icon anointed with Myron. When anointing icons with Myron, we say, “Be a haven of salvation and an expression of steadfastness for all those who come forth in faithfulness.”[[24]](#footnote-25)

**Illustration:** If I anoint a picture of the Virgin carrying Christ, or a picture of St. Demiana and the forty virgins, and insufflate it, this icon becomes like a mobile phone. How? A cell phone is simply a piece of metal or plastic to which we connect a line. Once the line is connected you are able to contact any person, possibly even overseas. Is God not able to do what phones sometimes do? If you want to send a call to Virgin Mary or St. Demiana, you go before the icon, light a candle, and make the call, thus your request is fulfilled instantly because there is line. If you bring a phone with no line, no one will hear you. The line is the role that the Myron performs. The Holy Spirit in the Myron gives a line to this icon. And now you could stand and ask St. Demiana to help you on your exam, intercede before the Lord Christ for resolving a problem... or request the aid of Virgin Mary... The requests arrive to heaven instantly.

Praying before an icon does not mean worshiping the icon but it is only requesting from the saint and pleading from him/her to listen.

Some people might ask:

**Can we pray at home before pictures of saints that are not consecrated?**

If you hang up a picture a dear person who departed, your father or grandfather, it could remind you of him. Likewise, a picture could remind you of the saint. Also, you could ask the saint’s prayers, or, if it is St. Mary, Archangel Michael, or any of the angels you could ask their intercessions. You could pray, even without any pictures. “Around the throne were… twenty-four elders… each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are **the prayers of the saints**.”[[25]](#footnote-26)

This is the difference between an ordinary picture and an anointed icon, but even the anointed icon we utterly do not worship, or else this would be polytheism.

**Greeting the Saints**

When we greet a saint saying, “Hail to you,” surely, it arrives. Some object and ask ironicly, are the saints living or are they dwelling in the icons?

We consider these saints as living with us, as “He is… the God of the living.”[[26]](#footnote-27)

Sometimes, saints are present with us, on their feast day, for example, or when the Virgin appears sometimes. But even if the saint does not attend in spirit, and remains in Paradise, we have agreed that there is spiritual connection through grace. Without this faith it would be as though we are in unknown land, jungles of Africa or deserted forests..

When we say, “Hail to you,” for a Saint it reaches him/her.. We greet all the saints as we pass by their icons in the church while raising incense.

I greet the saint, believing that my greeting is a type of incense sent, by grace, to reach this saint. There is spiritual fellowship between us, expressed by the incense. This spiritual fellowship incense may be as prayer request or a greeting. I can tell the Saint pray for me or blessed are you for what you did for us. This refers to the incense raised by the twenty four presbyters which is the prayers of saints (see Rev. 5:8).

**The Icon of the Lord Christ, the Logos, the Incarnate God:**

We prostrate before the Lord Christ and worship… The man born blind said, “Lord, I believe. And he worshiped Him.”[[27]](#footnote-28) We venerate the icon of the Lord Christ, but we do not worship it. No one ever said that this icon of Christ–is Christ!

The Body and Blood in the divine liturgy are true Body and true Blood. When you bow before it, you prostrate before the very Body that was born of the Virgin, crucified, and rose from the dead. Anything else in the church, other than the Body and Blood of the Lord, you could venerate or honor, but you do not worship, even if it is an icon of the Lord Christ. I have never seen anyone in church claim that an icon of Christ is actually Christ Himself, saying, “I worship you O icon.”

We bow down to Christ, whose divinity fills heaven and earth; this is the prostration of worship. Any other respect offered is not worship.

1. **Distinguishing between Prostrations for Worship and Prostrations other than for worship**

**Some people say that there are various prostrations that are wrong:**

For example when monks meet they offer a prostration to one another; this is a kind of greeting. In this case they certainly do not worship the each other?! One might offer a prostration to the bishop. Absolutely, it can never be for worship. One might bow down before a blessed ancient icon in the church, like the icon St. Luke drew of St. Mary. When entering the church we bow down before the altar, then to the icon of Virgin Mary, and then to the relics of the saints found in the church. In prostrating before the altar we worship before God who fills heaven and earth, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but the metania before the icon or the relics of the saints is veneration and not worship.

**What proves that there are kinds of Prostrations other than for worship:**

When **Abraham** –the patriarch- wanted to buy the field of Machpelah to bury his wife Sara who had died, he met the sons of Heth and asked them to sell him this field as he was a stranger coming from Mesopotamia (near Iraq). Here he was in the Holy Land, near Jerusalem. They agreed to sell him the field to bury his wife, since he owned nothing in the ground. (Maybe this has a hidden message: that the only thing you really own is the ground in which you will be buried. And even this is temporary ownership. If you say, “I own 500 acres of the best land.” All you really own are few meters maybe only two meters by one meter. His Holiness expressed this idea in one of his poems. Even the two meters by a meter is temporary, since you do not feel them because your spirit has been released.)

Sons of Heth allowed Abraham to have the land and bury his dead. “Then **Abraham** **bowed himself** down before the people of the land.”[[28]](#footnote-29) By this act was Abraham worshiping the sons of Heth? Does Abraham the patriarch, the father of the faithful, worship idols? Is Abraham polytheistic because he bowed down to the sons of Heth? No one could say this, Christians or non-Christians, protestants or non-protestants? This **bowing down is for thanks**.

**Jacob** fled from his brother Esau who had wanted to kill him since he has taken away the blessing. Since his mother feared for his life, she sent Jacob forth to his uncle Laban. He left for his uncle, married and remained there until he had eleven children and his wife was pregnant with number twelve, Benjamin. Returning with his servants and flocks to the land of his fathers, they told him that his brother Esau was coming to meet him. He prayed all night, and so Christ appeared to him, blessed him, and gave him a new name. When he crossed the fords of Jabbok he found Esau coming from afar, and so he “**bowed himself to the ground seven times**.”[[29]](#footnote-30) This is a **prostration for begging mercy**. As if he was pleading from him to forget the past and let not there be enmity between them. He sent before him to his brother Esau droves of gifts: camels, cattle, sheep, and donkeys, so that by the time Esau arrives his anger would have subsided. Jacob bowed before Esau seven times. This was **an apology prostration or a prostration begging mercy**, and not a prostration of worship.

