

A Series
of Dialogues
on The Creed



**COPTIC ORTHODOX
CHURCH
MY FAITH**

Pope Tawadros the Second

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HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II

**Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of The See of St. Mark
One Hundred and Eighteenth**



A ray of Loyalty



The first edition of this book was published during the papacy of His Holiness reposed Pope Shenouda III, with the blessing of His Eminence Abba Pachomius, metropolitan of Beheira, Matrouh and the Pentapolis, and head of the Clerical Seminary at Damnhour.

Introduction

This book was first published in 1990 in the Metropolis of Beheira, Matrouh, and Pentapolis, and has been republished a number of times ever since in different publications. Its targeted readership is primarily the youth of secondary school and university (16-25), at whose age questions and inquiries recur concerning our Holy Faith.

So, we have gathered a number of these questions, categorised them systematically according to the articles of the Creed¹, and set them in the form of sequential dialogues of a 148 questions and answers. We sought precision, simplicity and depth, in order to present this work in a practical and fitting manner, so that it may be simultaneously comprehensive and concise to our youth in every Christian family, and so that it may be beneficial to all who ask a reason of the hope that is in us.

Our aim is to present the basics of our Christian and Church life in the form of questions and answers, as it is one of the most beneficial and effective forms of Christian education for all ages.

“Without faith [it is] impossible to please [Him]” (Heb. 11:6).

Pope Tawadros the Second

The Monastery of Abba Bishoy in Wadi el-Natrun

July 31, 2014

¹ Translator's note: Literally, “Rule of Faith.”

This is My Faith

These sorts of questions revolve around our Holy Faith, and are frequently repeated in youth meetings.

We present them through the Creed, which we recite in a prayerful spirit in every occasion.

We present them in a practical and fitting form, so that it may simultaneously be a comprehensive and concise reference.

It is beneficial for our youth and children in every Christian family, and to all who ask a reason of the hope that is in us.

1. What is the right outlook with respect to the definition of the Christian Faith?

Faith is not merely embracing a number of doctrines that are recited in the “Creed.” It is rather a life that we live, or a belief that leads to life. Faith is also not merely belief in concepts or principles about God, but is rather a union at the core with a Living Person Who is God, and a relation to Him as the Author of our life, and its source.

Christian Faith:

A living, existential² realisation of God’s existence in my life, which is defined by Holy Scripture as, “[T]he **substance (personal) of things hoped for, the evidence (internal) of things not seen**” (Heb. 11:1).

The Reposed Hegoumen Bishoy Kamel said,

The measure of a Christian person is not that of his human body, but is rather the measure of God, Who dwells through His Spirit in the person. Therefore, I cannot by myself move a mountain. But God, Who dwells in me, is able, through me, to move a mountain. Similarly, if I have Christian Faith like a mustard seed, **“I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).**

² Translator’s note: Pertaining to, or expressing the fact of existence.

2. Who, then, is the Christian Believer?

He is not one who advocates a notion of God, but rather accepts God as a god to him, or as the centre of his whole existence, guiding and directing his entire life.

This means that the essence of Faith is for God to become “my God.” That is to say, he becomes the absolute point of reference for all of my affairs, and I am to obey Him not only in my external behaviour, but in my thoughts, desires, all of my feelings, so that He rules over my heart.

This is the meaning of the word “orthodox” (sound or right doctrine). An Orthodox Christian is a believer who lives a right life in God.

3. What is the way by which I may live this life of Faith?

If God-the Object of Faith-surpasses all mind, thought, imagination, feeling, and desire, then this means that I cannot conceive of Him on my own.

However, because God loves me-I am His creation and His handiwork-He desires to reveal Himself to me. This is because love drives the lover to reveal himself to his beloved, according to the saying of the Lord Jesus, **“I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).**

This is the significance of Christianity. All other religions attempt to lead man to a search for God. But in Christianity, God is the One Who seeks man, because of His love for him in order that he may be healed, restored, and saved from all of his passions.

It is worth noting that God, Who is always seeking me because of His love for me, does not force Himself upon my life without my consent for the simple reason that He respects the freedom that He has given me.

God does not only reveal Himself to the pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). God will reveal Himself through love to the one who is disposed in his heart to meet God.

4. Does not this understanding of Faith make Christianity's primary concern Heaven, and not Earth in which we live in?

This is true, and it is a genuine goal.

However, even though Christianity is a heavenly life, it is practiced on earth. We should not forget that God is not isolated in heaven when dealing with us. He came down to us, and united Himself to our human nature. He ate from the fruits of our earth, and drank from its waters. He granted us eternity through the reality of time. He took what is ours (i.e. our earthly nature, and our sins), and gave

us what is His (the heavenly and eternal life), as was said by St. Athanasius the Apostolic.³

So, in Christianity, we live that which is heavenly without disregarding the earthly. We worship God unconditionally without abandoning order, deriding time, or forgetting that we are here on earth.

5. Why was the Christian Faith formulated in the form of a Creed?

The Creed: Is the constitution of our Christian doctrine, which fully contains the terms of our Holy Faith in the form of clear and precise authoritative formulations that do not allow for argument or uncertainty. All Christians-East and West-know this Rule, and recite it in their prayers.

This Creed was formulated primarily for apologetic and catechetical purposes, but in a simplified theological arrangement that proclaims the right Faith of the Church, and is declared and prayed by Christians.

The Creed has become, however, a synthesis of the sound Christian Faith, more than a confession that is recited by catechumens.

³ Translator's note: "He acted as our Mediator, taking on Him what was ours, that He might impart to us what was His" (cf. St. Athanasius, *Fourth Discourse Against the Arians* 6, 7).

The Creed is called in Greek “SYMBOLON,” which is a means of recognition. The word is taken from the tokens of recognition, which soldiers exchanged in order to distinguish a friend from a foe.

It is worth noting that all the expressions of the Creed are derived entirely from Holy Scripture with its two testaments.

6. What is the source of the Creed?

Its source is the Holy Scripture, with its two testaments, which is God’s revelation of Himself to man. The first is to the Jews through what is known as the Old Testament, followed by a more evident and definitive manifestation to all men in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is known as the New Testament.

This Divine Revelation was recorded in holy books by holy men who were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

Holy Scripture is not one book, but is a group of assorted books comprised in one Book, each of these books is called cepher (from the Hebrew *word cepher*: book).

These books were written by persons of diverse characteristics, environments, and cultures, who lived in different places and times, and under varying social conditions.

Its writing spanned more than 1500 years, the date of its oldest scripture goes back to more than 3500 years. Despite

the variety of Its writers and the differences of their conditions across the ages, in the end, it comes out as one big book containing harmonized smaller ones. This indicates that its author is one, Who is God. Its one aim is the salvation of all men, from all nations, tribes, and tongues. It begins with the Book of Genesis, which speaks of the creation of the world, and ends with the Book of Revelation, which deals with the issue of the end of the world and the life of the other world.

7. When was the Creed formulated historically?

The Creed was instituted over two stages, corresponding with the appearance of heresies, against which the Christian Church had to defend Her Faith.

First:

In A.D. 325, the First Ecumenical Council was convened in the City of Nicaea in Turkey to deliberate over the heresy of Arius the Heretic, who attempted to sway the established Faith of the Church by saying that Christ is not eternal, and therefore not God, but merely a mediator between God and men.

In response to this heresy, the Council formulated the first part of the Creed (from its beginning to “Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit”).

Second:

In A.D. 381, the Second Ecumenical Council was convened in the City of Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) to deliberate over the heresy of Macedonius the Heretic, who taught that the Holy Spirit is not God.

In response to this heresy, the Council completed the second part of the Creed, demonstrating and dividing⁴ our belief in the Holy Spirit and His Divinity (the Lord, the Giver of Life...and the life of the coming age. Amen.).

8. What are the meanings of “Ecumenical Council” and “Heretic”?

“Ecumenical Council”:

A gathering of the shepherds and teachers of the Church from all the regions of the world to examine a matter that concerns the Christian Faith, with the aim of preserving the order and soundness of the Faith among the Christians throughout the entire world.

This expression is similar to the expression “international conference.” However, the concern is not with nations, but rather with the Christian churches in different countries.

⁴ Translator’s note: Making or drawing distinction (discerning) between what is sound and what is not.

“Heretic”:

An innovator, who proclaims a teaching that is contrary to what was recorded in Holy Scriptures. He also does not adhere to the teachings of the Church, which were proclaimed by Her Fathers throughout the centuries, and is thus referred to as a “heresiarch.” He is tried by an ecclesiastical (church) council that is either ecumenical or local. A range of disciplines are possible, the most serious of which is “excommunication” or “anathematisation,” which is his rejection from amongst the Christians, because he has disturbed the peace of the Church (2 John 1:10).

9. What is meant by “The Introduction to the Creed”?

The Introduction to the Creed is what is said prior to the recital of the Creed, and begins with “We exalt you, the Mother of the True Light.”

This piece was formulated by the Fathers of the Third Ecumenical Council⁵, which convened in the City of Ephesus in Asia Minor in 431, in response to the heresy of

⁵ Translator’s note: Other sources claim that the Introduction was authored by St. Cyril of Alexandria, and that it received approval by a local council that was convened in Alexandria (cf. Iris Habib el Masri, *The Story of the Copts: The True Story of Christianity in Egypt*, Vol. 1 [Merry Springs, California: St. Antony’s Monastery] 258).

Nestorius the Heretic, who claimed that the Virgin Lady Mary is the Mother of Christ's humanity only, and not Mother of God ("Theotokos," i.e. "Mother of God") as we profess Her to be.

10. Can it be said that the Creed is the synopsis of Christianity?

Yes, because, as was previously mentioned, it contains in concise form all of the articles of our Holy Faith, summarised in the following:

- a. The Divinity of God the Father: Pantocrator, Creator of all things.
- b. The Divinity of God the Son: Only Begotten, begotten of the Father, by Whom all things were made.
- c. The Divinity of the Holy Spirit: the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father.
- d. The Attributes of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.
- e. The Mystery of Holy Baptism for the new birth.
- f. The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead.
- g. The Doctrine of the Other Life and the Coming Age.

11. Why did the Church arrange that the Creed be recited in our prayers?

The Creed is recited in all of the prayers of Agpeya, at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, in the other Holy Mysteries, and during our Church gatherings. It is recited audibly while the people are standing for the following reasons:

- a. To confess before God and men that we will uphold the upright Faith, and will remain steadfast in the Word of God.
- b. To remember the persecutions and sufferings which were endured by the Church Fathers in order to preserve the purity and integrity of the Faith.
- c. This is a recitation of verses from Holy Scripture, which is the source of all of its articles, as was mentioned previously.

12. What is to be understood from the first article of the Creed?

When we say, “In truth we believe in One God,” we proclaim that our Faith is true, and not merely a teaching or an indoctrination. It is a real Faith that is from within, which is sound and without any doubt whatsoever.

We confess two realities that embody the foundation of all creedal truths, being:

- ❖ That we believe that God exists (existence of God).
- ❖ That we believe that God is one (oneness of God).

13. How can we be certain of the reality of God's existence?

Commonly people say:

“God has not been seen by anyone,
but people knew Him with their minds.”

This means that man, in his present capacity, is incapable of beholding the Divinity of God as He truly is. However, he can perceive mentally that God exists, and that He brought the world into being, creating it from nothing. He can perceive that God is spirit, and is not subject to the realm of the material senses.

We cannot see God now, but will delight in being eternally with Him when we set this body aside, with its limited physical and temporal faculties. If we are unable to see things that are very distant, or hear noises that faraway because of the incapability of our eyes and ears, it is not surprising that we cannot perceive God through sight.

If we wish to behold God in this world, we can do so in His handiwork and creation. We can observe Him in:

1. The Existence of Life:

The existence of life gives proof to the existence of God. It has been determined scientifically that there was a time when there was no form of life on the earth-whether human, animal, or plant-and that the earth was ablaze, as if it were a piece of fire, when it was torn from the solar

group. This did not allow for the existence of human or animal life, so how was life formed?

