**Sources of Authority**

**Within the Coptic Orthodox Church**

**Liturgical Texts**

 **by Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette**

 **Coptic Orthodox Church**

**Sources of Authority Within the Coptic Orthodox Church**

The Coptic Orthodox Church, for its theological principles, its doctrine and values, depends on various references or sources of authority. The main and most important of these sources are the **Holy Scriptures.** The second are the **sayings of the early fathers,** since our church is an apostolic traditional church whose faith and tradition were handed down from the apostles, their disciples the apostolic fathers, and the early fathers who were their disciples. Further significant sources are the **first three ecumenical councils** with their decrees and canons, as well as the **local synods** of the catholic church during the first centuries, with special significance to those of Alexandria. Other significant sources are the **seven sacraments** with all their implications, rites, prayers etc. Additional important sources of authority within the tradition of the Coptic Orthodox Church are the **liturgical prayers, canonical daily prayers, and church rites** that were handed down since the first centuries. This last point is the one that will be tackled in this research.

All the above-mentioned sources are in consent, accord, and harmony with one another. They are never contradictory or clashing.

The Liturgical and canonical daily prayers are: prayers of the holy liturgies[[1]](#footnote-1), prayers of the Agpia (the prayer book of the seven canonical hours), the psalmody (the prayer book of the midnight praises), the rite of the Holy Week, prayers of the seven sacraments and other services such as funerals and Laqan. These prayers are usually accompanied by prostrations, fasting, pleading for God’s mercy and forgiveness of sin.

The above-mentioned sources helped in facing many of the new innovations that our church is facing in recent times. Our church is faced by attacks against our faith in **the Holy Trinity**, our faith in the **Divine Incarnation and the divinity of Christ**. We are recently faced by some who are against the concept of the inheritance of the **original sin of Adam** and its effectson mankind, some who are against **God’s justice** and find it contradictory to His mercy and consequently attack the old concept of **atonement and redemption**, some who tried to prove the **dual predestination of man**, some who claim **deification of man,** etc.

**Liturgical and Canonical Prayers Facing New Innovations:**

**The Holy Trinity**

Throughout the ages Christianity was and is faced by attacks against the faith in the Holy Trinity. Sabillius (4th C) said that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One Person with three names. He was called Father when he was creator, Son when he redeemed, and Holy Spirit since he sanctifies.

Another way of attacking the Holy Trinity is through denying the divinity of Christ and consequently the Holy Spirit, this started since the early Christian era, and is continually creeping in through a variety of aspects throughout the ages, since it is written “*no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*” (1Cor. 12:3). In our days we have a clear example: the famous Jehovah Witnesses who do not believe in the divinity of Christ and that the Son is coessential with the Father, and also all the other different religions.

In our Liturgical and canonical prayers we have countless evidences to our faith in the Holy Trinity. Following are few examples:

***The creed of faith***is a declaration of our faith in the Holy Trinity and that the three hypostaseis are of the same essence. In the liturgical life of our Coptic Orthodox church we recite the creed of faith, more than once: during each of our sacramental rites, during the liturgy, in every hour of the Agpia, during the midnight praises…

***Baptism*** in our church is in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit equally.

***The Prayer of Thanksgiving*** by which every liturgical or canonical prayer starts ends with the following phrase to the Father and the Son:

Glory, honor, dominion and worship are due to You together with Him and the Life-Giving and coessential Holy spirit, now and forever. Amen.

***The Doxa*** is always given to the Holy Trinity, this is frequently repeated in all liturgical prayers as well as all the canonical hour prayers:

Glory be to the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now and forever and unto the ages of ages Amen.

***The Trisagion*** which is sung during all liturgical prayers, and repeated in every hour of the Agpia:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit now and forever more Amen

O Holy Trinity, have mercy upon us

O Holy Trinity, have mercy upon us

O Holy Trinity, have mercy upon us

Again in the ***Holy, Holy, Holy* prayer**, prayed in liturgical prayers and Agpia we say:

 O Holy Trinity, have mercy upon us

**The Liturgy of St. Basil – The Procession of the Lamb**

Amen. One is the Holy Father. One is the Holy son. One is the Holy Spirit. Amen. Blessed be the Lord God forever. amen

**The Liturgy of St. Gregory – the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful**

The love of God the Father; and the grace of the Only-begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, and the communion and the gift of the Holy Spirit, be with you all..