**Joseph** the son of Jacob, when his brothers came to Egypt due to the famine, the holy scriptures mentions that more than once that they prostrated themselves or bowed before him in reverence “And Joseph's brothers came and **bowed down before him** **with *their* faces to the earth**”[[30]](#footnote-31) “And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and **bowed down before him to the earth**”.[[31]](#footnote-32) When he asked about their father they said: “Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive. And **they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves**.”[[32]](#footnote-33)

**Abigail** who became the wife of David, she bowed to him while she is considered among the greatest females in the Old Testament. Her husband was a very selfish man; his name was Nabal, which means foolish as Abigail told David: “Nabal ishis name, and folly iswith him.”[[33]](#footnote-34) David had protected Nabal’s sheep all summer and winter, and at the time of sheep shearing David sent messengers telling him, “Peace *be* to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have! Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let *my* young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David”[[34]](#footnote-35) (and David was the king of Israel, but he was fleeing from Saul who wanted to kill him) “Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David (while David had been anointed king by a divine command through Samuel the prophet), and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from? So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words. Then David said to his men, Every man gird on his sword. So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies. Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him. Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. And she said to her servants, Go on before me; see, I am coming after you. But she did not tell her husband Nabal. So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good. May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light. **Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground**. **So she fell at his feet** and said: On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant. Then David said to Abigail: Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand."[[35]](#footnote-36)

**Was this prostration for worship?**

If this prostration was for worship David would not have told her, “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!” This is a **prostration of reverence** to the king, a **prostration of requesting mercy, and to cool his anger**. He was very upset for having been humiliated, dishonored, and disdained, down to the degree of a rebuffed beggar. He had a right to become upset, but not a right to kill sinless people. She eased the situation and calmed his anger, and he accepted her intercession.

When she returned home, she told her husband what she had done, he became wrathful and remained so for ten days until he died, the Lord having struck him in the heart. David heard that Nabal had died, he sent asking if she would like to come to him, she agreed and became David’s wife. (Since this was during war time, marriage to more than one was permitted. The men died in the war, and so the number of men was less than the number of women. Conditions were different than in the New Testament).

**King Solomon prostrated before his mother** at the peak of his perceptiveness. At the start of his reign, the Lord appeared to King Solomon saying, “Ask! What shall I give you,”[[36]](#footnote-37) riches, victory over your enemies, etc.? Solomon said, “Give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people.”[[37]](#footnote-38) God replied, “Since you have asked for wisdom, I will give you wisdom.” Solomon had offered a thousand sacrifices at Gibeon, so Christ appeared to him and said, “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.”[[38]](#footnote-39)

Next, **two women came to Solomon** fighting over a baby, one of them turned in the night and suffocated her baby. Now each was claiming the baby to be hers. (At that time they did not have blood testing or DNA testing to determine whose baby it was. Also, since it was a newborn he could not determine based on the resemblance to the mother). Solomon ordered a swordsman to split the live baby in two, giving each woman half. The real mother screamed asking them not to split the baby but give him to the other women. Solomon responded saying that the one who refused for the child to be split in two is the real mother, and ordered that it should be given to her because she is his mother (see 1kin 3: 16-28).

This is an example of the wisdom of King Solomon, who wrote the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs and the Wisdom. Concerning the wisdom of Solomon, the Lord Christ said, “The queen of the South… came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.”[[39]](#footnote-40) (The one greater than Solomon, is the Lord Christ).

Just enthroned, King Solomon sat on his throne, when his mother Bathsheba came into the king’s court. Seeing his mother enter, **he raced off his throne to bow down before her,** held her hand, and seated her on his right hand, saying, “What do you want my mother? Even if you want half the kingdom, state your wish.” She asked Abishag the Shunammite who only kept his father warm for his brother Adonijah. David had only married her officially, but their marriage was not consummated. Solomon got angry, he sent and beheaded his brother.

It is written: “Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and **bowed down to her**, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king’s mother; so she sat at his right hand [The queen sits at the right hand of the King]. Then she said, “I desire one small petition of you; do not refuse me.” And the king said to her, “Ask it, my mother, for I will not refuse you.”So she said, “Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as wife.” And King Solomon answered and said to his mother, “Now why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also [You might as well be asking for him to be king]-- for he is my older brother -- for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah.” Then King Solomon swore by the Lord, saying, “May God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life! Now therefore, as the Lord lives, who has confirmed me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has established a house for me, as He promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today!” So King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he struck him down, and he died”.[[40]](#footnote-41)

Adonijah son of Haggith (mother), he tried to proclaim himself king while his father was still alive. When King David heard of this, he quickly called for the high priest, anointed Solomon, and proclaimed him king while he was still alive, fearing that Adonijah would confiscate the throne. When he could not confiscate the throne, he wanted to confiscate his father’s wife.

Now, when Solomon bowed down to his mother Bathsheba, was he worshipping her? How can anyone consider it worship while her request was refused and he cut his brother’s head.

Followed by these stories he started building the temple, consecrating it, and praying in it: “And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord and the king’s house, and all Solomon’s desire which he wanted to do,that the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time [Christ appeared to him twice], as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. And the Lord said to him: “I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.”[[41]](#footnote-42)

Until this point Solomon had done nothing to upset God, and he had already bowed down to his mother. Christ appeared to him thereafter saying, “I have consecrated the house in which you have prayed.” Therefore, **his prostration, as the king, to his mother, in reverence, did not upset our Lord**.

In the New Testament the following was mentioned in the Book of Revelation, the message to the angel of Philadelphia: “Indeed I will make thoseof the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie-- indeed **I will make them come and worship before your feet**, and to know that I have loved you.”[[42]](#footnote-43)

**Types of Prostrations:**

Prostrations of worship are offered to God alone... There are also prostrations of reverence or veneration, thanksgiving, asking mercy and forgiveness which differ from the prostration of worship.

Even prostrations for asking God’s mercy is different from prostrations of worship, therefore, we do not offer the metanias for God’s mercy except while fasting. After communion we do not offer metanias asking for mercy or forgiveness because repentance should be before communion, not after. Therefore, metanias of requesting forgiveness are forbidden on Saturday’s and Sundays and after communion.

However, a prostration of worship before the altar is allowed even after communion because after communion we do not become Christ. By having communion we are offered grace and unity with eternal life, but God remains God and we remain slaves.

Metanias for forgiveness are not offered on Saturdays, Sundays, or after communion – the times in which strict abstinence and metanias are forbidden. However, when we say “Ten Ousht Emmok O Pikhristos” Tenouw]t `mmok `w Pxc meaning “We **worship** You O Christ, with Your good Father, and the Holy Spirit for You have come and saved us”[[43]](#footnote-44) we prostrate.

At the beginning of the canonical hourly prayers when the priest says: Poc? nai nan “God have **mercy** on us,” we offer a prostration at the start of every prayer, but not on Saturdays and Sundays: since it means “God have mercy”. They are metanias for asking for mercy, and asking forgiveness, they differ from metanias we offer when we say, “we worship you O Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit”. During all days we prostrate when the priest says Poc? nai nan “God have mercy” especially during the lent.

Conclusion: there is no contradiction between chapters twenty and chapter twenty-five in Exodus, “you shall not bow down to them nor serve them”[[44]](#footnote-45) is not contradictory to God’s command to Moses to make two cherubim on the cover of the ark of the covenant. God’s commandment was: “**You shall not bow down to them nor serve them**” which forbids the people from worshiping any picture or statue of anything in heaven, on earth, or under the earth in the sea. The god Dagon was half fish and half human. Some people worship fish, others cats, still others lizards and snakes, or Abis the calf for the ancient Egyptians. In Egypt they not only made a statue of Abis but they brought a calf and raised it in Luxor, picking it from the best genealogy, offered it the best bath, fed it the best grass, and the priests served it, washed it and removed its refuse. When ancient people saw an ox stroll with strength, looking around with strong looks and might they thought it was God. Besides, the Hindus worship the cow, because it gives milk so they consider it a giver of goods.