The question remains without answer, because the mystery of life remains until now an elusive enigma. We cannot fathom an answer, save for a power that transcends the rational faculty that must have established it. This power we call "God."

2. The Existence of Matter:

How did matter develop, and by whom was it wrought? Undoubtedly, it was God (Job 12:7-10).

3. The Existence of Order:

Coincidence is not order. To the one who studies the marvellous order of the universe and its laws that cannot be disrupted, it is apparent that beyond this sphere is a Structurist. To the one who studies the science of medicine, it can be observed that every system in the body works in an amazing order, and that there must be a Structionist. Wherever there is order, there is a Structionist, Who is God.

14. Does Christianity believe in One God?

Yes, Christianity believes in the oneness of God, and that there is no other god than Him. In this, it rejects the

principle of *shirk* (association, such as that of the pagans, who believe in polytheism). There is an abundance of verses from Holy Scripture, with its two testaments, that support this, amongst which are:

✦ **Old Testament:**

- ❖ **“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord”** (Deut. 6:4 LXX).
- ❖ The Lord says, **“Behold, behold that I am He, and there is no god beside Me”** (Deut. 32:39 LXX).
- ❖ And says again, **“I am the first, and I am hereafter: beside Me there is no God”** (Is. 44:6 LXX).

✦ **New Testament:**

- ❖ **“[There is] none good but One, [that is], God”** (Matt. 19:17, Mark 10:18).
- ❖ **“[It is] one God”** (Rom. 3:30).
- ❖ **“But to us [there is but] one God”** (1 Cor. 8:6).
- ❖ **“It is the same⁶ God Which worketh all in all”** (1 Cor. 12:6).

We affirm this reality every time we seal ourselves with the Sign of the Cross by saying at the end, “...One God. Amen.”

The Fathers used the expression “One God” in order to

⁶ Translator’s note: In Arabic, “It is One God Which worketh all in all.”

put an end to the error of polytheism, and subsequently to stress the belief and affirmation that God is one, distinct by nature and in truth. Thus, they proclaimed their Faith in One God.

Note that the devils do not fall into the delusion of polytheism, for it is written, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). The devils, however, entice humans with the sin of polytheism.

15. If this is so, why do we say that there are Three Persons (or Hypostases)?

We worship One God, **“For there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these Three are One” (1 John 5:7).**

From this, we have: the Being of God (the Father), the Mind of God (the Son), and the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit). The Three are One.

If man was created in the image of God and His likeness, then he was created according to an image: a human being, a mind, a spirit, and the three are one.

When we speak of your nature, we say that you have: a mind or a self, reasonable (rational) speech, and a spirit. Speaking of your nature does not negate at all that you are one, and not three.

16. What is the meaning of the word “Hypostasis”?

Oqnoom (Hypostasis) is a Syriac/Semitic expression that has made its way into the Arabic language,⁷ and is used uniquely for God alone.

It is made up of two words: *hypo* = under, and *stasis* = standing. Thus, the literal meaning is that which is “standing under,” i.e. that which underlies as the foundation. In other words, the hypostasis is a personal property without which the Divine Essence cannot stand. For example:

A. Property of Existence:

It is inconceivable that God exists without this property, for He is the Imperative (or Necessary) Existence.

B. Property of Reason:

It is unthinkable that God exists without this property, for He is the Mind and Wisdom.

C. Property of Life:

It is impossible that God exists without this property, for He is the Living and the Giver of Life.

Thus, it is evident from the above that the Three Hypostases are distinct in operation, but unseparated, because They are in the One Divine Essence.

⁷ Translator’s note: The word is *qnoma* in Syriac, and *oqnoom* in Arabic.

17. What is the meaning of the expression “Divine Essence”?

For simplicity it can be said that the word “**Essence**” means the nature that is characteristic of the being. Therefore, the Divine Essence is the nature of the Divinity (God), with all that it entails. Our God is one in essence, meaning that He is one of a kind, incomparable, transcending all creation, for He is its Creator, its Life-giver, and its Preserver.

We believe in Three Hypostases, not Three Essences, one in essence.

18. Why is the reality of the Three Hypostases seemingly hard for some to grasp?

The difficulty is not in the “issue” of the Hypostases, but rather in the “designation” of the Hypostases.

We call the **Divine Being** “**The Father,**” meaning “**Origin or Source.**” Naturally, it is not a physically reproductive fatherhood, but an equivocally spiritual one. To some extent, it may resemble our saying that Egypt is our mother.

Likewise, we call the **Divine Wisdom** “**Son,**” meaning “**Mind.**” This, of course, is a spiritual sonship, not reproductive.

Alternatively, it is like saying:

The mind of so-and-so solved the problem =
so-and-so solved the problem

Therefore, the mind of so-and-so = so-and-so
himself

And, the Mind of God = God Himself

We also refer to the Divine Life as “The Holy Spirit,” which is to say “Life,” because the Spirit is the Breath of Life. When the spirit departs from man, he is brought to an end.

Thus, these appellations are linguistic expressions intended to convey to us an essential reality, being that:

“God is one: Existing by His being, Rational by His Word, and Living by His Spirit.”

19. Please elaborate further on this point.

God, Who we believe in and adore, is: **One Divine Being and Three Hypostases.**

In order to demonstrate this, we ask:

❖ **Is God, Who I adore, existent or not?**

The answer is that He certainly exists, and that He is filling the whole of existence. If this is not so, then God would come to nought, God forbid.

Moreover, we ask:

❖ **Is God, Who is existent, alive or dead?**

The answer is that He is surely alive. Otherwise, if He

were existent and not alive, He would be a mere figure or idol, God forbid.

Finally, we ask:

❖ **Is the Living, Existent God rational and reasonable, or no?**

The answer is that He is assuredly rational, dealing with His servants and creation. If not, being existent, living, and unreasonable, He would be a mere irrational living being, like the birds, plants, and animals. God forbid that He would be described as such.

From this sort of questions and answers, it becomes evident that, in Christianity, the God Who is adored and believed in is:

The God Who (in His Divine Being) is in Three Distinct Hypostases, but one Divine essence

And so He is: **Existent-Rational-Living.**

20. What, then, is the meaning of the Three Hypostases being in the One Divine Being?

This means that the Three Hypostases have the same one essence, and for simplification we can say that:

The Father: Existent by Himself, Rational by the Son, and Living by His Spirit.

The One God is Existent by Himself (the Father), Rational by His Word (the Son), and Living by His Spirit.

To illustrate this further, we say that:

The Father is the “Existence”.

The Son is the “Rationality”.

The Holy Spirit is the “Life”.

21. Does Holy Scripture attest to the Doctrine of the Trinity?

Definitely, for what has been taught about the Trinity was revealed by God Himself to us in His Holy Scripture. This was first alluded to in the Old Testament, and then explicitly indicated in the New Testament. Here are a few examples:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are Three Hypostases in One God, which is why He did not say “names,” but rather said “Name,” because God is one.

St. John the Beloved says, **“For there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these Three are one” (1 John 5:7).**

In the event of the Baptism, we see the One God being revealed in His Three Hypostases: the Voice of the Father from Heaven, the Incarnate Son immersed in the River Jordan, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove settling on the head of the Word Incarnate (Matt. 3:13-17).

22. Are the Divine Hypostases parts that form the Being of God?

The Divine Hypostases-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit-are not parts or pieces that form the Divine Being, God forbid, for the Divine Being is one, unbroken and undivided. The Father is not a part of God, but God Himself is the Father (an Eastern word⁸ denoting “originator”). “God is the originator of existence,” and that is why we call Him “the Father.”

The Holy Spirit is not a part of God, God forbid, but God is the Greatest Spirit, the Holy One, the Framer of life, its Forger, and its Author.

The Son is not a part of God, but He Is His Word and rational uttering.

God, being the Greatest Mind and the Fashioner of existence, was incarnate in Christ. Christ, then, is the

⁸ Translator’s note: The word referred to here is ‘*ab*.’

Word, or the Rational Uttering of God, or the Reasonable Mind of God. He is the Son of God, that is to say that He is the “Greatest Manifestation of God,” i.e. the appearance of God in Christ.

The Divine Hypostases, then, are God Himself, upon Them the Divine Essence stands, and without Them the Divine Essence has no being or existence.

God cannot be without His Being (the Father), rational without His Mind (the Son), or living without His Spirit (the Holy Spirit). God cannot be divided, and His attributes cannot be split. God, for example, is merciful and just. It is difficult to speak of the justice of God alone, or the mercy of God alone. Yet, I say that God is just in His mercy, or that His mercy is just, or that He is merciful in His justice, or that His justice is merciful, or that the mercy of God is full of justice, or that the justice of God is full of mercy.

23. Are there no conflicts or contradictions between speaking of Oneness and Trinity?

It may have been contradictory had we spoken of three gods. However, there are Three Hypostases in One God.

Oneness is an issue, and Trinity is another one. God is one, because the divinity is one, the Divine Essence is one, and the Divine Being is one.

It is a Trinity of the Hypostases, not a Trinity of beings or essences. When we make the Sign of the Cross, we call to mind the Three Hypostases: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yet, we conclude by saying, “One God,” as an expression of the unity.

The Christian teaching on the Trinity and the Oneness can be summarised characteristically in the expression “Three in One.” This cannot be extended to any other triadic form. By saying that the Three are One, we do not mean that the Father is the Son is the Holy Spirit, or else the distinction of the Trinity is lost. What we do mean is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one in divinity, in nature, and in essence. It may be likened to the fire, which is flame, light, and heat. We cannot say that the flame is the light, or that the light is the heat. However, the three are one, and the fire, with its flame, light, and heat, are one entity.

24. Is it true that the concept of the Christian Trinity is derived from the Ancient Egyptian Triad?

There is not the least bit of a relationship, for the Ancient Egyptian Triad speaks of three gods: A father god whose name is Osiris, who married a mother god whose

name is Isis, and they begat a son god whose name is Horus. There were also other children who warred and feuded with one other.

Thus, they are not a trinity but a family, and this all took place by way of natural reproduction, which is the result of marriage and mating.

Christianity is opposed to this pagan triad, because of its dissimilarity to the Christian Trinity. It (the pagan triad) has femininity, natural birth, marriage, and a son whose age is younger than the father and who is his successor. There was also a time when it did not exist, in addition to the son's generation being a separation from the parents, and all of this is nonexistent in the Christian Trinity.

As for the Christian Trinity, we say that He is **“One God in Three Hypostases,”** which is utterly different from the flesh, marriage, birth, and reproduction.

25. Were there any erroneous theories concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity throughout history?

There were many triads that were known in the pagan religions, such as the Egyptian triad, the Hindu triad, and

the Brahman triad.⁹ In the seventh century A.D.¹⁰, there appeared also an erroneous theory that attributed to the Christians the claim that Christ is the third of three gods, and that God the Father conjoined with Mary so that she bore Christ. This was known as the Marian heresy.

This erroneous concept, however, has no relation whatsoever with what we proclaim about the All-Holy Trinity, and we have been refuting it prior to the seventh century A.D. and after.

26. Does my Faith in the doctrine of the Trinity mean that I associate with God (Polytheism)?

Certainly not. My Faith in the All-Holy Trinity is my Faith in the One God. It is worthy of note that there is a drastic difference between the associators on the one hand, and the Christians on the other. This can be read in books on the general history of religions.

⁹ Translator's note: The Hindu and the Brahman triads are one in the same. They are otherwise known as Trimurti (Sanskrit: *tri* 'three' + *murti* 'form'), which is a grouping of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer.

¹⁰ There were roots for this heresy since the 3rd century.