**Midnight praises – the end of the First Canticle**:

We worship You, O Christ with You Good Father, and the Holy Spirit for you have come and saved us.

**Midnight praises – the end of the Second Canticle**:

Blessed are You indeed, with You Good Father, and the Holy Spirit, for you have come and saved us

**Midnight praises- Tuesday Theotokia:**

For of His own will, and the pleasure of His Father, and the Holy Spirit, He came and saved us.

**Midnight praises – the ending of the Adam Psali**

That we may praise You, with Your good father, and the Holy Spirit, for You have come and saved us.

**Morning Doxology** starts with:

We worship the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**The Agpia – prayer of the first hour**

One is God; the Father of all. One is his Son Who became man, died and rose from the dead on the third day, and raised us up with Him. One is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and the same in nature, who proceeds from the Father and sanctifies the whole creation, teaching us to worship the Holy Trinity in one divinity, one nature. We praise Him, and we bless Him forever. Amen

**The Agpia: Third hour – a special prayer to the Holy Spirit**

O Heavenly King, the Spirit of truth, the comforter, who is everywhere and fills everybody. You are the treasure of goodness and giver of life, we ask You to graciously come and dwell within us, purify us from iniquity and save our souls.

**The Divine Incarnation:**

The mystery of the divine incarnation is a real stumble stone to all heretics. Christological disputations throughout the ages and till now revolve around the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is son of God and son of man at the same time. That is to say that He Himself, in His same person, is the Word and the true God eternally begotten of the Father without separation before all ages, and also the perfect man Who alone is without sin, born of the holy virgin Mary in the fullness of time, co-essential with the Father according to His Divinity, and co-essential with us according to His humanity.

Most heretics did not understand the mystery of the divine incarnation: i.e. how God was manifested in the flesh, how did the hypostasis of the Word become man through the incarnation, how does the superior divine nature unite with the humble human nature, how divinity united to humanity with its materialistic flesh forming one incarnate nature of the Word of God, or how, in Christ the Logos, there could be a rational human spirit while according to His divine essence He is spirit and mind, and according to his hypostatic title as God; the reason in state of generation from the Father Who is according to His hypostatic title; the origin of the mind and the rational. Or how does the divine nature unite to the human nature in a full and natural union not including any mingling of the limited human nature into the limitless infinite divine nature… Thus, heresies became numerous over this great doctrine, i.e. the mystery of the divine incarnation for the salvation of man.

Some heretics denied the divinity of Jesus Christ like the Arians, some denied His perfect humanity like Apollinarius, and others said that Jesus Christ is one person and the Son of God is another like Nestorius and his followers, as well as his teachers Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Our liturgical and canonical prayersprove the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who is co-essential with the Father. Following are few examples:

**The Liturgy of St. Gregory – the prayer of reconciliation:**

**O You Who is, Who was, Who is lasting forever; the Eternal, the One in Essence, the Co-enthroned and Co-Creator with Father**; Who for the sake of goodness only, formed man out of non-existence, and put him in the paradise of joy.

And when he fell, through the guile of the enemy and disobedience of Your holy commandment, and You desired to renew him, and to restore him to his first estate; neither an angel, nor an archangel, nor a patriarch, nor a prophet, have You entrusted with our salvation.

**But You without change, were incarnate and became man, and resembled us in everything, save for sin only.**

**The Liturgy of St. Gregory Meet and Right**

…We praise You, bless You, serve You, worship You, and glorify You, the Only One, True God, the Lover of mankind; the Unspeakable, the Invisible, the Infinite, without beginning, the Eternal, the Timeless, the Limitless, the Immeasurable, the Unchangeable, the Creator of all, the Savior of everyone, the Forgiver of our sins, the Redeemer of our life from corruption, Who crown us with mercy and compassion.

**…O You Who exists, the Master Lord, the True God of the True God, Who revealed to us the light of the Father, Who granted us the true knowledge of the Holy Spirit.**

**The Liturgy of St. Gregory – Holy Holy**

Holy, Holy, are You, O Lord, and Holy in everything and most excellent is the light of Your essence. Unexplainable is the power of Your wisdom, and no manner of speech can measure the depth of Your love of mankind…

**You, my Master, turned for me the punishment into salvation**. As a Good Shepherd, You sought after the one who had gone astray. As a true father you labored with me, I who had fallen…. **You are He Who ministered unto me salvation when I disobeyed Your Law..**

**You, Who exists at all times, came to us on earth. You came into the womb of the Virgin. You, the Infinite, being God, thought** it not robbery to be equal with God, but You humbled Yourself, and took the form of a servant. You blessed my nature in You, and fulfilled Your Law on my behalf.