1. **Incense**

When the high priest used to enter to the Holy of Holies once a year to offer incense he used to go with the golden censor around the Ark of the Covenant. They also used to offer incense throughout the year at the altar of incense as Zachariah the priest the father of John the Baptist was doing, when the angel announced the birth of John the Baptist. The angel appeared to Zachraiah, “standing on the right side of the altar of incense,” while he was offering incense in the Holy. While he was offering incense in the temple, there were images of angels everywhere, and the statues of the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. When he offered this incense, was he worshipping these angels? Never, he was worshipping and offering incense to God who dwelt in this house.

Our fathers, the holy martyrs of the Coptic Church, refused to offer incense to the idols, but they did not refuse offering incense inside the church, since this incense is offered to God, in the tabernacle and the temple.

In the Book of Revelation, it is mentioned that the twenty-four presbyters around the throne offer, “the prayers of the saints”[[45]](#footnote-46) as incense.

The saint prays while on earth, or in Paradise, but by the throne in the heaven of heavens there is rising incense all around the throne. How do the prayers of those on earth become incense there at the heavenly throne? How can prayers of saints be here on earth then it becomes incense, using bowls around the throne? Even if one says that this scene indicates a meaning, but still it means that one prayed in one place, and another delivers the prayer above. Sure this is considered intercession. This is one point, another is that incense is fellowship of prayer. In other words offering incense could be one of two kinds: incense of worship, and incense of fellowship in prayer.

**Two Meanings for Offering Incense:**

**First:** Offering incense for worship, this is never used for living beings or icons of saints. It is only used when offering incense infront of the altar as we say “**We worship You**, O **Christ**, with Your good **Father** and the **Holy Spirit**..” By this we mean that we worship the Triune God whose glory fills all earth and especially His holy temple.

**Second**: Raising incense for fellowship in prayer.

A priest offers incense to the people as he passes by them.. Does this mean that the congregation became gods?! He offers the incense as if saying that these rising incense are the prayers of the people which he lifts up before God, along with the prayers of the priest for the congregation. This is fellowship in prayer. In the Book of Revelation the twenty four Presbyter lift up bowls of gold full of “incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”[[46]](#footnote-47)

As the priest offers incense to the people in the church, he also offers incense to his fellow priest of equal rank. He exchanges greetings with him by the hands saying, “I ask you my father to remember me in your prayers..” and the other priest responds, “May the Lord preserve your priesthood, as He did with Melchizedek, Aaron, Zachariah, and Simeon, the priests of the Most High God.” The priest offers incense to the bishop like the people, but not like the fellow priest, since there is no equality in the priestly rank. The priest says to the bishop: “May the Lord preserve and confirm the life of our honored father the high priest… in keeping him for us for many years and peaceful times… Ask the Lord on our behalf to forgive us our sins”. The bishop responds “May the Lord preserve your priesthood, as He did with Melchizedek, Aaron, Zachariah, and Simeon, the priests of the Most High God.” Therefore, raising incense is a fellowship of prayer, as the psalmist said, “**Let my prayer be set before You as incense**, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”[[47]](#footnote-48)

Offering incense to icons is not worship, but it is fellowship in prayer between us and the saints like St. Mary, St. Paul etc. This fellowship in prayer is expressed in incensing.

While saints pray for us in Paradise, their prayers reach to the twenty-four presbyters who are lifting up incense before the throne of God the Father, and in their midst, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain.[[48]](#footnote-49) This incense which is the prayers of saints is in the heaven of heavens not in paradise.

This proves that incense is not ignored in the New Testament. Since it is written that “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four presbyter fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”[[49]](#footnote-50)

The icon has a special grace so that it becomes “a haven of salvation for all those who come forth in faithfulness,”[[50]](#footnote-51) as the bishop says during anointing an icon by the holy Myron for consecration. Since prayers reach due to anointing with Myron (like the line of a cell phone), therefore incense lifts the prayers prayed before an icon. Can anyone consider these as prayers of worship? Sure not... It is a request of remembrance from the saint in the icon.

Our teacher St. James said, “Pray for one another,”[[51]](#footnote-52) if we sinners should pray for each other, how much more should the saints pray for us?

Regarding the incense of worship this was performed by pagans. Not every raising of incense is considered worship…

**An Incorporated Respond to the Claim of Worshipping Saints**:

When we say that there is a fellowship of prayer between us and between the saints this does not imply that we worship the saints.

When we offer incense in church towards the East, we say in Coptic,

Tenouw]t `mmok `w Pxc? nem pekiwt `n`agaqoc nem pi``pneuma `eqouab

je ak`i akcw; `mmon nai nan

“**We worship You**, O **Christ**, with Your good **Father** and the **Holy Spirit**, for You have come and saved us.” The priest says this statement while incensing three times to the east, moving the censor thrice. At this point the priest is standing at the doorway of the sanctuary, with the altar and the icon of the Pantocrator with its heavenly scene before him. Then he goes towards the west and says the same prayer. This is worship offered to God, not worship offered to an icon, with three hands of incense to the north in worship to the three persons of the trinity.

When we offer incense to the icon of the crucifixion or resurrection, we also offer thrice, because we are confirming that the Son is one Person of the Holy Trinity, and not an ordinary saint, nor is this incense a fellowship in prayer. This is worship to Christ, not to the icon.

We are now speaking about raising incense in the direction of the altar or the icon of the Pantocrator meaning the icon of Christ on His throne in heaven surrounded by the twenty four Presbyters and the four living creatures, i.e. a heavenly scene.. When we open the veil or door of the sanctuary we offer incense before the anointed consecrated altar before the consecrated icon of the Pantocrator and say, “We worship you O Christ”. Thus doing we do not worship the ivory of the altar, or the wall on which the icon is placed or painted. We are considering Christ as present, because He said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age,”[[52]](#footnote-53) and also, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”[[53]](#footnote-54) Where do two or three gather in His name, more than during Vespers and Matins incense, and the liturgy? Christ is present, so we tell Him, “We worship You O Christ.”

God told Moses, “I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim.”[[54]](#footnote-55) Then the glory of God appeared to Moses from between the two cherubim and filled the tabernacle and the temple. The presence of God in our midst is un-doubtable.

We offer prostrations of worship to Christ our Lord only, not even to the icon of the Pantocrator, nor to the ivory altar. The only time we prostrate before the altar, is for the body and blood after transubstantiation; this is the only time it is prostration of worship to Who is above the altar. As long as the transubstantiation has not occurred, worship is to Christ who fills all existence according to His divinity, Who incarnated, was crucified, resurrected and sitting on the right hand of the Father interceding for us by His Blood, and is present on the altar after the transubstantiation.

Here it has to be clear that when we say, “We worship You, O Christ,” we do not consider that the Christ we are speaking to is the icon on the nave but Christ Who is omnipresent.

Whoever says that we prostrate to the icon, the wall, or the ivory are mixed up.

We say “We worship You O Christ our Lord” meaning that Christ is present in His holy house and everywhere.