27. What are the illustrations from everyday life that best demonstrate this doctrine?

There are illustrations from our everyday life that approximate for our minds the Doctrine of the Trinity and Unity, but are not as profound. For example:

- Man has existence, speech, and life. He is one man in his one human being.
- Fire consists of flame, from which light emanates and heat proceeds.
- The sun is a disk from which light emanates and heat proceeds. The disk is not light, which is not heat. However, the three are inseparable, because the one sun is existent in the disk, illuminating by its rays, and smouldering by its heat.

To those who do not believe in the Trinity, finding sufficiency in God being one, we say:

What is the value of the sun as a disk without rays or heat? It has no existence without its lights and heat.

- Equilateral triangle (for example of gold): it has one Essence of gold and three equal angles.

There are some illustrations that are faulty or lacking, amongst which is:

- **Tree:** Consists of roots, a trunk, and branches. The flaw is that each of its constituents is independent from the other.

- **Matter:** Exists in three phases: solid-liquid-gas. The flaw is that this occurs under certain conditions.

- **Finger:** Consists of three phalanges. Its flaw is that they are not equivalent, and are not formed at once.

28. Is it necessary for my Faith to be in the Tri-Hypostatic One God?

Christians do not have a doctrine that does not correlate to human life. This means that my life would be totally different if the Trinity did not exist.

It must not escape us that if we speak of God, our words should have different meanings than those we are familiar with, for there is nothing in existence like God, nor is there a creature that is like Him.

For example, if we say that a person is “beautiful,” it is not in this sense that we say that God is beautiful. We cannot by any means speak of God in the same manner that we speak of man, because human language falls short in speaking of God. Man cannot but enumerate the senses. God cannot be quantified, for if He is numbered becomes limited.

In summary, the case is not statistic, but the issue is with man’s calculating mind. In order for him to understand correctly, he must think.

In order to comprehend with our hearts before our minds, we must be aware that Christianity describes God as love-“God is love”-which means that there is an operation of love in God. He is not wrapped up in Himself, but is open to converse with man whom He loves, and it is a dialogue of love. The Father is the Lover, the Son is the Beloved, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Love, or the Language of Mutual Love. The Father loves the Beloved Son with the Spirit of Love. Thus, the circle of love is complete, of which we speak about God saying that He is love.

- It is noteworthy that The Father loves The Son, The Son loves The Holy Spirit. So, every Hypostasis loves the other two and the Holy Spirit is not just a reciprocal love between The Father and The Son.

29. What does it mean when we describe God as “Pantocrator”?

Saying that God is the Pantocrator means that He rules over existence, and nothing falls outside His knowledge. He is the Almighty, Who is capable of all things, and Who is concerned with and cares for all things. He sees and watches over all, covering and caring for all, and nothing falls outside His sight.

All are under His sovereignty, even the devil, whose works are bound by limits, as in the Trial of Job. If the devil was left free, he would have destroyed the world, but the devils asked of Him to leave and enter the swine.

God is the Pantocrator, and if man fears anything, he overlooks that God is Pantocrator. Whoever hides from the Face of God, like Adam and Jonah, forgets that God is Pantocrator. Whoever wrongs another pays no heed that God is Pantocrator, and that He hears the cries of the oppressed before they ask. Their groans ascend to Him like the groans of those who were enslaved to Pharaoh.

Holy Scripture is full of examples that illustrate that the Hand of God intervenes to help the world. The providence of God extends to all His creation, the head of which is man.

It is noteworthy that in the Church, there is an apse in the Eastern wall of the Sanctuary called the “Bosom of the Father,” on which is drawn the image of “**The Pantocrator = The All-Sovereign,**” which depicts Christ the Master holding the planet Earth in His hand.

30. Who created the world: The Father alone, or the Three Hypostases together?

God is one in essence, and His Three Hypostases are distinct in operation. If the Father decided creating the

world, the Son is the One Who would carry out the act of creation, and the Holy Spirit would give life to the matter.

God is He Who created the Earth and all that is therein, from beings that are visible and invisible, as well as angels who are invisible.

God is the Creator, and none can attain His ability (Job 12:7-9; Neh. 9:6).

Verses from Holy Scripture demonstrate the participation of the Hypostases in creation:

God the Father as Creator: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).**

God the Son as Creator: **“All things were made through Him; and without Him w nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3).**

God the Holy Spirit as Creator: **“Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created” (Ps. 104:30 LXX).**

31. We read some verses in Holy Scripture that speak of God the Father, or God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. Is the One God referred to at times as Father, at others as Son, and at others as Holy Spirit? Or what? What is the meaning of this?

It is true that such verses exist. For example:

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...” (Jas. 1:27);

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16);

“But Peter said, Ananias why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” (Acts 5:3).

It is evident that these verses do not refer to three separated gods, for the Master Christ said, **“...the honour that [cometh] from the one God”¹¹ (John 5:44).**

The saying refers to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Who are one Divine Being. One divinity with equal glory and eternal honour, according to Athanasius the Apostolic.¹²

It is like a person seeing the disk of the sun in the very early morning, at dawn, before the rays and the heat appear. He says of the disk alone, “the sun is out.”

When he sees the rays coming through a room in his house, he says that the sun is in the house. When he sits for a while in the heat of the sun and feels its effects, he says that he has a sunstroke.

When he says that the disk, or the rays, or the heat, is the sun, he does not mean that it is three suns. Rather, it is

¹¹ Translator’s note: This is the translation of the verse’s Arabic rendition. The KJV reading of the verse is, “...the honour that [cometh] from God only.”

¹² Translator’s note: Cf. The Athanasian Creed, “But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.” The authorship has falsely been attributed to St. Athanasius, and it is thought to have been written around the middle fifth/late sixth century (Philip Schaff. “The Athanasian Creed.” *History of the Christian Church, Volume III: A.D. 311-600.*)

one sun, and the disk, rays, and heat are of the same one essence of the sun.

This is why St. Augustine says, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one essence, but not every Person is Himself the other.”¹³

32. What does the Apostle Paul mean when he says, “God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:9)?

God created all things by Jesus Christ, just as I would say, “I solved the problem by my mind.” The mind is not something that is distinct from you, but belongs to you, and by it you are unique from the animals, and without it you cannot be called a human.

So, the Second Person is the Mind of God, or rather He is God’s Thought and His Scope, by which He envision the creation.

¹³ Translator’s note: “And let him so say one essence, as not to think one to be either greater or better than, or in any respect differing from, another. Yet not that the Father Himself is both Son and Holy Spirit, or whatever else each is singly called in relation to either of the others” (cf. Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity* 7.6.12. Philip Schaff, ed. NPNF, Ser. 1, Vol. 3. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1995.).

33. Please provide a concise explanation of how Christianity understands the creation of man.

Holy Scripture says, **“In the beginning God create the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1 LXX).**

This is the doctrine of creation through which we affirm that all things exist by the will of God, and by it alone, drawing their being from Him.

God did not just create, but He continues without ceasing. As long as the universe is in existence, it is upheld by the word of His power,¹⁴ which is why the Lord Jesus says, **“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (John 5:17).**

God is not a retired designer, but **“in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).**

As for man, he is the crown of God’s creation. He was formed after the world was filled for him with other creatures. God endowed him with many attributes that were not bestowed upon any other, namely the mind, the will, freedom, creativity, love, and an eternal spirit. These are all characteristics that are akin to those of God, which is why Scripture says that God made man according to His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26).

¹⁴ Translator’s note: Cf. Heb. 1:3.

The creation of Eve followed, who was a suitable help to Adam, the First Man. This is an image of the union of man and woman (Gen. 2:23, 24), where the two genders are equal and complementary of the other. Marriage is then seen as the means of their union in a profound manner and a definitive bond (Gen. 1:24; Matt. 19:6).

34. What is the purpose of the creation of man?

The love of God created man so that He may delight in a loving relationship with man, and so that man may participate in a life of immense and everlasting joy with Him.

This means that the source of joy is the union of man with God, which is manifested as follows:

1. Possession of full psychological faculties: i.e. an illumined mind, a strong will, good love, a pure intention, etc.
2. Dominion over nature: It will not revolt against man, nor will it harm him, be a source of trials or tribulations, or prey on him.
3. Link between God and the universe: Man directs creation in the name of God, lifting up to Him the praises of nature.
4. Immortality: The union of man's dwelling in God.

Therefore, we say that because of God's goodness and graciousness, He formed man so that he may enjoy life and existence with God, and if he conducts himself well, he will be graced with eternity. God loved us before we were fashioned, and so He created us.

35. What are the meanings of the words "Jesus" and "Christ"?

Jesus:

A Hebrew name which means "saviour"¹⁵ In Hebrew, the name is "Joshua."¹⁶ In the Greek language, it is *Iēsous*, from which came the name *Īsā*.

Christ:

An adjective meaning "anointed," "set apart," "dedicated," "consecrated."¹⁷ This adjective was later taken on by the believers in the Name of Christ (as a surname), thus becoming "Christians."

¹⁵ Translator's note: According to *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*, Jesus (Joshua or Jehoshua) means "whose help [salvation] is Jehovah."

¹⁶ Translator's note: Arabic text refers to the pronunciation, which in Hebrew is *Yēhowshuwa*.

¹⁷ Translator's note: Common translation of *christos* (Heb. *mashiyach*) is "anointed" or "anointed one" (cf. *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*; *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*; Oxford's *A Dictionary of the Bible* [2 ed.]).

Jesus Christ:

This name means, “The Saviour Who is anointed by God the Father as the redeemer and saviour of all humans of their sins throughout the ages.” The Master Christ came as a teacher, a preacher, and a guide. But, before all of that, He came as a redeemer and a saviour of humanity from sin and death.

36. Earlier, we referred to God as “God,” but now we refer to God the Son as “Lord.” What is the difference?

The word “Lord” denotes divinity in precisely the same manner as “God.” Both words are synonymous and not unrelated, and the proof is that they were both given to the Master Christ as appellations without distinction. For example:

❖ In the Creed, we say, “We believe in One Lord... True God of True God.”

❖ The Apostle Thomas said to Christ, “**My Lord and My God**” (John 20:28).

❖ In the Old Testament, it is written, “**The Lord our God is one Lord**” (Deut. 6:4).

37. How can we say that Christ is the Son of God?

Firstly: This matter is fundamentally different from what it could mean with respect to human beings and animals.

Secondly: We know that every born (infant) is a “son.” So, the One who is born of the Virgin Mary is a son. The son has a father. Who, then, is His father? There is no father except God. So, we must attribute the sonship of Jesus Christ to God Himself, and that is why we call Him “Son of God.”

Thirdly: The sonship of Christ is characterised by the following:

1. **It is a spiritual, rational sonship:** As the generation of light from light, and thoughts from the mind.

2. **It is a real sonship:** Not by Kin. Christ is of the same nature as God the Father, and of His essence.

3. **It is an eternal sonship:** Christ exists with the Father without separation from eternity.

4. **It is a continuous sonship without separation:** The divinity of Christ is itself the divinity of the Father.

5. **It is a sonship by nature, and not by position:** Christ is of the nature of God, and there is none like Him.

6. **It is a unique, unparalleled sonship:** None like it in the world of man or matter.

38. Are there any who would disagree concerning this?

Yes, for we believe that the Master Christ, to Him be glory, is God Who was incarnated. Therefore, He is God and the Son of God at the same time. This is our Faith, and we are happy with it.

It has never happened in the history of humanity that from (the time of) Adam, that a girl has born and given birth while being a virgin.

Has this ever happened?! And if every human being has a father, and Christ, as man, was born of a woman without the seed of man, who then is His father?

Some answer this question by saying that it is “omnipotence.”¹⁸ This certainly is an unconvincing, inconvenient, and insufficient answer, for the Almighty God governs the world and creation with certain laws, which do not fail. The rule of procreation has never undergone a change, except for this one instance, where a child, namely Christ, to Whom be glory, is born without a father.