**Midnight praises – Wednesday Theotokia**

God Who rests within His saints, became incarnate of the Virgin, for our salvation. Come behold and be amazed, joyfully sing on account, of this mystery, which was revealed unto us. **For the One without flesh was incarnate, and the Word took body, the One with no beginning began, and the Eternal One became temporal. The incomprehensible has been touched, and the Unseen has been seen, and the Son of the Living God, truly became the Son of Man. Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today and forever, in one hypostasis, we worship and glorify Him.**

**Midnight praises – Thursday Theotokia**

He did not cease to be divine, He came and became the Son of man, for He is the true God, who came and saved us.

**Midnight praises – Thursday Theotokia**

**The One and Only Word, begotten before all ages, according to the divinity without a body from the Father only. And He Himself also, was born bodily, without change or alteration, from His mother only.**

**Midnight praises – Sunday Theotokia – hymn for the resurrection**

Who is likened unto You, O Lord among the gods, You are the true God, the Performer of Miracles. You revealed Your power to the peoples and You saved your people with Your arm. You descended into Hades, and brought up those who were captives in that place. And granted us again, the freedom, as a Good God for You have risen and saved us.

**Agpia – First Hour**

O True Light, Who enlightens everyman, that comes into the world, You came to the world because of your love to mankind, and all creation rejoiced at Your coming. You saved our forefather Adam from temptation…

**Original Sin:**

Recently in our church, some persons rejected the effect of the original sin of Adam on mankind, claiming that the word ‘original’ started only with Augustine. They refused to believe that which they wrongly called ‘western teaching’, that the descendants of Adam and Eve inherited their sin and are regarded guilty henceforth.

There are very strong responses to this trend from the Holy Scriptures and from the sayings of the early fathers. Moreover, in our liturgies very strong proof appears against it and responds easily to it.

In every liturgy, we pray among the liturgical prayers, used in our church, the story of Adam’s sin using the pronoun of the first person singular, as if Adam’s sin was the sin of each one of us. This is always followed by the account of the salvation fulfilled by Christ as a remedy for sin and all its consequences.

**Liturgy of St. Basil:**

Holy, holy, holy indeed. **O Lord our God, who formed us, created us, and placed us in the paradise of joy, when we disobeyed Your commandment by the deception of the serpent, we fell from eternal life and were exiled from the paradise of joy**. You have not abandoned us to the end, but have always visited us through Your holy prophets, and in the last days You manifested Yourself to us, who were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, through Your only-begotten Son, our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, who, of the Holy Spirit and of the holy Virgin Mary was incarnate and became man, and taught us the ways of salvation. He granted us the birth from on high through water and Spirit. He made us unto Himself an assembled people, and sanctified us by Your Holy Spirit. He loved His own who are in the world, and gave Himself up for our salvation unto death, which reigned over us, whereby we were bound and sold on account of our sins.

**Liturgy of St. Gregory:**

You, as Lover of Mankind, have **created** **me**, as man. You had no need of my servitude, but rather I had need of Your lordship. Because of the multitude of Your tender mercies, You have brought **me** into existence when I was not. You have raised heaven as a roof for **me**, and established the earth for **me** to walk upon. For **my** sake, You have bound the sea. For **my** sake, You have manifested the nature of animals. You have subjected all things under **my** feet. You have not left **me** in need of any of the works of Your honor. You are He who formed **me**, and laid Your hand upon **me**, and inscribed in **me** the image of Your authority. You have placed in **me** the gift of speech, and opened for **me** paradise to enjoy, and have given to **me** the learning of Your knowledge. You have manifested to **me** the tree of life, and made known to **me** the sting of death. **Of one plant have** **You forbidden me to eat, that of which You have said to me, “Of it only do not eat.” But according to my will, I did eat. I put Your law behind me by my own counsel, and became slothful towards Your commandments. I plucked for myself the sentence of death…**

**You, O my Master, have turned for me the punishment into salvation… You are He who ministered salvation to me when I disobeyed Your Law. As true light, You have shone upon the lost and ignorant.**

**You have emptied Yourself and took the form of a servant, and blessed my nature in Yourself, and fulfilled Your law on my behalf.** You have shown me the rising up from **my** fall. You have given release to those who were bound in Hades. You have lifted the curse of the Law. You have abolished sin in the flesh.You have shown **me** the power of Your authority… You have manifested to **me** the economy of Your tender mercy.