Next, we offer incense towards the North before the icon of St. Mary saying,

Ten; ne `mpixereticmoc nem Gabrihl piaggeloc je xere ke xaritwmenh

`o Kurioc meta cou

“We send you greeting with Gabriel the angel, saying, “We send you greetings with Gabriel the angel, saying Hail to you, O full of grace, the Lord is with you”[[55]](#footnote-56) Then we offer incense towards the South, at the left side of the sanctuary, or at the right of the priest directed towards the East, before the icon of St. John and say, “Hail to John, the son of Zachariah. Hail to the priest, the son of the priest.”[[56]](#footnote-57) The icon of John the Baptist, is to the left of the sanctuary, baptizing Christ for he is the baptizer and forerunner, baptizer of Christ and His witness who is considered the prophet of the two testaments.

In the midst is Christ the Lord because when we open the veil we are facing the icon of Christ the Pantocrator on the throne in the bosom of the Father. He is the door because He said, “I am the door.”[[57]](#footnote-58) Also He is present on the altar.. On the right we find the icon of the Virgin, and the icon of John the Baptist on the left. Here, we project from the Paradise to the age to come, where the Virgin will be on His right: “At Your right hand stands the queen,”[[58]](#footnote-59) and John on His left; this is our church dogma.

To the West, toward the congregation, the priest offers incense saying, “Hail to the choir of the angels, to my masters and fathers the apostles, and to the choir of the martyrs and saints.”[[59]](#footnote-60) This includes all the congregation since each member in the congregation is an icon anointed with Myron at Confirmation. St. Paul wrote “To the saints who are in Ephesus.”[[60]](#footnote-61) Therefore it is conditioned that all the congregation are holy, “Holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”[[61]](#footnote-62) As long as one lives a life of repentance, in fellowship with God, confesses, takes communion, and is precise in his spiritual life, he becomes an icon and a saint, in hope of fulfilling his strife in peace. This is the fellowship between us and saints.

Returning East, the priest says, “Let us worship our Savior, the Good One and Lover of mankind, for He had compassion on us and has come and saved us,”[[62]](#footnote-63) and we bow down before Christ again.

**Venerating the Relics of Saints:**

If I could offer a prostration to any person in case I want to apologize to him, or to His Holiness out of respect to His Holiness, will I not offer a prostration to the relics of St. George out of respect for these bones which will be very luminous in the kingdom of heaven?

No one can attach one of the bones of St. George for instance to his body thinking that in doing so he enters the kingdom of heaven with him because each person will resurrect in a body of his own.

There is a blessing that one takes from the relics of the saints. Reject the blessings of saints are to the loss of such people. When we place a box containing the relics of a saint on a possessed person, the devil screams and is burned. Likewise the anointed icon makes the devil scream continually until it is exorcised.

**Venerating the Bishop:**

The priest offers incense to the congregation.. If there are two fellow priests or fellow bishops, they motion with the hands with the incense to each other saying, “I ask you my father the priest (bishop) to remember me in your prayers May the Lord preserve your priesthood.”[[63]](#footnote-64) It is a fellow common prayer. This does not happen with the congregation since the congregation does not have the same priestly rank. The priest offers incense to the bishop as he does with the congregation since they are not in the same priestly rank. As the priest offers incense to the Bishop he says: “I ask you my father the bishop to remember me in your prayers that Christ our Lord forgive my sins.. May the Lord preserve and confirm the life of our honored father the high priest… in keeping him for us for many years and peaceful times.” The bishop responses while crossing, “May the Lord preserve your priesthood as He did with Melchizedek, Aaron, Zachariah, and Simeon, the priests of the Most High God.”[[64]](#footnote-65) Each one is praying for the other while the incense is raised.. This is the significance of the incense..

The priest offers incense to the bishop as he offers to the people. What is wrong in that? Is the bishop less than the people, that they say by offering incense to him we worship idols!!?

I will tell you an anecdote: Fr. Gabriel of Sourian Monastery served in the bishopric of Sharkia during the days of the departed Metropolitan Metaos of Sharkia and the Canal. He had a nice voice and loved to make jokes. The metropolitan ordained a new priest and asked Fr. Gabriel to teach and hand him the liturgy. He took the priest and taught him the liturgy perfectly. In addition, he told this new priest that when he comes to offer incense before the metropolitan he should say, ‘The worship of idols, utterly uproot from the world. Satan and all his evil powers trample and humiliate under out feet speedily.”[[65]](#footnote-66) The new priest believed him. After the forty days, he came to pray with the metropolitan, and while offering incense to the metropolitan he said as Fr. Gabriel taught him, “The worship of idols, utterly uproot from the world. Satan and all his evil powers trample and humiliate under out feet speedily.” The metropolitan got angry and rebuked him saying, ‘Am I and idol?!’ And the priest simply answered that Fr. Gabriel taught him to say it. Being questioned, Fr. Gabriel said, “Your eminence, I was just joking.” The metropolitan picked up for Cairo and reported to His Holiness Pope Kyrillos VI. His Holiness questioned Fr. Gabriel, he responded that he was only joking. His Holiness said, “There should be no jokes in the liturgy. Take six months at the Sourian monastery. And do not pray any liturgies.” (When H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy arrived to the Sourian Monastery in 1968 to become a new monk, it was during the six months of punishment for Fr. Gabriel). Fr. Gabriel died and the day came when Protestants say that offering incense to the bishop is an idol worship.

1. **Worshiping the Body and Blood of Christ:**

When our Lord Jesus Christ offered the bread and wine to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, He said, “This is My body… this is My blood.”[[66]](#footnote-67) Do we believe Christ or not? He also said, “For My flesh is food indeed [true food], and My blood is drink indeed [true drink].”[[67]](#footnote-68) Protestants mock at us saying that we knead our God, bake him, and then we bow to Him. Saying this they resemble non-Christians who claim that the man born blind’s worship of the Lord Christ is polytheism, for how could man worship a fellow human? They do not believe that he is not a man but an incarnate God.

Protestants agree to the worship of the blind man to Jesus Christ, but they say that the bread and wine is only a remembrance.

When the Lord Christ incarnated, He was a single cell in the womb of St. Mary. It grew as He was nourished from her. He was born, and drank milk from her. He grew up and ate bread. The bread he ate was in His body and enlarged it. When He was crucified, after being one cell, He weighed about seventy kilograms. This difference in weigh came from the bread which the Virgin baked, which He ate, and which enlarged His body. As long as the Holy Spirit descends during the liturgy, He turns this bread exactly as the bread which Christ ate, which entered His body, united with the divinity, with which He was crucified, rose, and ascended to heaven.

If you have a censor with ignited charcoal, and you add charcoal, do you strike a new match or do they ignite each other? Likewise, all that was added to the Lord Christ is not a new incarnation of the Word, but is an extension of the hypostatic union between the divinity and the humanity.

Likewise, the bread in the Divine Liturgy is an extension of the sacrifice of the cross. Therefore, the Lord Christ said, “This is My body.”[[68]](#footnote-69)

St. Paul said, “For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”[[69]](#footnote-70) Why does one eats and drink judgment to himself if unworthy? Because this is true body. When we bow down before the body of Christ, we bow down to Christ our savior and redeemer.