¹⁸ Translator’s note: Cf. The Qur’ān, “His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is. So exalted is He in whose hand is the realm of all things, and to Him you will be returned” (Yā Sīn 36:82-83).

If He has no human father, then God (The Father = The Origin of Existence) must be His Father, and this is how He is the Son of God.

We must add the following to what was previously said:

This matter is entirely different from the material, physical, and sexual understanding of sonship.

39. Is there no better expression than “Son of God” that can be applied to Christ, to Whom be glory?

There is none. If there is, please guide me to it.

Human language is material by nature and origin, given its limitation. So, “Son” is the most suitable expression that can be understood by people in their language to illustrate the relationship between God the Father Who is unseen, and God the Son Who was revealed in Christ; “God was manifest in the flesh.”¹⁹

In other words, it is an idiomatic expression meaning “Divine Sonship.” It is the most suitable in human language to illustrate the natural relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

¹⁹ Translator’s note: 1Tim. 3:16.

40. We say that God the Father is “the First Hypostasis,” and that the Son is “the Second Hypostasis.” Does this not denote a difference in time between them?

The order of “First, Second, and Third” is related to humanity’s knowledge of God. They knew God as Father before they knew Him as Son, and that is because the Incarnation took place later in time.

What we say of the Master Christ, the Second Hypostasis, we say of the Holy Spirit, the Third Hypostasis.

41. If we believe that Christ is the Son of God, why then do we say that He is Only-Begotten?

The Master Christ is the only Son of God by nature, which is to say that He is in the same essence with the Father.

We have previously illustrated that the sonship of Christ is by essence, and is not physical or reproductive. It is unique and unlike anything else in existence, and that is why He-to Him be glory-is referred to as “the Only-Begotten Son of God.”

42. Christ is the Son of God, and we are children of God. What is the difference?

We have said that Christ Jesus is the Son of God, because we have seen in Him the unseen God. He is also the Son of God, because He is in His divinity of the same nature and essence as God. There is also no other expression in human language than “the Son” that can express the exact identity of the Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

For this Christ, to Whom be glory, said to His disciple Philip, “[H]e that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

We relate to God as children in a sort of honorary fashion that is bestowed to us out of the abundance of His love for us.

In other words, we call humans children of God only because of the love and providence of God for them. This love overcomes the gap between the Creator and the creature, but does not remove it.

To summarise:

The sonship of Christ is by essence. Our sonship is honorific.

The sonship of Christ is eternal. Our sonship is temporal.

43. Why do we say that Christ is “begotten of the Father before all ages”?

As we have mentioned before, Christ-to Him be glory-is the Son of God, which means that He is begotten of God the Father.

This generation is eternal, and we express this by saying that it is before all ages, which is to say before time. God the Son is being in God the Father from eternity and before the Incarnation, which is why Christ the Master says, **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).**

To simplify, we say:

The Son is the Mind of God. It cannot be said that there was a time when God had no mind, and so He creates one for Himself. With what mind would He have created one? Therefore, the Mind of God exists in God from eternity, and is without beginning.

44. What is meant by the article “Light of Light; True God of True God”?

There was no time when the Son of God was not.

Light emanates from the sun, but there is no son without light.

Thus, the Son was begotten of the Father, but there is no Father without the Son. The existence of the Son is innate to the existence of the Father, just as the existence of light is innate to the existence of the sun, and the existence of thought is to the mind.

All this, means that all The Father's Divine characteristics (e.g.: eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, all-holiness) are also for the Son, because the Father and the Son have one essence.

45. We say that Christ, to Whom be glory, is “Light of Light.” Does this mean that the Light came from another Light? Is one of these lights the light that was at the beginning, which is mentioned at the beginning of the Book of Genesis?

Certainly not. “Light of Light,” is because God is light. His nature is light, and He dwells in light. God is not material or corporeal; He is all pure light.

“Light of Light” indicates that He is pure light. Christ says that He is from the Father, meaning that He is of the nature and essence of the Father. This is the meaning of “Light of Light.”

46. How can we say that He is “begotten, not created”?

When the Fathers formulated the Creed, they used with all precision words that affirm the personal nature of the Master Christ and its glory. They asserted that He is **“begotten, not created,”** declaring that He was not created, being higher than the level of creatures. He exists in an unknown and intemporal fashion that is from the very essence of the Father, for **“In the beginning²⁰ was the Word” (John 1:1)**. He-to Him be glory-is “begotten” of the Father, for He is in the Father and has His very nature. Just as a son takes from his father his human nature, so too does the Son of God derive His divine nature from the Father in a mystical way that cannot be grasped.

There is, however, another birth for the Master Christ that is different from His eternal generation from the Father. We are referring to His nativity in the flesh, in the fullness of time, from the Virgin Mary.

A creature comes from nothing to existence by the will of God. The Son of God, however, exists in God the Father Himself, and He is no creature. He is rather the eternal “Creator,” Who deigned to be born in the flesh from the Virgin (Gal. 4:4-5).

The summation is that God the Father and God the Son are one in the divine nature, and there is no temporal

²⁰ Translator’s note: Greek, *archē*.

difference between them; **“I and My Father are one” (John 10:30)**. This is one aspect. Another would be that God the Son was born in the fullness of time from the Virgin Mary in the form of the Master Christ without being created, for He Himself is the Creator.

St. Augustine says, “If we cannot comprehend His nativity in the flesh, how then can we comprehend His eternal generation?”

His birth in the flesh has perplexed us. In His birth according to the flesh, He was born of a woman without a father. In His eternal generation, He was begotten of a Father without a mother. Both births are incomprehensible and surpassing the mind.

47. I have heard from some that the birth of Christ has to do with the divisions of creation; i.e. Adam was begotten without a father or a mother; Eve was born of a father without a mother; and Christ was born of a mother without a father.

This opinion is specious and devoid of accuracy, because:

- ❖ Adam has nothing whatsoever to do with generation. He was created from the clay or the

crust of the earth, and that is why he was called “Adam.”²¹ Adam was created from dust.

- ❖ Eve was not born from Adam (or else she would have been his daughter, and not his wife). God fashioned her from one of Adam’s ribs in order to illustrate the extent of what their relationship should be.

As for the Master Christ, He was born in a unique and wondrous fashion that was not undergone by anyone prior to or after Him.

We cannot compare between the creature Adam and the uncreated Master Christ, by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was not anything made that was made (John 1:3).

It was also not said of Adam that he is the word of God or His Spirit. Adam had to be fashioned without a father, for it was he who was the first father of humanity. When Christ was born, on the other hand, the earth was inhabited by begetting fathers and begotten children.

We declare of Christ-to Him be glory-in the Creed saying:

“Begotten, not created.”

²¹ Translator’s note: The noun *‘adamah*, from which the name Adam is derived, means “earth; ground; land; the earth” (cf. *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*). So, Adam can be thought of as “the man from the earth” or “the earth-man.”

He is “not created,” because He is the Creator. He is begotten of the Heavenly Father before all ages (eternal generation).

In the fullness of time, He was born of the Lady, the Virgin Mary (temporal generation) in a unique and wondrous fashion. This birth is incomparable and unlike any other, and itself demonstrates that its offspring is outside the realm of man.

48. We say, “[O]f One Essence with the Father.” What is the relevance of this article in the Creed?

It is response to Arianism, which did not understand the Lord’s saying, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). The Father is not greater than the Son in essence, for the Son has the same nature and essence as the Father, and His very divinity, for He is equal to Him in all aspects.

The statement “My Father is greater than I” was said during the self-emptying state of the Incarnation. It is said, **“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).**

The state of self-emptying, i.e. the taking of the servant's form, is this in which it was said "My Father is greater than I," while the essence of the divinity remained as is.

The Father is greater than the form of the passions and the Cross, in all the dishonour that the Son bore in His Incarnation. As for the essence of the divinity that is united with this humanity, it remains as is, and not lacking anything on account of the humanity's humility.

Thus, in His humanity, He was able to say and do all that befits His divinity, with which He is equal with the Father.

As such, He said, **"I and My Father are one"** (John 10:30); **"I am in the Father, and the Father in Me"** (John 14:11); **"That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father"** (John 5:23). In His incarnation, He also said to the palsied man, **"[T]hy sins be forgiven thee"** (Mark 2:5). He said the same statement to the sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears (Luke 7:48).

In His incarnation, He walked on water (Matt. 14:25); rebuked the wind and the sea, causing them to cease and for there to be calm (Mark 4:39); created new matter in the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes (Matt. 14:17-21), the changing of water into wine at the wedding of Cana of Galilee (John 2), and in granting sight to the man born blind (John 9). He did many things that reveal His divinity,

in addition to His resurrection while the tomb was sealed, His entry into the upper room while the doors were shut (John 20:19), and His ascension to Heaven.

49. In the Creed, we declare that Christ, “for us men and for our salvation, came down.” Salvation from what?

From the sin of the First Man, Adam. Adam was created so that he may be in the company of God at all times. However, he rejected this fellowship, and that rejection was the beginning of what the Church calls “The Fall of Adam,” or “The Ancestral Sin,” which all of humanity inherited from its forefather Adam.

This means that the Fall of Adam is primarily the disobedience of God’s will. This an unnatural condition has been extended to all of Adam’s offspring.

In the Apostle Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, we read, “[A]s by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). See also Rom. 5:18, 19.

This means that the reason why all men are sinners is Adam, the forefather of humans.

Adam, whose progeny is humanity, lost the upright life by his disobedience. As punishment, He was banished from the Paradise of Joy to the Earth, which was cursed because

of his sin. On earth, He begat offspring which, by nature, was exiled and devoid of its paradisiacal inheritance (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:1-2).

This is in addition to the corruption of human nature, which, in turn, rendered man incapable of even keeping the moral law on his own.

It should be noted here that the sin of Adam, to us, is considered as a hereditary sin, and not actual one, for we did not commit it. We did, however, inherit from it the condemnation of death.

50. What is sin according to the Christian perspective?

The meaning of sin is derived from wrong-doing, which is the misdeed of man by not turning to God as his aim and the source of his being and existence.

Holy Scripture defines sin as “transgression” (1 John 3:4), i.e. infringing on the holiness of God, and defying His law. This definition entails doubting and being suspicious of God, or having the desire to deceive and become unfaithful to Him, whether by word, thought, deed, or by all senses. The inevitable consequence then is distance, and separation, from God. This is why it is said that “the wages of sin is death,”²² which means that death is a natural

²² Translator’s note: Rom. 6:23.

offspring of sin, which is a separation from the Source of Life, and the Origin of man and his existence (Jas. 1:15).

51. Please elaborate on the Fall of Adam, and how his sin extended to all of humanity.

We have previously seen how the purpose of man's creation is for him to live a continuous life in the love of God, until the image of God is established in him, and the warmth of love emanates from him to all of creation.

God provided Adam with free will, i.e. the choice between good and evil, thus placing on him the choice of either abiding by the commandment of God, or rejecting it, and thus rejecting God.

Man, however, wanted for himself to be a "god," knowing good and evil. So, he preferred to do away with the love of God and His embracing him, disregarding that it is from God alone that man draws all gift, power, and life. The catastrophe then was that he listened to the voice of the devil through the serpent, transgressing the commandment of God and disobeying Him. This matter is of grave danger, for it is in opposition of God Himself, and also because it is from the First Man Adam, who is the crown and model for all of humanity. On account of this, the punishment had to be out of the norm.

Hence, the sin of the First Man Adam placed the whole of humanity in a vicious cycle, wherein by the absence of God from our lives, we have become inheritors of sin, and in it we are formed, thus becoming sinners, and no one is righteous.²³ Apart from God, there is nothing but void, emptiness, and death.

52. Why, then, did the Loving God give Adam a commandment, forbidding him from the tree, even though He foreknew that he would disobey?