**Midnight Praises - Monday Theotokia:**

**While Adam was sad, God was pleased, to bring him back** to his leadership. He shone in the flesh, taken from the Virgin, without the seed of man, in order to save us.

Rejoice and be happy, O human race, for God so revealed, His love to the world, that He gave His beloved Son, for those who believe in Him, so that they may life forever. For He has overcome, by His mercy, and sent unto us, His Almighty Arm.

**Christ** **the Second Adam, was born, in order to bring Adam, the first man made of dust, back to the Paradise, and to absolve, the decree of death,** saying “Adam you are from dust, and to dust you shall return.

For He has destroyed, the middle wall, and killed the enmity, with perfection. **He has torn, the verdict of slavery, pronounced on Adam and Eve, and He freed them**.

You have come into the world, through Your love for man, and all the creation, rejoiced at Your coming. **You have saved Adam, from the seduction, and delivered Eve, from the pangs** **of death**. You gave unto us, the Spirit of Sonship…

**Adam our father, the first creation,** by the hands of God, the Creator, through the advice of Eve, our first mother, **Adam ate from, the fruit of the tree, so came to our race, and all the creation, the authority of death, and corruption**.

**Midnight Praises - Tuesday Theotokia:**

He remained God, as He is, and became, a perfect man, so as **to abolish, the iniquity of Adam,** and that He may save, those who perished and to make him a citizen, of heaven, and restore his leadership, according to His great mercy.

**Midnight Praises - The Friday Theotokia**

Through His Cross, and His holy Resurrection, **He restored man once more, to the Paradise.**

**Agpia - The prayer of the First hour:**

**You saved our forefather Adam** from temptation and our mother Eve from the pangs of death.

**Agpia - The prayer of the Sixth hour:**

Lord, who on the sixth day, at the sixth hour, **You were nailed to the Cross for the sin that Adam dared to commit in paradise**. Break the bonds of our sins, Lord Christ, and save us.

**God’s Justice and Condemnation of Sinners:**

Certain persons claim that mercy is opposed to justice and that justice belongs to the portion of wickedness in a person. They add that justice and mercy cannot abide in one soul, that God’s use of justice cannot counterbalance His mercy, and that the mercy of the Creator is not stemmed by the vices of His Creatures. Consequently, God will not judge anyone for sin but His mercy will come upon all evil people and even the devil, not condemning any.

We already proved that this is against the biblical teachings, here we shall prove from our liturgical and canonical prayers the error is this concept. The liturgical prayers manifest God’s justice and fairness, how fearful it is to stand before God’s throne as a sinner, how we should plead for His mercy and forgiveness, and how we should be condemned according to our sin. On the other hand, they illustrate God’s mercy, tenderness, forgiveness, and great work of salvation, in which His punishment for our sin was turned into salvation. It explains, on one hand that God’s justice does not contradict His mercy, and that both are infinite and also on the other that our fear for God does not contradict our love for Him, and that both feelings should be equivalent.

**The Liturgy of St. Gregory**

**The priest says:**

You have shown me the manifestation of Your coming wherein **You shall come to judge the living and the dead, and give each one according to his deeds.**

**The respond of the congregation:**

**According to Your mercy and not according to our sin.**

**The Liturgy of St. Gregory**

**You, O my Master, have turned for me the punishment into salvation…** You are He who ministered salvation to me when I disobeyed Your law. As true light, You have shone upon the lost and ignorant.

**Midnight Praises - Sunday Psali**

Turn away Your face, from all of my sins, My Lord Jesus Christ help me.

Blot out O God, all my iniquities, My Lord Jesus Christ help me.

Have patience with me, **do not hasten to destroy me,** My Lord Jesus Christ help me.