Protestants do not like this and accuse us of idol worship in media.

What is written in chapter 25 of Exodus regarding the two gold statues of the cherubim inside the Holy of Holies, and that God spoke to Moses from between them while people worshipped in the temple; this is not worship of the two gold statues. Therefore, it is not against saying, “you shall not bow to them or **serve them**”[[70]](#footnote-71) since He said “or serve them”. Not any person who has a picture or statue has committed a sin and contradicted the second commandment as long as he does not worship them.

They were carrying the Ark of the Covenant on a cart drawn by oxen, while David the prophet danced before the ark of the covenant containing the two tablets and over its cover the two angels. (Moses had consecrated these items the day he opened the tabernacle of meeting). Then the oxen stumbled, and the Ark was going to fall, so Uzzah (not of the priesthood) supported the ark lest it falls, thus, he fell dead. How dare he, not being of the priesthood, touch the Ark of the Covenant?[[71]](#footnote-72)

This event took place in the presence of King David, and so David was terrified. It is written that “David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, How can the ark of the LORD come to me? So David would not move the ark of the Lord with him into the City of David."[[72]](#footnote-73)

Why did God say to Moses, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground,”[[73]](#footnote-74) when the fire appeared in the bush?

When the body and blood of Christ are on the altar in the church, would this not also be a sacred place?

When an icon is anointed was Myron, would it not be sacred, as the Ark of the Covenant was sacred — if one not of the priests touched it, he died.

If they say this was in the Old Testament we reply by saying that they argued from the beginning using the second commandment of the Old Testament.

**What Proves the Genuiness of Orthodox Doctrine of Transubstantiation:**

In transubstantiation the body and blood appear as bread and wine; the bread does not turn into a piece of meat, nor the wine and water into hemoglobin and plasma. In substance it remains bread, but in essence it is united with the divinity, being the very body of the crucified risen ascended Lord who will come again in His second coming.

It is written, “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.”[[74]](#footnote-75) When He gave thanks and broke, transubstantiation occurred: it changed from ordinary bread into bread united with the divinity, and an extension to the sacrifice of the Cross, the body of the crucified risen Lord.

Since we are accused of worshipping bread and wine, which is idolatry, I would like to return to the words of St. Paul in his comparison between the pagan worship and the Divine Liturgy in which is the Lord’s body and blood. Whoever attacks us on this point is also attacking St. Paul, because he is one who placed this comparison:

St. Paul wrote: “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry (those who attack us say that the liturgy is idol worship, Let us see what St. Paul will say here). I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say (here we ask our reader also to judge). The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? (Here St. Paul starts the comparison between pagan worship and the Eucharist in rare braveness through the Holy Spirit who revealed to him). The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? (St. Paul is starting to link between the cup of blessing and the Lord’s body in the liturgy, and Israel’s Jewish altar and partakers of the altar. Here, he sets the Christian behavior and the Jewish behavior on parallel paths. Then we shall make a link between this and between Isiah 19) What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? (Here he unites between the sacrifice and the one who offers it. Then, he shifts from the Jewish sacrifices and were acceptable to God until Christ came and offered the true complete sacrifice prefigured in the Old Testament sacrifices, to the idol sacrifices) Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons (St. Paul does not want them to attend the sacrifices to idols or eat of their sacrifices). You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (He unified between the sacrifice and the one to whom the sacrifice is offered (the idol). Then, he gave them an ultimatum: either choose the sacrifice of the Lord, or choose the sacrifice of the devils; do not eat from this and that); you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of **the table of demons**. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?[[75]](#footnote-76)

This passage shows that, in St. Paul’s mind, the table of the Eucharist is an altar. He placed three categories:

First: The communion of the body and blood of Christ,

Second: The Jewish sacrifices, saying, “Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?”.

Third: The pagan altar, and lastly: he told them to choose if they will eat from the Lord’s table or the table of demons.

Our Lord Christ say, “Take, eat; this is My body,” and St. Paul’s words assert that what the Lord Christ said was not figurative speech.

St. Paul in Chapter eleven of his first Epistle to the Corinthians said, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”[[76]](#footnote-77) Not only during the night of His Passion did the Lord do this.

St. Paul our teacher said: “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. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. 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.”[[77]](#footnote-78)

The New Testament is related to the Cup and not to the sacrifice of Golgotha. The blood He shed is present during the Eucharist in the church.

Why is the one who eats this bread and drinks this cup considered guilty to the body and blood of the Lord unless it is true body and true blood??!

During the Divine Liturgy we say, “This is My blood of the New Covenant.”[[78]](#footnote-79) This is true and our Lord Jesus Christ said so Himself. St. Paul, and the gospel according to St. Luke, focused in even more on this point: “This **cup** is the new covenant in My blood.”[[79]](#footnote-80) The cup is the new covenant in His blood… Now, if the Eucharist is simply symbolic, as some claim, then, is the new covenant also symbolic?

Where is this new covenant in a Church that hasn’t the blood of Christ inside the cup?

Where would you find the blood of Christ, which was shed on the cross, if you do not find it in the Eucharist Cup?!

If you do not find the blood of Christ in the Eucharist cup where can you find it?! Christ offered his life for us on the Cross and gave it to us, to live by it. He said, “He who feeds on Me will live because of Me,”[[80]](#footnote-81) He also said, “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.”[[81]](#footnote-82)

Christ gave us His life. How will His life reach us, if the blood of Christ under the appearance of wine is not true blood inside the cup?

Now, we need to connect this with what came in the Book of Isaiah: “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.”[[82]](#footnote-83) Where is this altar, unless it is the altar of the Eucharist?

If there is no altar in the church, then, which altar was Isaiah speaking of? Is it an altar for idols? No, he said, “An altar of the Lord.” Is it a Jewish altar? Definitely not, for the Jews have no altar except in Jerusalem since God had told them, “I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there.”[[83]](#footnote-84) After God had specified the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, He forbade the Jews, to this day, from offering sacrifices out of these boundaries.

St. Paul wrote in the Epistle to Hebrews: “**We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat**.”[[84]](#footnote-85) In other words, the Jews do not have a right to eat from it, what could be this altar except the altar of the new covenant?

Isaiah the prophet continues: “Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it.”[[85]](#footnote-86) The Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord, responds to those who say that we worship idols.. Or was Isaiah the prophet mistaken when he said this prophecy?!

Prophet Isaiah said: “Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering”. Note that it says “sacrifice”, not sacrifices. How will all the Egyptians offer only one sacrifice?

It could not be only one offering, unless it was the sacrifice of the Cross. This responds to those who claim that the Eucharist is a repetition of the crucifixion. No, the Eucharistic sacrifice is an extension to the cross and is beyond time. Proof that this is so, is that, a few hours before the Lord Christ shed His blood on the cross, after Judas left, He said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him,”[[86]](#footnote-87) blessed the cup, and gave His disciples saying, “He also tookthe cup after supper, saying, "This cup isthe new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” [[87]](#footnote-88) That the Eucharistic sacrifice is above time is evident in what we pray in the liturgy: “As we also commemorate His holy Passion, His Resurrection from the dead, His Ascension into the heavens, His Sitting at Your right hand, O Father, and His Second Coming.”[[88]](#footnote-89) Thus the sacrifice mentioned by Isaiah the prophet is the sacrifice of the Eucharistic. The Eucharist and the cross are one sacrifice in all the churches united in faith.