The tree was a moral guide and limit, which was placed by God under the authority of Adam, by which He may test him.

God had previously given Adam the means and the ability to carry out the commandment and not to transgress it. However, Adam, by his free will, disobeyed. So, the obeying of the commandment was a measure that reveals the extent of man's love for God.

We should add that God's foreknowledge of man's fall does not impede Him from offering man what is beneficial to him if he obeys. If, however, he freely chooses to reject God's commandment, he would then have chosen for himself disobedience and separation from God.

²³ Translator's note: Cf. Rom. 3:10.

We ought not to forget that when evil took place on account of the disobedience, God saved man from the authority of evil, and restored him once again to his primal condition by redemption, thus making man deal with God in a stronger bond of love. This caused St. Augustine to praise the Fall of Adam, which made us recipients of all the graces of redemption.

God's commandment for Adam was an opportunity for him to exercise his responsibilities, and for his preparation for what is greater. It was also God's affirmation of man's free will, which is the greatest gift that God bestowed upon man.

God allowed man to transgress and disobey Him by using his freedom, which is a grace bestowed from God.

53. What was the atypical punishment that was deservingly allotted to Adam and his descendants?

Adam transgressed the commandment of God, and this an infinite sin, because it is against the Uncircumscribed God. So, its punishment must be unlimited. This is in accordance with the principle that the punishment fits the offense. This punishment can be summarised as follows:

1. Death in every form:

- *Physical Death* = Separation of the spirit from the body, which decomposes into dust.

- *Moral Death* = Disgrace of sin and its abominable treasury.

- *Eternal Death* = Perdition in the fiery Gehenna²⁴ forever.

- *Spiritual Death* = This means the loss of communion between the spirit and God. The death of the spirit does not mean that it perishes, but rather that it loses its sensitivity towards God. In other words, every human being still has a spirit. However, this spirit-on account of the ancestral sin-has become darkened, and unable to commune with God. It exists, but is feeble.

2. Tainting of the human nature:

Human nature, which had been pure, has become tainted with sin, and unfit to enter Paradise, or to dwell in the presence of God. Thus, evil found its way to the whole of humanity. From Adam, all of his human progeny inherited his sinful way.

“I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5 LXX).

²⁴ Translator’s note: The place of future torment; hell; a place of torture; a prison (cf. *OED Online*. September 2013. Oxford University Press. 21 October 2013.).

So, all of humanity was deemed sinful (Rom. 3:10-12).
3. *Expulsion from the Presence of God (Paradise)*
(Gen. 3:23, 24).

The Perfect and Holy God cannot dwell with wicked sinners, but it is rather the pure in heart alone who beholds God, for there is no communion between light and darkness.²⁵

54. Does this mean that evil is foreign to humanity?

Precisely. Ever since the disobedience of Adam, evil found its way to all of humanity, becoming exacerbated and rampant from generation to generation, until the image of the righteous man became distorted (Eph. 4:24), and a disease named “evil” overtook man. Many human efforts—i.e. police, judiciary, prisons, hospitals—were founded to cure that disease. However, the painful and lamentable result is that evil increased at the same rate as the reformatory efforts, because evil is inherent in man, and is not merely external. This is why it cannot be extracted by material means.

²⁵ Translator’s note: Cf. 2 Cor. 6:14.

55. So, were there any consequences to this Fall?

Yes, three perilous consequences resulted from the Fall of Adam. This is why some refer to the Sin of Adam as “The Triple Disintegration Tragedy”:

A. *The Disintegration of the Unity of Man:*

The rising up of lusts, passions, and whims against man. He-being the rational one of all of creation-deifies money, power, fame, prestige, sex, knowledge, etc.

Adam, prior to the Fall, was guarded from passion, ignorance, and death.

B. *The Disintegration of Man's Unity with Others:*

God alone unites humanity. So, by distancing man from God, sin was able to keep man from his neighbour (Gen. 3:12). This is why we read that after the Fall, Cain killed his brother Abel, which was followed by an explosion of grudges amongst men. Prior to the Fall, man was kept from envy, rejection, struggles, and animosity.

C. *The Disintegration of Man's Unity with Nature:*

A lack of harmony between man and nature formed (Gen. 3:17, 18), and man became a victim to the laws of nature, which were a source of suffering, disasters, trials, and tribulations. Animals became vicious towards him, and viruses began to destroy him. Prior to the Fall, however, he was protected from pain, suffering, so on.

56. Did the image of man after the Fall change from what it was prior to that?

The question could be reworded in another way:

How does man know that his present condition is not in its original form?

Or...

How can man realise the extent of his fall without knowing what he was like prior to it?

In response, we say:

We did not know the meaning of sin, until we came to know Our Lord Jesus Christ (referred to by the Apostle Paul as “the firstborn among many brethren” [Rom. 8:29]), who became like us in everything except for sin alone when He took flesh and came to us on Earth.

So, in meeting with the Lord Jesus, the full image of God is realised in us, which He desired for us from the beginning. This is the “Mystery of the Incarnation,” in which we had a far greater meeting than that which was on the Day of Creation.

57. This means that humanity was in need of someone to save it.

They were definitely in need of someone who would not only save them, but who would renew their nature and restore their potential.

They were in need of another for at least three reasons:

1. Deliverer:

One Who delivers, redeems, and saves them from sin. After the Fall of Adam and his expulsion from Paradise as one condemned to die, he began to show regret, confessing, praying, and offering sacrifices. The offering of sacrifice mean that he felt his need for a redeemer. However, it was not possible for an animal to become a mediator between man and God. The constant offering of sacrifices was a continuous and constant reminder that man is in need not of a mediator, but of the Mediator of whom these bloody sacrifices are pointing to (Heb. 9:26). Redemption, then, means that there is a need for a mediator to deliver (Rom. 5:6-8).

2. Restorer:

One Who restores humanity after it had been corrupted completely by sin and evil had coursed through it. None can perform this function, except for God alone, for the simple reason that He is the creator of man.

Of course, it was not possible for man to ascend to God on account of the evil that had shackled him with chains that restrain any ascent. So he was in need of God to come to him in flesh in order to raise him from his fall, and to lift him up, delivering and restoring His creation.

3. *Archetype:*

Humanity was in need of one who would offer a model of human perfection. This is why we see the Master Christ-to Him be glory-teaching virtue in His Person, and not with His words, as all the teachers who preceded Him had done. We see Him challenging His generation and every generation, **“Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” (John 8:46)**. So, in His coming amongst us, He was an example so that we may follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

Thus, in the Person of Blessed Christ, these three things were fulfilled:

Deliverer-Restorer-Archetype

58. Was it not possible for good works, such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, to bring about remission of sins for man?

There is absolutely no value for good works, whatever they may be, without the foundation of Faith in Christ, and the work of redemption, which He offered us.

According to Scripture,

“[F]or if righteousness (forgiveness) come by the law (good works), then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).

The works of man are likened to however many zeros, for their numerical value is zero. Faith in the Lord Jesus is likened to the number one. If placed before the zeros, it

becomes a number. If the number of zeros increase alongside the one, its numerical value increases. Such is Faith and its necessity with respect to works.

Likewise, repentance and remorse over sin have no value in remission of sins without faith in Christ, for the repentance of a sinner does not restore to God His honour and glory.

If a person embezzled a sum of money, does his feeling of wrong, or sorrow, regret, or even his good works that ensue release him from the punishment of embezzlement? Definitely not.

59. Is it possible to determine the characteristics of the One Who would carry out what is needed in response to the Fall of Adam?

There are four traits that characterise the work of redemption as a definitive and encompassing solution to the Fall of Adam:

A. He must be human...

For He is a representative of the disobedient man (fallen humanity).

B. He must be susceptible to death...

For the wages of sin (sin of Adam) is death.

C. He must be without sin...

For the one devoid of the thing cannot give it.

D. He must be infinite...

For the sin of Adam is against the unlimited God.

To give redemption for sins of all people throughout all ages.

It can be noted that traits A and B can be found in any human being. As for traits C and D, they cannot be found in any human being, but are only found in God.

60. If that is the case, then how can these four traits be found in one person?

The only way is for God to deign and to take the form of man, uniting God and man in one, where all these traits may come together in Him. It is only in the Person of the Master Christ that this is fulfilled, because:

In His humanity, He is a human being, and is susceptible to death (traits A and B).

In His divinity, He is without sin, and is infinite (traits C and D).

Of course, angels are not fit, for an angel is not a human being, and is limited.

Also, man is not fit, for there is no man without sin, who would be able to redeem other, and he is also limited.

So, God was manifested in the flesh in the man Jesus Christ in order to lift the judgement of death which was

because of the sin of the First Adam. He came in the flesh to change the corruption of man to incorruption.

He alone is the Saviour, and because He is man, He took on the trait of incircumscription on account of the union of the divinity and the humanity, thus fulfilling in Himself the traits of the Redeeming Saviour.

61. Why is this considered the only solution?

When man fell, two requirements became at odds with him:

Justice, which requires the complete carrying of the sentence without leniency or negligence; and **mercy**, which on its part demands complete pardon, without account or reproach. Both requirements are in contrast with one another, or are rather contradictory. From this stemmed a dilemma that cannot be resolved except by the Incarnation, for in this solution, we find:

All mercy, for there is no greater love than for the Holy God Himself to deign and take an earthly body for us.

And all justice, for God Himself accepted to carry the sentence that He pronounced over man.

This necessitated the Incarnation, whereby God is veiled in the flesh of man in order to accept in Himself the same sentence that was ruled over man. This is how redemption

may be realised, which may not be accomplished by any other means.

62. Christianity believes in the coming down of God to save man. Were there no other substitutions for this salvation that the Omnipotent God could offer?

Yes, there were two other alternatives, but both are fundamentally unacceptable for the following reasons:

❖ **The First Unacceptable Substitution (Pardon)**

Being that God pardons Adam and Eve, because He is an All-Loving God, bringing the whole matter to an end. However, if God were to pardon Adam because of His limitless love, where then would His limitless justice be, which sentenced with death? It is necessary for this just judgement to be carried out, because in God, there is no separation in His traits. For just as He is merciful, He is just, meaning that the mercy of God is full of justice, and the justice of God is full of mercy.

If we were to hypothetically assume that this is possible, we must consider that forgiveness is one thing, but purification and the restoration of the corrupted human nature is another, more important thing.

It is easy to pay on behalf of the thief the amount that he stole. However, what is more important is for his nature to be changed in order for him not to return to theft.

**❖ The Second Unacceptable Substitution
(Annihilation)**

Being that God would annihilate Adam and Eve, and would create a new Adam and a new Eve, bringing an end to the problem...!

The death of man is against the mercy of God, for it would have been better for Him not to have created man... It is against the intelligence of God, because He is unable to find a solution for the dilemma... It is against the might of God, because He is unable to protect man... It is against the wisdom of God, for why then did He create man... It is against the honour of God, for man was created in the image and likeness of God...

It is a demonic approach which is unbefitting of God's omnipotence, or His glory, or His honour as creator.

We must not forget that the opportunity for the fall of the new Adam and the new Eve is possible, still standing and ongoing, for the conditions are the same, and its repetition is plausible. Therefore, the only solution is the Incarnation and Redemption, in order for the forgiveness to be fulfilled, and for human nature to be restored.

63. This means that the Incarnation took place to fulfill Redemption.

Precisely, for as we saw, it is the only solution for the redemption of man and his delivery from the consequences of the Fall of Adam, his forefather. God takes the form of man, so that the traits of the Redeemer, which were discussed above, may be fulfilled in Him.

The Incarnation is an event for the fulfillment of redemption, for the manifestation of God-**“No man hath seen God at any time; the Only Begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18)**-and so that He may grant us a better life.

In other words:

The Incarnation is the means by which God may unite to “fallen” man, in order for the life of God to course in man, thus renewing his fallen nature.