**Midnight Praises - The conclusion of the Adam Theotokias (sung daily** pleading for forgiveness**)**

**Your mercies, O my God, are countless, and exceedingly plenteous is Your compassion**. All the rain drops are counted by You, and the sand of the sea are before Your eyes. How much more are the sins of my soul manifest before You, O my God. The sins that I have committed, do not remember my Lord, and do not count my iniquities. For You have chosen the publican, and the adulteress, You have saved and the right-hand thief my Lord, you have remembered. And me too, the sinner, teach me O my Master, to offer repentance. For You do not desire the death of a sinner but rather that he returns and that his soul may live. Restore us, O God, to Your salvation, and **deal with us according to Your goodness. For You are good and merciful; let Your compassion speedily come to us. Have compassion upon us all, O Lord God our Savior, and have mercy upon us according to Your great mercy.**

**Midnight Praises - Monday Psali**

**Exceedingly great are Your compassions, O fair Judge, O my Lord Jesus.**

Look upon us O my Lord Jesus with the merciful eye of Your Goodness… I entreat You, O my Lord Jesus to have mercy upon us in Your kingdom.

**Midnight Praises -The Conclusion of the Batos Theotokia**

O our Lord Jesus Christ, who carries the sin of the world, **count us with Your sheep,** those who are to Your right. And when You come again **in Your Second fearful appearance, may we never fearfully hear You say “I do not know you”.** But rather **may we be made worthy to hear the voice full of joy of Your tender mercies,** proclaiming and saying “Come unto Me, O blessed of My Father, and inherit the life that endures forever.” The martyrs will come bearing their afflictions, and the righteous will come bearing their virtues. **The Son of God shall come in His glory, and His Father’s glory, to give unto everyone according to his deeds which he has done**… O the angel of this day, flying up with this hymn, remember us before the Lord, that He may forgive us our sins.

**Agpia -** **Holy Holy Holy**:

O Lord forgive us for the sake of Your Holy Name that is called upon us, and **according to Your mercy and not to our sins.**

**Agpia - The prayer of the ninth hour:**

O Righteous Lord who received the confession of the thief on the cross, **accept us who** **deserve the judgment of death because of our sins**. (Although, judged to death we plead for and are sure of His mercy).

**Agpia - Absolution (ninth hour):**

Grant us to be worthy of Your calling and when we are released from this body, **may we be counted among those who kneel before Your throne** and are worthy of the sufferings of Your Only Begotten Son. Grant us Your mercy, forgive us our sins and save us…

**Agpia - The prayer of the Eleventh Hour:**

**If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where shall I, the sinner, appear?**

I practiced evil with diligence and enthusiasm, with earnestness and keenness I committed each sin. For this **I deserve suffering and condemnation**.

**Agpia - The prayer of the Twelfth hour:**

Behold, I **am about to stand before the just judge** **in fear** because of my numerous sins, for **the life spent in pleasures deserves condemnation**. Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth… Rise up from your laziness and implore the Saviour in repentance..

If this life was everlasting and this world eternal, O my soul, you would have a valid excuse. But if your wicked deeds and repulsive evils are **exposed before the just judge**, what answer would you give when you are lying on the bed of sin and failed to subject the body. O Christ, our God, **before Your fearful throne of judgment I am terrified, and before Your counsel of judgment I am in awe,** and unto the light of Your divinity I tremble, I am the wicked and defiled…

**Agpia - The prayer of the Veil:**

**Your judgment O Lord is fearful**, where people are gathered, angels standing, books are opened, works unveiled and thoughts are examined. **What judgment is mine, who is caught is sin!**

**Agpia - Midnight prayer – second service:**

When I am conscious of my sins, and **when I think of Your judgment, I fear and tremble and run to You**, O God, do not turn away my supplications. **My undefiled Lord, have mercy upon me.** (Here it is clear how our fear from God is equivalent to our love for Him being our only shelter).

**Agpia - Midnight prayer – Third service:**

Wake up, my soul and be careful, **your judge is present**. Consider the **awesome time of judgment**, **there will be no mercy on those who did not have mercy on others..**

**Agpia - Midnight prayer – Absolution:**

When you come to judge the world, grant us to hear the joyful call, “Come you that are blessed by My Father! Come and inherit the Kingdom that has been prepared for you since the creation of the world!” Lord grant us to attend at that hour without fear, anxiety or condemnation. **Do not judge us according to our sins, because You alone, have such compassion, patience and mercy.**

**Atonement and Redemption:**

There is a contemporary current of thought among some individuals in the church, assuming that God is never enraged because of sin, and that He does not punish the sinners for their sins. This current trend **expels the idea of receiving the dues of the Divine Justice in full upon the cross**. It denies the idea of punishment concerning the sentence of death against man. Thus, the concept of redemption and the dogma of atonement dissolves, and this results in the loss of the value of the Christian doctrine. An extremely dangerous subject.