We do not bow to the bread and wine, but we bow to the body and blood of Christ after the Holy Spirit comes upon them transubstantiating them into true body and true blood of Christ united to His divinity. The bread does not change into meat and the blood does not change in to Plasma and hemoglobin. Logically, the bread that Christ ate developed His body and increased His weight. Thus the divine incarnation, the unity between the divinity and humanity is not repeatable. Incarnation is an amazing mystery, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh”[[89]](#footnote-90) As a burning piece of charcoal in the censor ignites another when added to it. Thus, all that was added to the body of Christ as he grew up did not need repetition of the incarnation, but it is an extension..

Since we accept the idea of the extension of divine incarnation, we also accept the idea of the extension of the sacrifice of the Cross. The bread becomes the body of Christ that grew. As the man born blind offered prostration to Him with all the additional increase in weight since He had been in the womb of the virgin, thus by superior divine power the Holy Spirit changes the bread into the body of Christ united with His divinity throughout thousands of years, since the Eucharist as we said is above time being a divine mystery.

Therefore, worship is offered to the real body of Christ, exactly as the man born blind worshiped Him. St. Athanasius said that Christ does not have two natures, one worshipped and another not worshipped, but we worship Christ with one prostration being God the Logos incarnate.

**His High Priesthood on the Rank of Melchizedek:**

As for the High Priesthood of Christ, it is written, “Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”[[90]](#footnote-91)

Why is it written, “according to the order of Melchizedek”? The respond is that Melchizedek offered bread and wine.

How can He become High Priest according to the order to Melchizedek unless there are priest who offer bread and wine?

Therefore the priesthood of Christ is annulled if there was no sacrifice of bread and wine i.e. Eucharist.

The High Priesthood of Christ is according to the order of Melchizedek, Melchizedek offered bread and wine. So when it is written that He is High Priest according to the order to Melchizedek this means that His priesthood is linked with the Eucharist which is an offering of bread and wine, which He started on the night of His passion and commanded for it to be performed by the high priests who were present i.e. the eleven apostles after Judas had left. He said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.”[[91]](#footnote-92)

Evidence that Judas did not partake of the holy communion is that we say in the Divine Liturgy that Christ “gave it also to His own holy disciples and saintly apostles, saying, ‘Take, eat of it, all of you.”[[92]](#footnote-93) When Christ came to speak of Judas, He told Peter, “you are clean, but not all of you.”[[93]](#footnote-94) Therefore, ‘His own hol**y** disciples’, are the disciples not including Judas.

Regarding priesthood St. Paul wrote in his epistle to Hebrews three important verses:

“Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”[[94]](#footnote-95) Here, he not only connects the Priesthood of the Lord Christ with that of Melchizedek, but his High Priesthood.

He reconfirmed it by saying in chapter 7, “For He testifies: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”[[95]](#footnote-96) and, “for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: ‘The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’”[[96]](#footnote-97)

Therefore, Jesus Christ, according to the order of Melchizedek, is High Priest forever, and also Priest forever. Why according to the order of Melchizedek? Because the priesthood of Christ is linked with the offering of bread and wine. If the Eucharist was not the sacrifice of the cross, how could the priesthood of Christ be according to the order to Melchizedek? The sacrifice of the cross on Golgotha was not bread and wine, so how could His priesthood be linked to that of Melchizedek? The answer is that the sacrifice of the Cross must be the very same sacrifice of the Eucharist. This solves the paradox.

Furthermore, since He is High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, there must be priests according to the order of Melchizedek, otherwise He would not be a High Priest, but only a priest. The priests according to the order of Melchizedek are the New Testament priests who offer the sacrifice of the cross by bread and wine (the Eucharist sacrifice). If we cancel out the New Testament priesthood or the sacrifice of the Eucharist, then we have canceled out the High Priesthood of the Lord Christ, as well as His priesthood, since His priesthood is according to the order to Mechizedek who offered bread and wine.

**Interpretation of Some Verses from the Gospel of John Chapter 6:**

In a book written by someone who attacks our church, he made an equation between two verses in this chapter: “Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day,”[[97]](#footnote-98) and, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day,”[[98]](#footnote-99) and concluded that, “**Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him**” equals “**Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood**.” Therefore, eating the flesh and drinking the blood are equal to seeing the Son and believing in him

First we have to clarify that eating from the body and drinking from the blood is not the faith in the Son. The faith of the Son is inadequate… When the Lord Christ sits on His throne on Judgment Day He says: “All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left… He will also say to those on the left hand… I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink… they will also answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You? Then He will answer them, saying, Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me… Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”[[99]](#footnote-100)

These people believed in the Lord Christ, but they did not fulfill His commandment. Since they did not fulfill the commandment, the following verse applies to them: “faith without works is dead.”[[100]](#footnote-101)

Therefore, “everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him” needs awareness that this belief is a living one working with love and fulfilling the commandment, including the commandment to “do this in remembrance of Me”, or is it only theoretical faith?

In another way, does, “Everyone who sees the Son and believes in him” prevent fulfilling the commandments of Jesus Christ? Take for example the commandment that, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit… he cannot see the kingdom of God.”[[101]](#footnote-102)

The consequences of faith is obeying the commandment. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.”[[102]](#footnote-103) One who does not keep the commandments loses his faith.

Faith is the doorway, the beginning of the way. Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”[[103]](#footnote-104) On this way, He “taught us the ways of salvation. He granted us the birth from on high through water and Spirit,”[[104]](#footnote-105) the Eucharist, all the sacraments of the church, and fulfilling the commandments of God. No one could claim that faith alone is sufficient.

1. **Venerating the Wooden Cross:**

When the wood of the cross was discovered they offered incense before it; it had been soaked with the actual blood of Christ. What is wrong in this?

What is wrong when we say, “Let us worship the cross of our good Savior.”

Protestants attack our veneration for the cross…

As for an ordinary cross, not the authentic wood of the cross, we do not worship it, but we venerate or kiss it. Do you not kiss your father’s picture, so what is wrong in kissing the cross?

The sign of the cross burns Satan. Christ foretold that at His second coming, “The sign of the Son of Man (the cross) will appear in heaven.”[[105]](#footnote-106) St Paul the Apostle said: “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”[[106]](#footnote-107)

One who attacks the veneration of the cross, forgets that the cross is the sign of victory, conquest, and salvation. This is the sign that will appear in heaven at Christ’s second coming.

But do we worship the ordinary cross that does not have the blood of Christ on it? Definitely not..