64. Please provide a precise definition of “the Divine Incarnation.”

It is a free initiation on the part of God towards man, who had steered away from Him, and had rejected Him willingly.

Man cannot know God on his own, and God, in His perfection, does not wish to remain unknown to His

creature, man. Given that man does not know of God except that He is God, man cannot know God except through God.

So, it was apparent that God had to deign and a real humanity in order to facilitate for man the means to see and know Him.

God came in the Master Christ, Who took flesh from the Virgin, and united in it all that is God's (divinity) with all that is human (humanity). This union became the greatest and strongest expression of God's love for man.

This why St. Athanasius says,

**The Lover longs to be likened to
His beloved, being one with the beloved.
God so loved man in his humility, and so
loved to be one with him. This is the
incarnation.**

65. How did the Incarnation take place?

In the fullness of time, the Word came to the womb of the Lady Virgin Mary, and by the Holy Spirit Who came down upon her, He formed from her the flesh of the Saviour. It was pure from the ancestral sin, because it was without the seed of man, and hence devoid of the hereditary corruption. At the moment when the beginning of the humanity was formed, the divinity was united to it. There

was no moment in time when the humanity of Christ was bereft of His divinity. This is why we cannot separate the humanity of the Master Christ from His divinity, for He was united to it from the beginning of the Incarnation. Likewise, we cannot separate Christ into two natures, a human nature and a divine nature.

From this came the expression of the Orthodox Faith with regards to Christ, **“One nature of God the Incarnate Word.”**²⁶

66. How was the Master Christ in Heaven and on Earth at the same time? Did He leave the Throne of His Majesty in Heaven during His Incarnation on Earth?

The Master Christ existed with His divinity from eternity. This means that prior to His Incarnation, He fills Heaven and Earth by His existence, or rather overfills them. When He became incarnate, He filled, and still fills, Heaven and Earth by His existence. He still governs the movement of the universe, and manages the affairs of the living in all of existence.

²⁶ Translator’s note: In St. Cyril of Alexandria’s *Letter 45.6 to Succenus*, Bishop of Diocaesarea in Isauria, “[T]here is one *phusis* of the Word [of God] made flesh” (John I. McEnerney, trans. *Letters 1-50*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007. *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 76.).

Of this divine truth, the Lord Jesus Himself says,
“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man Which is in Heaven” (John 3:13).

An example of Christ’s perceived existence on earth is that of the lamp that radiates with light. Although it has a body, the light goes out from it through the glass body, spreading to the exterior in all directions.

Another example is that of the Burning Bush, which Moses the Prophet saw consumed with fire, and with the voice of God speaking to him from it. The appearance of God and His openly perceived manifestation in any one place does not bring to nought His existence in Heaven at the same time.

Thus, Christ-to Him be glory-by His incarnation, existed on earth, while in His divinity filling Heaven at the same time while being on earth and everywhere.

67. Did the Incarnation bring about any change for God?

One of the traits of God is that He is not impaired by change. He is absolutely perfect, which is why He is described by Holy Scripture as One **“with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas. 1:17).**

It is erroneous to say that, because of the Incarnation, the divinity underwent a change. The Incarnation is nothing but one of God's great works, which was, and still is being, carried out through the ages. For God saw the corruption of man, and did not desire his death. So, the Word of God became flesh without sin, suffering death in order that He may save the corrupt man.

The Word Incarnate died and rose, and the divinity did not die. Thus the work of redemption was accomplished, and the divinity did not undergo change.

68. How does the Uncircumscribed God dwell in the circumscribed man?

We must realise that the divinity is not limited by the humanity. It is not limited by place, and even though it fills all things and is present in all of creation, it is distinct from them in essence.

It is like the glass of the lamp, which does not restrict its light, but we rather find the rays of light coming forth from the lamp in all directions without restriction. The humanity, likewise, does not restrict the Divine Light.

To elaborate further on the answer, we provide the following examples to approximate it for the mind:

- ❖ Air surrounds the planet Earth, but it is also in the lungs of all human beings.

- ❖ The union of God and man is like the union of heat and water in hot water.
- ❖ It is also like the union of electricity and wire in the electric wire.

69. How can the Holy God unite to human nature, which is inferior?

The Incarnation does not mean that God transformed into a human being, but rather that God condescended and united to all that pertains to man. At the same time, He remains the God Who is capable of all things. This is precisely like the sun, which remains the same, with its light and energy, even though its rays shine upon places filled with rubbish, with all that is therein from rot and germs.

God the Pantocrator Himself governs all things, but is not affected by anything. He cannot be tainted, but rather sanctifies what is impure.

70. How can human beings see God Who is unseen?

Seeing the divinity plainly is impossible. This is why God said to Moses, **“Thou shalt not be able to see My face; for no man shall see My face, and live”** (Exod.

33:20 LXX). For this, the prophets prepared the way for humanity for the great revelation of God amongst us (Emmanuel = God with us).

Some of the Fathers liken the Old Testament to an engagement, and the Incarnation to marriage, for God sealed His manifestation by the Incarnation.

This is why it was necessary for God to take on flesh, so that we may see Him. The Holy Apostle John says, **“And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the [spirit] of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world”** (1 John 4:3).

71. I read in the Gospel of John a verse which says, “No man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18). In the same Gospel, I read another verse in which the Master Christ says, “[H]e that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Is there a contradiction between the two verses?

There are no contradictions whatsoever. God is spirit, and no one can see Him. The Master Christ was born of the Holy Spirit (Spirit of God), and is of the same essence and nature as the Father. So, whomever sees Christ (Hypostasis of the Son) sees the Father; **“No man hath seen God at**

any time; the Only Begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18).

God is manifested in the flesh, and this is why we say that He is **“the Incarnate Word of God.”**

The Apostle John also affirms this in the prologue of his Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:1; 14)

Truly, **“without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).**

72. So, was the sending of prophets prior to the coming of the Master Christ a preparation?

Yes. He sent them in order to prepare humanity for the coming of the True Saviour. The task of the prophet, as his title indicates, was to speak concerning the will of God. That is, to declare it with ardour, calling men to set straight their ways, and to return to God.

It is to be noted that the constant appearing of the prophets was, in itself, an indication that humanity was in need of

something “greater” than the mere oral and written messages of the prophets. It was in need of the Creator Himself.

73. Is the coming of God to man unique to Christianity alone?

Christianity is unique in that regards. Some teach that the overcoming of sin is in the obedience of God, and the keeping of His laws and statues. To them, sound religiosity is in the drawing of man towards God. Christianity, on the other hand, sees that sin and evil are spiritual maladies, and that man without God is ill. This is why the Master Christ came to humanity as the Only True Physician.

God sought after man in order to heal man and make him whole, and to deliver him from all of his passions. This is what sets Christianity apart from the others.

74. Why did the Second Person, the Hypostasis of the Word (Logos), specifically have to undergo the Incarnation?

The Second Person is the Creator-“**All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made**” (John 1:3)-and that Person Himself had to restore our creation to the very same image in which were originally created, and which was distorted, in order

that we may be born again from above (John 3:3).

Man was destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6), and so it was necessary-according to the plan of God-for the Hypostasis of Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding-i.e. the Logos-to come in order that man may know God and live in His bliss (Matt. 11:27).

The world perished because of its ignorance, and so it was expedient for Wisdom (the Hypostasis of the Word) to deliver and save it.

The Second Person is also the One Who is set to reveal the Divine Being. According to the Holy Apostle John, “No man hath seen God at any time; the Only Begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared (i.e. revealed) Him.”²⁷

75. How can the Incarnation concern only one of the Hypostases without the Father and the Holy Spirit, even though it was said earlier that they are not divided?

There is no division. This is evident from creation. The sun, for example, has a disk, heat, and light. If you conceal the sun with anything at daytime, you will find that its heat is united to the earth, and remains latent until the coming of the night’s coolness.

²⁷ Translator’s note: John 1:18.

The sun is eclipsed, or sets, because it is a creature. God, however, is in all places, and nothing can conceal Him. He fills all places, and governs all things by the simplicity of His divinity. Nothing can contain Him, and this is why the Incarnation became the concern of the Eternal Word, Who cannot be separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit, as is fitting.

76. Who, then, is Christ to the Christians?

Christ, to Him be glory, to the Christians, regardless of their ethnicity, race, or language, unanimously-East and West-be they Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant, is God the Word Incarnate (John 1:14).

“God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

God, Who was manifest visibly, is Christ. This is the meaning of His being “Son of God.” It does not mean that God begets in the same way as humans or animals, God forbid. But His being the Son of God means that He is the “Image of the Unseen God.” Or, God, Who is unseen in His nature (John 1:18), was united to our humanity so that He may be seen by men. Christ is the Unseen God Who has been made manifest. Why was He made manifest?

To accomplish the task of redemption and salvation, which could not have been accomplished by anyone else

other than God, as was previously discussed in question 59 and 60.

God was Incarnate in Christ for the sake of redemption and salvation:

Redemption is the end, and the Incarnation is the means.

“He became man, but did not dwell in a holy man,”²⁸ according to St. Athanasius the Apostolic.

77. Is there a role for the Virgin Mary in salvation?

We have said previously that God, in His profound love, came down to man in order to save him. This matter needed the gradual preparation of humanity over the span of the Old Testament, until, in the person of the Virgin Mary, the fullness of faith, humility, and obedience to God were fulfilled. So, she was made worthy of being the lab of the union between God and man, and that is why she is referred to as “the Mother of God - Theotokos” (Luke 1:41-43).

²⁸ Translator’s note: In *Synodal Letter to the People of Antioch* 7, “[T]he Word did not...dwell in a holy man at the consummation of the ages, but that the Word Himself was made flesh, and being in the Form of God, took the form of a servant, and from Mary after the flesh became man for us” (Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace, ed. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Vol. 4. Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1995.).

By this, she surpasses the angels, for she was made worthy to bear the Incarnate Son of God, becoming a living sanctuary for Him Who took flesh from her for our salvation.

With this all, she was in need of salvation like any other human being, and this is evident in her *Magnificat*, which is recorded in Luke 1:46-55.

78. What is the difference between saying “incarnate,” and “inhominate”?

Incarnate is taking flesh, and **inhominate** is becoming man.

This means that the Lord Jesus Christ is the “Inhominatē God.” Perfect God, and perfect man. True God, and true man. Divinity and humanity united in One Person without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration-the Person of the Incarnate Son of God.

This is why the Oriental Orthodox proclaim that they are “Miaphysite,”²⁹ or according to the statement of St. Cyril of Alexandria, the 24th Patriarch, “**One nature of God the Incarnate Word.**”³⁰

The authentic Cyrillian formula denotes a harmonious (united) nature, and not numerically one.

²⁹ Translator’s note: Arabic text: “Adherents of the One Nature.”

³⁰ Translator’s note: See n. 23.

79. Are there any other blessings that resulted from the Incarnation, other than it being a means for the redemption of man?

According to the Doctrine of the Incarnation, God dwells in the midst of people, and is not distant from them. This goes with a sense of security, joy, assurance, and satiation in the divine teachings.

The Incarnation and the dwelling of God amongst men was a strong motive in the preaching of the Name of Christ around the whole world (1 John 1:1). It was also a model of piety, so that His steps may be followed (1 Pet. 2:21).

By the Incarnation, God is always present in the world in the Person of Christ, to Whom be glory. We, the believers, have also become representatives of the presence of Christ in the world, for we (members of) His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Eph. 5:30). This is why He is called “Emmanuel” (God with us).

In the time of His incarnation, Christ was able to present a model of the perfect man, and how he ought to be. He gave men an idea of spiritual conduct through the practical model that was offered to them.

He became a representative of humanity in the fulfilling of all righteousness, and the offering of perfect obedience to God the Father. He was a representative of humanity in

fasting and repentance, when He received baptism from John.