We already responded to this concept with biblical evidence and from the sayings of the fathers, but here we shall prove the flaw from the liturgical and canonical prayers as well.

**Liturgy of St. Gregory** (The Prayer of Reconciliation):

O You, the Being, who were and who abide forever, the eternal, co-essential, co-enthroned and co-creator with the Father, who for the sake of goodness only brought man into existence out of nonexistence, and put him in the paradise of joy. And when he fell through the deception of the enemy and the disobedience of Your holy commandment, You desired to renew him and to restore him to his first estate. Neither an angel not an archangel, neither a patriarch nor a prophet, have You entrusted with our salvation, but You, without change, were incarnate and became man and resembled us in everything, except for sin alone, and **became for us a mediator with the Father, and the middle wall You have broken down and the old enmity You have abolished. You have reconciled the earthly with the heavenly and made the two into one, and fulfilled the economy in the flesh**.

**Liturgy of St. Gregory:**

**You have come to the slaughter as a lamb, even to the Cross**. You have manifested the greatness of Your care for me. **You have slain my sin in Your tomb**. You have brought my first fruit up to heaven. You have shown me the manifestation of Your coming wherein You shall come to judge the living and the dead, and give each one according to his deeds.

**Midnight Praises - Sunday Psali**

You who carries the sins of world save me, My Lord Jesus Christ help me.

**Midnight Praises - The Sunday Theotokia**

**He who offered Himself, as an acceptable sacrifice, upon the Cross, for the salvation of our race. His Father smelled Him in the evening on Golgotha. He opened the gate of Paradise and restored Adam again to his authority.**

Who is likened unto You, O Lord among the gods, You are the true God, the Performer of Miracles. You revealed Your power to the people and You saved Your people with Your arm. You descended into Hades and brought up those who were captives in that place. And granted us again, the freedom as a Good God for You have risen and saved us.

**Midnight Praises - Tuesday Theotokia**

For of His own will and the pleasure of His Father and the Holy Spirit He came and saved us.

**Midnight Praises - Thursday Theotokia**

The One of the Trinity coessential to the Father, **when He looked upon our tribulation and our bitter slaver**y. He bowed the heaven of heavens, and came to the womb of the Virgin. He became man like us, save for sin only. When He was born in Bethlehem, according to the prophecies, He **saved and redeemed us,** for we are His people.

**Agpia - The prayer of the sixth hour:**

O Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was nailed to the Cross at the sixth hour. You **mortified sin by the cross**, by your death you raised the dead; Man, whom you created with Your hands, who died to sin.

**Agpia - Absolution (sixth hour):**

Accept our supplications an remove the seal of our sins as it was broken at this holy hour, through the crucifixion of Your Only Begotten Son, the Saviour of our souls, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom You destroyed the power of evil.

**Agpia - The prayer of the ninth hour:**

O Lord who **tasted death in the flesh** at the ninth hour for our sake, we the sinners; mortify our carnal senses, O Christ our God, and deliver us.

You were born of the virgin, for our sake and endured crucifixion, O Righteous Lord, with **Your death You defeated death**, with Your resurrection You made eternal life manifest.

**Deification of Man:**

In the last decade, some persons in our church adapted a trend that exaggerates the explanation of the state of man after the incarnation of the Logos. They depend mainly on a wrong interpretation of: “*I said, You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High*” (Psa 82: 6) overlooking the rest of the saying in the following verse “But you shall die like men”.

They claim that through the incarnation of the Son of God, He assumed the human nature in general, thus mankind was deified by grace and fully united to God, becoming members of His own body. Consequently, we were born, crucified, resurrected, ascended, and are now sitting at the right hand of the Father in Heaven with Christ, or in Christ.

The outcome of this trend would be that one does not need to strive, ask for God’s mercy, humiliate himself before God, repent, lead an ascetic life, seek a live of virtue etc. This is very different from the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and of the church throughout the ages. We find powerful responses to this error in the Holy Scriptures and in the sayings of the fathers.

Moreover, our daily and liturgical prayers similarly prove the error in this recent trend. It teaches us how to approach God in the correct manner, clarifying that the nature of God is divine and ours is sinful. It instructs us in the behavior and feeling by which we should stand before God and speak to Him defining how we should regard ourselves in our relationship with Him.