**Accusing us of exaggeration in describing St Mary**

Regarding the intercession of St. Mary specifically, some claim, using references from inside the church, that people exaggerate in her descriptions and glorifications, to a point close to worship. Moreover, we bestow on her some titles, descriptions and deeds that relates to God to the point of interchanging titles and deeds. They claim that her veneration is overrated, to a level that {offends the right theological sense}. This is the exact expression used by a writer from the Coptic Orthodox Church. Some attackers of the Orthodox faith use it. As an example, in the Verspers we ask Virgin Mary to “shut the gates of hell” and in the Veil we say “By trusting in you we’ll never be put to shame but will be saved”.

**Shut the Gates of Hell:**

In section three of the eleventh hour prayer we address St. Mary saying “shut the gates of hell.”[[107]](#footnote-108) Let us read from the begining: “Come to my rescue, when my soul departs from my body, defeat the conspiracies of the enemy, shut the gates of hell lest they swallow my soul. O blameless bride of the true Lord.”[[108]](#footnote-109)

If you ask many of the religious pious families, you will find that many of those who prayed the midnight prayers lifelong on candlelight saw Virgin Mary at the time of their departure. Among those is the martyr Sidhom Bishay. This is written in the manuscript of his biography. He told those around him, “Bring her a chair to sit on, here she comes wearing white, bring a chair for the lady.” He said this as they poured boiling oil on his head. He saw the Virgin, while they were torturing him, before his martyrdom. Do you know that on this very spot, the See chair of the Diocese of Damietta, has been established, where the body of the martyr Sidhom Bishay is found. This spot has become the Diocese chair Cathedral of Our Lady and St. Sidhom Bishay.

**The Presence of the Virgin at the Departure of a Saint’s Soul:**

She comes as a compassionate mother to the one who asks saying, “Defeat the conspiracies of the enemy.”

It is written that “Michael the archangel, in 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”[[109]](#footnote-110) What is the connection between Archangel Michael and the body of Moses? The reason is that the devil wanted to reveal the body of Moses so that the people of Israel would worship it.

Likely, on a person’s departure from this world, the demons come to arrest his soul, so one pleas with the Virgin saying, ‘Come stand by me. The demons will be terrified when they see you standing by me’ “defeat the conspiracies of the enemy,” and by your presence you will have “shut the gates of hell” from taking my soul.

Was it wrong that Michael is the one who fought the devil? Did Christ have to personally come protect the body of Moses? In the Revelation it is written: “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer…. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now **salvation**, and strength, and the kingdom **of our God**, and the power of His Christ have come.”[[110]](#footnote-111)

He said, “salvation… of our God”: Was this salvation of our God done by Archangel Michael? Is not salvation accomplished by the Lord Christ?

Certainly, the Lord Christ is the One Who accomplishes salvation.. This is a stage in the battle, when Satan “was cast to the earth… released from his prison…he knows that he has a short time… that he should deceive the nations …”[[111]](#footnote-112) But, regarding the decisive battle, St. Paul said in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, “the Lord will consume [Satan] with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming”[[112]](#footnote-113) There was a midway battle, in which He may send Archangel Michael and his army.

Does Christ have to enter each battle Himself?

The decisive final battle like the battle on the Cross and his second coming. “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish… whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”[[113]](#footnote-114)

Who will destroy the devil once and for all? The Lord Christ. During a transitional stage, however, Satan was released from his prison and tried to penetrate heaven.

Before, Satan used to stand before God and complained of Job: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.And the Lord said to Satan, From where do you come? So Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it. Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? So Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing?’”[[114]](#footnote-115)

After he was released from his prison, Satan charged for heaven with his army, so the Lord Christ commanded Archangel Michael to attack him, a battle occurred in heaven. This is one of the many scenes from the book of Revelation. This battle is after Satan was released from his prison, therefore, at the end of this chapter it says, “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.”[[115]](#footnote-116)

Therefore, this prayer is asking support from the Virgin, the saints, and the angels to humans at the time the soul departs from the body, to cast away from it the pressure of demons.

Did not Jesus Christ say that when Lazarus died, he“was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom?”[[116]](#footnote-117) Although this was a symbolic story, but, will Christ say that the angels carried the spirit of Lazarus while the angels have no role in this? Did not Christ say, in the parables of the sower and the dragnet, that the reapers are the angels who will gather His elect from the farthest part of earth?[[117]](#footnote-118) What then is wrong if I ask the holy angels to be with me in the moments when my soul departs from my body? The Virgin will come with the angels to fight for this soul which is beseeching them for help.

Returning to technology, do the people who attack us for the intercession of saints not use a microphones in preaching in their churches? Of course they do?? Why aren’t they ashamed of using a microphone?

My microphone is Virgin Mary; my prayers will not go past the ceiling, but when I use St. Mary as my microphone my prayers are immediately amplified up to God.

**Can the Devil Perform Miracles:**

Yes, he can, and he can imitate real miracles… We have to know and test the circumstances around the miracles and where they lead to in the end.

**A genuine religion should have four conditions:**

1- the presence of an accumulation of **prophecies** continuing over thousands of years that support the validity of the message.

2- sanctity of the **teachings** of this message or religion i.e. teachings being superior and holy

3- sanctity of the **person** bearing the message

4-miracles

These are four basic conditions for the geniuness of a religion or message as learned in systematic theology.

Miracles cannot solely form an upright faith. Had Christ performed miracles only, it would not have sufficed to prove that He is the Messiah, “the Desire of All Nations,”[[118]](#footnote-119) the Son of God, The Word of God, the Incarnate Word of God sent to the world.

All the prophecies were fulfilled in the person of Christ: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,”[[119]](#footnote-120) even things done by His enemies, not His friends. When the crowd greeted Him with palm branches at Jerusalem, it is written that the disciples “remembered that these things were written of Him and that they had done these things to Him”[[120]](#footnote-121); this was done by His friends, but other events were done by his enemies, such as His crucifixion. Some prophecies were fulfilled through His friends, others by His enemies, still others by a combination of both, but ultimately all the prophecies were fulfilled.

The miracles were among the signs that support Christ’s message. For example, it is written, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,”[[121]](#footnote-122) it does not say, ‘Simply because we have seen His miracles.’ Undoubtedly some believed because Lazarus was raised from the dead, and because of the miracles of the Lord Christ, but this was supported by His holy sanctity and His noble teachings; this was supported by the fulfillment of the prophecies.

Likewise, the church valuates miracles. Even within our church, when some falsely claim to work miracles, we resist them even if they were monks or priests, it is our role to advise and enlighten people.

Once they told me that a cardboard picture of Virgin Mary, in one of the districts of Cairo, leftover from a previous year’s calendar hanging in a household kitchen pours out oil. People left the churches, took off their shoes outside, and began trickling into that kitchen to take the blessing of that picture and the oil. When I heard of this, I said this is not right. Would people leave church and take off their shoes to enter the kitchen! An intelligent person went around to all the vendors in the neighborhood asking if any unordinary thing is happening to their oil. They all answered, “No,” until he reached one vendor who told him, “How do you know! Each time I fill the jar from the barrel, I find the jar lacking.” He told the people, “I found out where the oil in the picture is coming from”; it was by an invisible phantom devilish act.