He put the ideal law, and corrected the people's understanding of the Law as, for example, in their understanding of the laws pertaining to the Sabbath, which were put in place for man, and not the other way around. He fulfilled the types and the prophecies, and drew near to them the image of God. He gave them an idea of the Loving, Compassionate God, Who dwells in their hearts. Christ was a simplified image (illustration for clarification) of God.

In summary, the Incarnation has several blessings, at the top of which is the fulfillment of redemption.

80. Was the Master Christ truly crucified?

Most definitely. This is a real fact that cannot be doubted by anyone, unless they are ignoring on purpose all of the Scriptural and non-scriptural evidences that have come down to us.

In addition to the witness of Holy Scripture to the reality of the Crucifixion, the general history, with all that is therein from the sayings of the historians and philosophers of the first century A.D., be they Jews or Gentiles, attests to this also.

There are also many substantial evidences, beginning with the appearance of the Holy Wood of the Cross, upon which the Master Christ was crucified. St. Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, uncovered it in the year A.D. 326. The most recent piece of evidence is the Holy Shroud, otherwise known as the “Shroud of Turin.” It was analysed scientifically for five years (1973-1978), and is now preserved in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in the Italian city of Turin.

We must note that the accounts of the Crucifixion, the Burial, and the Resurrection in the Holy Scripture are of utmost importance. They are to be considered as beaming evidence and decisive proof of Scripture’s soundness and accuracy in the face of distortion by omission or addition. For what honour is there for Christians to cling to, or be affiliated with, a crucified and humiliated man, who is a symbol of humiliation and shame? Unless the matter is full of honour and pride to them, as was expressed by our teacher, the Apostle Paul, when he said, **“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world”** (Gal. 6:14).

81. Why, then, did the Master Christ, to Him be glory, choose crucifixion particularly as a method for death?

Before all else, the Master Christ did not choose for Himself the manner of death. Rather, it was the Jews who chose the Cross when they cried out to Pilate, “Crucify Him!” (Mark 15:12-15).

As for why redemption was accomplished by way of the Cross, St. Athanasius summarises the reasons in the following points³¹:

1. In order for death to occur publicly before witnesses, so that there can be certainty over the Resurrection, which was to follow.
2. In order to preserve His body in perfect soundness and undivided, according to the prophecies.
3. In order to die while holding out His hands to unite the Jews and the Gentiles in Himself.
4. In order to be lifted up from the earth, drawing us to Himself (John 12:32).
5. In order to clear the air from the evil spirits, granting us victory over them (Eph. 2:2).
6. In order to fulfill the prophecies which were set forth concerning the necessity of the Crucifixion (Ps. 22:16; Isa. 53).

³¹ Translator's note: Cf. *On the Incarnation* 21, 24, 25, 34, and 35.

7. In order to bear the curse laid upon us, for it was written, “[F]or every one that is hanged on a tree is cursed of God” (Deut. 21:23).

82. Is the Cross of importance to the whole of humanity?

The importance of the Cross and its value comes from the salvation which was accomplished by the Master Christ, when He tasted death of His own will.

By salvation, we mean salvation from sin, its dominion, and its traces, not only with respect to the past only, but the present and future of the life of all men. This matter is connected with the bigger issue that concerns all mankind, the issue of forgiveness.

From this perspective, the Cross became the glory and boasting of every Christian (Gal. 6:14), with all the humiliation, degradation, shame, and disgrace that it entails.

It is Christianity's unique mark of distinction, which cannot be found in any other religion.

83. Is this why we say, “He was crucified for us”?

Yes, for this statement means that the Master Christ was not deserving of the Cross, but that He came to the Crucifixion of His own free will to save us.

Every deed and work that was done by Christ was truly very great and marvellous. However, the most noble of them was His Holy Cross, for by the Cross, everything was made right. Sin was destroyed, death was denied, and the Resurrection was bestowed upon all who believe in Him. The event of Christ's Crucifixion was a measure of God's exceeding love towards the human race, and that is why we proclaim that "He was crucified for us," that is on behalf of us all, the sinners.

84. What did the Master Christ accomplish on the Cross?

In the Theotokia (praise) of Friday, we chant the following refrain, which sums up what the Master Christ accomplished:

"He took what is ours, and gave us what is His. We praise and glorify Him, and exalt Him."

This entails:

- a) His taking of the curse which came upon Adam on account of his fall (Gen. 3:7), carrying it on our behalf, granting that we may be made the righteousness of God (innocent) (2 Cor. 5:21).
- b) His taking of the death, of which Adam was deserving from the day of his disobedience (Gen.

2:17), and His granting us the Resurrection after He had defeated death (1 Cor. 15:26).

- c) His taking of our life, with all the weakness and leanings towards sin that it entails, and His bestowing upon us of His Holy Spirit, and the ability of being victorious over all weakness and sin (Eph. 2:6).

85. I know that the Master Christ was crucified on Golgotha. Is this the same place where God created the First Man Adam?

There is a tradition that Adam was buried on Golgotha, or Calvary,³² which is the same place upon which the Master Christ was crucified. However, this is a tradition that is not supported by Holy Scripture, which tells us in the Book of Genesis that God created Adam in the Garden of Eden, and not in Golgotha, which is in Jerusalem. Some painters have depicted the scene of the Crucifixion with a skull at the base of the Cross, alluding to the skull of the First Man Adam. This traditional depiction suggests that the place where the First Man Adam died, and by whom sin entered into the world, is the same place where the Last Adam, Our Lord Jesus Christ, died in order to wipe away

³² Translator's note: The Place of a Skull (Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17).

the transgressions of the sinners by His death on the wood of the Cross.

On another note, the place where Abraham the Patriarch wanted offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God, which is known as Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2), is the same place where the Temple of Solomon once stood in the City of Jerusalem, or al-Quds. So, the place where the Crucifixion of Christ took place, and the place where Isaac was offered as a sacrifice, as two places in the City of al-Quds, which was known as Jerusalem.

86. I heard in Church that the statement of Isaiah the Prophet, “[T]he chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his bruises we were healed” (Isa. 53:5 LXX), is concerned with the work of the Master Christ. How is this so?

The entire 53rd chapter of the Book of Isaiah, and not just this verse, is a wonderful prophecy concerning the Master Christ, His death on the Cross, and the shedding of His blood for the redemption of sinners. It was recorded by Isaiah the Prophet hundreds of years prior to its occurrence.

The prophecy in its entirety points to Christ, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, along with the sorrows and passions of not only us, but the entire human race.

The statement, “the chastisement of our peace,” refers to the chastisement by which God was to discipline us on account of our sins, and which was bore by Christ for us.

The statement, “by his bruises we were healed,” indicates that while we are sinners, we have been justified by the passions of Christ, which He bore instead of us, and by which we have received the healing from sin, and received eternal life. This prophecy is of great importance for the Christian life, for it was explained by the Apostle Paul in more than one place in his epistles (cf. Rom. 5:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:13).

87. Who is Pontius Pilate?

He is the Roman governor and procurator³³ of Judaea in Palestine. Pontius (Pontus, his home region, in Asia Minor) Pilate (his name) was the fifth prefect, and remained in this position from A.D. 26 to A.D. 36. During that time, he was delegated by Caesar to manage the affairs of the province.³⁴

We know nothing of his upbringing or the end of his life, other than it was said that he committed suicide in his

³³ Translator’s note: “procurator, n.: A person who is employed to manage the affairs of another or is authorized to act on behalf of another. A provincial ruler or governor; (Roman Hist.)...the head of a minor part of a province, esp. Judaea (which was part of the province of Syria)” (*OED Online*. September 2013. Oxford University Press. 16 October 2013.).

³⁴ Translator’s note: Cf. “Pilate, Pontius.” *A Dictionary of the Bible*, Second Ed. W. R. F. Browning, ed. Oxford University Press: 2009.

exile in Vienne, Gaul, after the year A.D. 36.³⁵ There remains a monument, 52 feet in height, which indicates his burial location.

His fame goes back to his being the governor in whose time the Crucifixion of Christ took place, after having given in to the accusations of the Jews, concerning more for himself, and out of fear for his position (Mark 15:15).

The Jewish historian Josephus wrote concerning Pilate, "And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned Him (Jesus) to the Cross, those that loved Him at first did not forsake Him."³⁶

88. Some say that the one who was hung on the Cross is another person other than Christ. Is this true?

The one who was hung on the Cross was none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Jews had nothing to gain from crucifying a substitute. The aim of the scribes, priests, and Pharisees was to get rid of Christ Himself, and not another, in order to maintain their authorities, positions, and dominion over the people and the land (John 11:50-52; 18:14).

³⁵ Translator's note: Cf. Eusebius Pamphilius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.7.

³⁶ Translator's note: In *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.64 (William Whiston, trans. *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish Historian*. London, 1737.).

Furthermore, the One Who was crucified is Himself the One Who rose and spoke with the disciples after His resurrection (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-39; John 20:20-29). If the one who died was a mere man, what then is there to gain from his death, seeing as how “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

If Christ was a mere man, and not God, why then are His death and crucifixion being denied? Man, by nature, is capable of dying and crucifixion.

So, either He is God Who is being deprived of the Cross and the Passions, or He bore our sins, being made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

89. I have read a theory that claims that Judas Iscariot died instead of Christ, after the matter was conflated for the soldiers, so they crucified him instead of Christ. Did this happen?

This theory is devoid of accuracy, and is pure fabrication. It can be responded to.

Firstly: The Crucifixion of Christ did not happen suddenly, nor did take place hastily. It occurred after five trials—from 9 on the eve of Great Thursday, to 9 on the

morning of Great Friday-before witnesses, governors, high priests, and the people. How is it possible that after all of these that there is doubt concerning the identity of the Crucified, being that Christ is well known in his Jewish community?!

Secondly: The witness of the prophets concerning the Crucifixion of Christ prior to its occurrence by hundreds of years. Here are some references: Ps. 22; 69; Isa. 53; Lam. 3:14, 15, 30.

Thirdly: The discourse of Christ Himself to His disciples concerning the Crucifixion prior to its occurrence: Matt. 20:17-19; 26:2, 21; Mark 8:31; 14:18.

Fourthly: Christ remained hanging on the Cross from noon on Great Friday, to 3 in the afternoon, prior to giving up the spirit. At 5, He was taken down from the Cross, and the shrouding and the burial were concluded at 6. If there was the least bit of doubt concerning the identity of the Crucified, the family members or the friends of the Crucified would have certainly objected to the error, as some claim.

It is impossible that the personality of Christ was confused for another, especially since He was a known personality to all of the people at the different classes.

Fifthly: The non-Christian historical sources, such as:

- ❖ *The Antiquities of the Jews* by the Jewish historian Josephus.

- ❖ The detailed account of Christ's trials, which were relied upon by 'Abbās El-aqqād in his book, *The Genius of Christ*.

Sixthly: Presence of the remaining relics of the Cross, the nails in numerous churches and museums all over the world, and the Holy Shroud in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin in Italy.

90. Why do the Christians always make the Sign of the Cross?

The Sign of the Cross is a concise summary of Christianity, with all of its doctrines and spirituality.

If we make the Sign of the Cross, we recall in an instant all of the meanings that are tied to the Cross with respect to Faith in God, the unity of His nature and the Three Hypostases, the Divinity of Christ, His Incarnation, His Crucifixion, His Redemption, His Resurrection, and all that pertains to these events with respect to quick salvific blessings.

To this, we add that we make the Sign of the Cross:

1. In order to demonstrate that we are followers of the Crucified Christ, for the Cross is the Sign of our Saviour.
2. As a proclamation of our Christian Faith, and our glory in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. As a confession of His beneficence in all of the spiritual blessings of the New Testament.
4. For other benefits, amongst which:
 - ❖ The expulsion of the surrounding evil forces, for it is a terrifying Sign to the demons.
 - ❖ The encouragement of the faithful in the face of trials and tribulations, which come against their Faith.
 - ❖ A remedy against some sins, such as anger and lust.
 - ❖ A power to put to an end the effects of nature that are in opposition to us, i.e. poison, sickness, or animals' bites.