Following are only some examples:

**The Liturgy of St. Cyril** (The prayer of Reconciliation):

O Author of life and King of ages, **O God, unto whom every knee bows**, those in the heavens, those on earth, and those under the earth; **to whom all are humbled and under the yoke of servitude, bowing the head to the scepter of His kingship**; Who are glorified by the angelic hosts and the heavenly orders and the rational natures with unceasing voices declaring His Godhead. And You were pleased that we frail earthly men should also serve You, not on account of the purity of our hands, since **we have wrought no goodness on earth, but rather desiring to give to us, we undeserving wretches of Your purity**. Receive us unto Yourself, O Good One and Lover of Mankind, as **we draw near to Your holy altar, according to the multitude of Your mercies**….

**And cast us not behind, we Your servants, on account of the defilement of our sins**, for You, as a creator, know our form, that no one born of a woman can be justified before You. So make us worthy, O our Master, with a holy heart and a soul filled with Your grace, to stand before You…

**Liturgy of St. Gregory** (The Prayer of Reconciliation):

O Christ our God, the **fearful and incomprehensible power of God the Father**, who sit upon the flaming throne of the cherubim, who are served by the fiery powers; and You, as God, are consuming fire…

**Make us worthy, O our Master**-we also at this fearsome hour, that with one mind and without double-heartedness and the rest of evil to greet one another with a holy kiss.

**And cast us not into condemnation**, even if **we are not perfectly pure from the mire of sin, malice, and the deadly remembrance of evil**, according to the pleasure of Your goodness, but rather through Your ineffable and indestructible compassion, **knowing the frailty and downfall of our form**, wipe away all the stain of our iniquities, **that we may not be under condemnation nor fall into judgment** concerning this Mystery of Your divinity.

**The Liturgy of St. Gregory**

You, who are the **Being at all times**, have come to us on earth. You have come into the womb of the Virgin. **You, the Infinite, being God…**

**Midnight Praises - Sunday Psali for the Lord Jesus:**

**Every knee, bows down before You**, My Lord Jesus Christ help me.

All the diverse tongues, together bless Your name, My Lord Jesus Christ help me.

**Midnight Praises - The Friday Theotokia**

**He took what is ours, and gave us what is His**, we praise and glorify Him, and exalt Him.

**Midnight Praises - The Saturday Psali**

Every soul praises You, **every knee bows to You**, O my Lord Jesus Christ my good savior.

Receive our prayers we who are sinners O my Lord Jesus Christ my Good Savior.

**Agpia -** **The Trisagion**:

O Holy Trinity, **have mercy upon us**.. O Lord, **forgive us** our sins. O Lord, forgive us our trespasses. O Lord, forgive us our transgressions.

**Agpia** - **Holy Holy Holy**:

O Holy Trinity **have mercy upon us**. O Lord God of hosts be with us, for we have no other supporter in our tribulations and adversities but You. O God, **absolve, remit and forgive us our sins** which we have done willingly and unwillingly, and those which we committed knowingly and unknowingly, the hidden and the visible.

O Lord forgive us for the sake of Your Holy Name that is called upon us, and according to your mercy and not to our sins.

**Agpia -** **Conclusion prayer:**

O Christ our good Lord, plenteous in patience, mercy and compassion, who loves the just and shows mercy to all sinners amongst whom I am the first. Who does not wish death for the sinner but repentance and life, calling us all to salvation for the promised forthcoming rewards… Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, set right our thoughts, cleanse our intentions, heal our sickness, forgive us our sins, and deliver us from every evil, grief…

**Agpia: The prayer of the first hour**

Listen to our voices according to Your great mercy, and save us, O Lord our God, through Your compassion.

**Agpia - The Gloria:**

O Lord, Lamb of God and Son of the Father, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, accept our supplications.

**Agpia - Midnight prayer- first service**:

Remember my soul that awesome day, awake and light your lamp with the oil of joy for you do not know when the voice will call: “Behold, here comes the bridegroom”. **Watch my soul, that you do not fall asleep lest you should stay outside knocking like the five foolish virgins..**

1. In our Coptic Orthodox Church we use three ancient Liturgies the oldest is the Liturgy of St. Mark the Apostle, instituted and used by him. It was handed down and used in the church since the first century. Later St. Cyril of Alexandria (378-444 A.D.) added to it some prayers, therefore it is sometimes named after him, i.e. the Liturgy of St. Cyril. We also use the liturgy of St. Gregory Nazianzen (325-390 A.D.), and the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great of Caesarea (329-379 A.D.). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)