Therefore, whenever a miracle occurs that takes a major position in the church, the church specifies a committee to investigate the facts, and to examine the miracle. We do not simply accept any person alleging to perform miracles, using magic for example, and so we resist and confront him. Sometimes people are upset at us, but the truth has to be revealed. This is our role that we must perform.

Among the stipulations of a real miracle is that it leads to glorifying God...

The person who receives glorification from men as a result of miracles, we have to question the sincerity of his faith, because “God isSpirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”[[122]](#footnote-123) Does this person use magic, or use prayer? Is this person moving in the upright Orthodox mentality or not?

Those who attack miracles must know that we ourselves confront any miracle not stemming from the Holy Spirit and the grace of Christ.. A miracle must lead to the glory of God, and be coupled with upright faith according to Christ’s commandments written in the Holy Bible. If those who are attacking the Orthodox faith performed miracles, I would say to them, ‘Since your faith is not upright, then your miracles are not honest.’

**Is the Coptic Congregation Obsessed With Miracles?**

Yes, our Coptic congregation is obsessed with miracles, but not all of the people, since many of our Coptic congregation are simple people who respect the priesthood. This protects them.. If they heard that the church hierarch rejects something, they obey. We have a balance between two things: rushing after miracles like the apparition of St. Mary or St. George etc. and between respecting priesthood. St. Paul says, “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”[[123]](#footnote-124) By investigation, verification, and prayer the truth is revealed.

**The Christian Trinity:**

Some accuse our worship in the Coptic Orthodox Church of being an extension of the pagan Pharaonic worship. One popular book says that the Christian Trinity consists of Isis, Osiris, and Horus. Furthermore, it claims that Pope Alexander fought against Arius who was attempting to prevent the entry of this pagan Trinity into Christianity. In other words Pope Alexander excommunicated Arius because he was loyal to the Christian doctrine rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is a fact that we are accused of being an extension of the pagan Pharaonic worship, in response we say:

The first to mention the term Trinity (ς in Greek) is the Martyr-Bishop Theophilus of Antioch (167 AD). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned in the Holy Bible; Christ said, “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,”[[124]](#footnote-125) not in the names, but in the name. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned frequently in the Holy Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. But the first to mention or write the term “Trinity” was the Martyr-Bishop Theophilus of Antioch (South-Eastern Turkey). Egyptian Christians are not the ones who invented the term “Trinity.” Thereafter, this term came to Egypt from Antioch; it has no connection with the Pharaohs.

The Pharaohs did not only have as gods, Isis, Osiris, and Horus. They had many other gods, including the god Amun and others. During the ten plagues God told Moses, “For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and **against all the gods of Egypt** I will execute judgment: I am the Lord”[[125]](#footnote-126) The Egyptians had many gods. Apis the bull, for example, was not just a statue. It was a well-kept bull, maintained in Thebes, chosen from the best breed, fed, bathed, and groomed. This was the god Apis, and when it died they chose another. There is also Anubis, with a long dog-like nose, the god who cared for burying the dead.

When I went to visit the Temple of Philae in Upper Egypt, I found inside the Temple a church with a small altar and an icon fresco on the wall. Entering the temple, I found most of the faces of the statues broken, so I was saddened over our beautiful Pharaonic heritage. But when I entered the Christian altar, I understood why they had broken the statues. There was a firm rejection among Christians against pagan worship. Now that pagan worship has ended, we say we wish they had not broken the statues (from the point of cherishing and priding in the heritage and history). This supposed unfortunate destruction expresses the zeal of the Egyptian Christians who

are considered an extension of the ancient Egyptians.

In language for example, the Coptic language is considered an extension of the demotic language, connected with the hieratic and ancient Egyptian language, but it was written in Greek letters to facilitate reading due to the difficulty of the drawings that represented the letters of ancient Egyptians.

**Sometimes they accuse us of being an extension of the pagan worship of the ancient Egyptians, and sometimes they accuse us of persecuting the pagans when our fathers converted to Christianity.**

1. Ex 20:2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Deut 6:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ex 20:4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Ex 20:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Jam 2:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ex 25: 1, 11, 16-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ex 26:31-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Ex 26:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Ps 5:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Lk 1:35. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 188. This is taken from the Fraction prayer. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. (The Holy Psalmody 1990), 92. This is taken from the Sunday Theotokia. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. (The Holy Psalmody 1990), 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Lk 1: 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Lk 1:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Ex 20:4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Num 10:35. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. 1 Sam 4:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Mt 1:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Cf. 2 Sam 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Gen 28:16-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Mt 5:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Heb 13:7; 12:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. (Hanna 1994), 522. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Rev 4:4; 5:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Mk 12:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Jn 9:38. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Gen 23:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Gen 33:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Gen 42:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Gen 43:26.  [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Gen 43:28.  [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. 1 Sam 25:25. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. 1 Sam 25:6-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. 1Sam 25: 10-33 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. 1 Kin 3:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. 1 Kin 3:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. 1Kin 3:11-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Mt 12:42. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. 1 Kin 2:19-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. 1 Kin 9:1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Rev. 3:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 2. At this point the priest opens the curtain to the sanctuary. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Ex 20:4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Rev. 5:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Rev. 5:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Ps 141: 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Rev 5:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Rev 5:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. (Hanna 1994), 522. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Jam 5:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Mat. 28: 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Mat 18: 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Ex 25:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Jn 10:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Ps 45:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Eph 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Heb 12:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 31. This is taken from the procession of the incense. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Ibid, 54. Taken from the litany for the congregation. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Mt 26:26, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Jn 6:55. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Mt 26:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. 1 Cor 11:29. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Ex 20:4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Cf. 2 Sam 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Cf. 2 Sam 6: 9,10. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Ex 3:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Mt 26:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. 1 Cor 10: 14-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. 1 Cor 11: 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. 1 Cor 11: 23-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 163. This is taken from the institution narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. 1 Cor 11:25. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Jn 6: 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. Jn 6: 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. Is 19: 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. 2 Chron 6:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Heb 13:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. Is 19:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. Jn 13:31. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Lk 22:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 164. This is taken from the Institution Narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. 1 Tim 3:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Heb 6:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Lk 22: 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 161. Taken from the institution narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. Jn 13:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Heb 6:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Heb 7: 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Heb 7: 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Jn 6:40. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Jn 6:54. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. Mt 25: 33, 41-42, 44-45, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. Jam 2:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. Jn 3:5, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Jn 14: 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. Jn 14:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. (Serapion and Youssef 2001), 157. This is taken from the Trisagion. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. Mt 24:30. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. 1 Cor 1:18. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. (Agpia: The prayer book of the seven canonical hours 1997), 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Jud 1:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Rev 12:7-8, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Rev 12:9; 20:7; 12:12; 20:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. 2 Thes 2:8; Rev 20:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. 2 Thes 2:9-10, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. Job 1:6-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. Rev 12:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Lk 16:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. Cf. Mt 13:39, 41, 49; Mk 13:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. Hag 2:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. Rev 19:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. Jn 12:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. Jn 1: 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. Jn 4:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. 2 Cor 11: 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. (The New King James Version 1982) Mt 28: 19. All Bible references are taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise specified. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. Ex 12:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)