91. What do we mean by how we make the Sign of the Cross?

Placing the fingers on the forehead is an indication of God the Father Who is in heaven and above all.

Moving the hand to the end of the chest and the beginning of the stomach is an indication of the Incarnation, and the coming down of the Son of God to the Earth in order to redeem us.

The movement of the hand from left shoulder to the right is an indication of the effect of the Holy Spirit, Who

moved us from the left to the right. We then say, “One God. Amen,” to affirm the oneness of the Divine Being.

In making the Sign of the Cross, we use either:

- ❖ One finger in the likeness of the One God.
- ❖ Three fingers, which are united to symbolise the Three in One.
- ❖ Five fingers, in the likeness of the five wounds of Christ upon the Cross.

92. If Christ is God, how can we say that He “suffered”? Does God suffer?

We have said previously that Christ is the Incarnate God, which means that the divine nature (divinity) and the human nature (humanity) have united in One Person, Who is the Master Christ.

- ❖ Divinity (Divine Nature)
- ❖ Humanity (a human body and a human soul) = Christ

What suffered is the human body, for divinity does not suffer. If we hammer with a hammer on metal that has been heated by fire, the hammering will affect the metal only without having any effect on the fire that is united to it. The likeness here is not entirely similar.

The passions of Christ were real physical passions, which were accompanied by psychological passions, such

as mockery. This is in addition to the scourging, the crown of thorns, the gall, the carrying of the Cross, the nails, etc.

93. We say also that He “was buried.” How can He die while being God? Who governed the universe when He was in the tomb?

God does not die, for divinity does not die.

The Master Christ, however, is not divinity alone. He is united with humanity, which is composed of a human body and a human soul, exactly like our human nature, which is susceptible to death.

When He died on the Cross, He suffered death in the flesh (in His humanity). This is why we say at the Prayer of the Ninth Hour, **“O You Who tasted death in the flesh at the time of the ninth hour...”**

His death was not contradictory to His divinity, because the divinity is alive by its nature and does not die. Also, He willed for His humanity to die as a pleasing burnt offering, and for the redemption of the world.

As for who governed the universe while He was dead, the answer is:

It was His divinity that was governing the universe, for it did not die, nor was it affected at all by the death of the flesh. The divinity is present in all places, and is also in Heaven (John 3:13).

94. The last statement that was said concerning Christ, to Him be glory, while He was on the Cross, is that “He gave up the spirit.”³⁷ What spirit was this?

Christ, being God, took up full humanity, being a spirit and a body. If God had taken the body of a man without taking a spirit, then Christ would have been a redeemer of animals. However, He took a human body and spirit in order to redeem man.

This full humanity (human body and spirit) is referred to as the humanity. Of course, the human spirit is different than the divinity.

This human spirit is what He gave up on the Cross, for there was a separation of the human spirit and the body. The Divinity, however, remains united to both the spirit and the body separately.

95. Do we not say that the Divinity of Christ parted not from His Humanity for a single moment, nor a twinkling of an eye? How then could He die?

The death of Christ means that His human spirit was separated from His body, and not that His divinity was separated from His humanity.

³⁷ Translator’s note: Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 19:30.

Divinity does not die. The death pertains only to humanity, for it is a separation of the two parts of humanity, i.e. the spirit and the body, with the divinity being separated for the two parts of humanity.

His Spirit was separated from His body, but His divinity parted not from His spirit or His body.

❖ Prior to death, His divinity was united to the spirit and body of Christ (humanity) without any separation between them (the spirit and the body).

❖ During death, the divinity was united to the spirit and body of Christ, while being separated from one another (separation of spirit and body). After death, the divinity was united to the spirit and body of Christ, which had been restored to each other (the spirit was restored the body once more).

The divinity did not ever part from the humanity either prior to death, during, or after it.

96. What does the denial of Christ's Crucifixion mean?

The denial of the Crucifixion of Christ, to Him be glory, is a denial of history, the artifacts, and the feasts. It also ascribes to God fraud, deception, and injustice, for all of

the prophecies of the Old Testament point to the death of the Lord and His Resurrection (Heb. 10:4-12).

If Christ was not crucified, why then were the disciples, who clung to their case in spite of their simplicity and poverty, martyred? From where did the wisdom and power which were in them come from?!

If Christ was not crucified, how then did Christianity spread everywhere, transforming the hearts of men and leading them to what is exalted and superior?

If Christ was not crucified, how can we justify the empty sepulchre, which stands and will remain standing over the years?

If Christ did not die, how then was worship established in our churches and our lives, or the ancient hymns, our rites, or our prayers?

He was truly crucified...and truly, He is risen...

97. Is it for us to know what the Cross means today for the Christians?

The Cross was formerly known as an instrument of torture and death, and a symbol for humiliation and degradation. However, the death of Christ our Lord transformed the Cross into a symbol of love and redemption:

“For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved in it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

The Crucifixion of Christ and His Death were not in vain, because He died to redeem the sinners, and rose from the dead to bestow life unto us. Everyone who believes in Christ receives this new life, which is the life of victory and conquering over evil and sin: **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).**

It is as if every Christian person glories with the Apostle Paul saying, **“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).**

98. Christ is risen from the dead. Is this different from the miracles that He performed in which He raised people from the dead?

Yes, very different. It is characterised by four unique characteristics, which are:

1. It is a glorified resurrection. The Master arose with a glorified body (victorious), in contrast to those whom He raised before, for they arose with the same human body.
2. It is a permanent resurrection, which is not followed by death (Rom. 6:9-10). The others

who were raised by Him, however, all died after some time.

3. It is a personal resurrection. This means that He arose by His own authority, and no one else raised Him. He arose, and was not raised.
4. It is a wondrous resurrection, which is unparalleled, for it is a victory over sin and death.

99. How do we count the three days, which were spent by the Master Christ in the tomb?

In order to count these days, we must affirm the following truths:

Firstly: In the numbering of days, some of the day, or part of it, is considered as the whole day. This is similar to the figure of speech-known in grammar as “synechdoche”³⁸- where a part expresses the whole, and the whole expresses a part.

Secondly: The body of the Lord was placed in the tomb on Friday, before the setting of the sun. He rose early

³⁸ Translator’s note: “synechdoche (/sɪˈnekdəki/), n.: (Grammar and Rhetoric) A figure by which a more comprehensive term is used for a less comprehensive or vice versa; as whole for part or part for whole, genus for species or species for genus, etc.” (OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. 16 October 2013.).

Sunday morning. So, the duration spent by the Master Christ in the tomb is as follows:

Part of Friday is counted as a day.

All of Saturday is counted as a day.

Part of Sunday is counted as a day.

The time span, then, is considered as three days and three nights. This is according to the Talmud, which is deemed by the Jews as the holiest book after the Book of God, which says,

The adding of an hour to a day is counted as another day. The adding of a day to the year is counted as another year.

This expression is valid until this very day. Based on this, it can be rightly said that the Master Christ remained in the tomb three days and three nights.

100. For Christians, did Sunday draw its importance from the resurrection of the Master Christ?

Yes. Saturday used to be the day of worship and rest in the Old Testament, i.e. before the coming of the Master Christ. The Hebrew word “sabbath” itself means “rest”³⁹ (Exod. 20:8-11), and that is why the keeping of the

³⁹ Translator’s note: *shabath*, v.: to rest, to keep as a day of rest; to cease, to desist, leave off (cf. *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*).

Sabbath, to the Jews, was part of the Mosaic Law, and whoever kept the Sabbath was obliged to keep the whole Law.

After the coming of the Master Christ, the Christians were not bound to keep the Sabbath, because salvation is through Christ, and not by the keeping of the Law. So, Sunday became the Day of the Lord for a number of reasons:

- A. The Glorious Resurrection of the Christ was on Sunday (1 Cor. 15:4).
- B. The Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples was on Sunday (Acts 2:4).
- C. Sunday was the day of the Lord's Supper since the foundation of the Church (Acts 20:7).
- D. Sunday was the day to collect the Church's offerings since the foundation of the Church (1 Cor. 16:2).
- E. Sunday is referred to in Holy Scripture as the Day of the Lord (Rev. 1:10).
- F. The Early Church and Her Fathers kept this Tradition very clearly.

101. Which books do we refer to when we say, “according to the Scriptures”?

The books are Holy Scripture. The Hebrew word “cepher” means “book,”⁴⁰ i.e. the Books of Holy Scripture, with all the prophecies and signs contained therein which point to the truth of the Resurrection, and which attest to it.

Here are some examples:

- ❖ “I lay down and slept; I awaked” (Ps. 3:5 LXX).
- ❖ “[I]n the third day He will raise us up” (Hos. 6:2).
- ❖ Being in the belly of the whale for three days (Jon.).
- ❖ “[R]aised again [on] the third day” (Matt. 16:21).
- ❖ Who will deliver Him to the Jews (Luke 22:3, 4).
- ❖ “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55).

102. Is the “Gospel of Barnabas” among these books?

Definitely not. There is no real gospel that bears the name of Barnabas. It is merely a book that is full of lies and slander, charged with lies and fantasies. It was written by a non-Christian man about the sixteenth century, and first appeared in Andalusia in Spain. It was written in Italian,

⁴⁰ Translator’s note: *cepher*, n.: writing; a writing; a book (cf. *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*).

and then translated to Spanish in a hostile attack against Christianity. It infixed sayings and claims to the Master Christ, to Him be glory, which were never uttered. It was eventually translated into English and other languages.

Based on much evidence, it seems that its author converted from his original faith, Judaism, in Spain. There, he wrote this book out of his unsound imagination, and with a desire for fame. So, he gave it the name “gospel.” There are many insupportable errors therein. For example, the author refers to the cities of Nazareth and Jerusalem as ports on the Red Sea, even though it is known that they are in Palestine.

A proof that this book is a modern forgery is its inclusion in many matters that pertain to the Italian customs of the Middle Ages, and was quoted by the Italian writer Dante (1265-1321) in his epic poem, *The Divine Comedy*. It also contains much that is offensive to the different religions. *The Concise Arabic Encyclopedia*, which was edited by Mr. Mohammed Shafik Ghorbal, refers to it as being “a forged book that was authored in Europe in the 15th century...There are many grave errors in its description of the political and religious milieus of The Holy Land in the days of Christ” (page 354, column A).

103. Why is it necessary to have Four Gospels in the New Testament? Was one Gospel not sufficient?

Firstly, the word “evangelion” (Gospel) itself is Greek, which means good news, or glad tidings.⁴¹ It is repeated 72 times in the New Testament, 54 of which are in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, and it conveys the news of the joyous salvation, which was offered to us by God in His Son Jesus Christ, to enter with us into the Bosom of His Father by His Holy Spirit.

The New Testament begins with four books, which are known as the Four Gospels, which proclaim to us the good news of salvation in the Redeemer Jesus Christ.

These Four Gospels bear the names of their writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are amongst the Disciples of Christ, and this is why, for example, the Gospel will be referred to as the “Gospel of (according to) Matthew” = The Proclamation of Matthew = the glad tidings which were relayed to us by the Apostle Matthew concerning the life of Our Lord Jesus. Thus, these joyous gospels were written by four evangelists, each with his unique language and method, as was inspired by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16).

⁴¹ Translator’s note: *evangelion*, n.: a reward for good tidings; good tidings (cf. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

In reality, it is One Gospel (four accounts written by four witnesses) that speaks of the life of One Person, Who is Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one work, which is God's redemption of mankind. This in itself is an affirmation of its reliability, truth, and precision.

This does not mean that each cannot have its own unique characteristic. The Four Gospels shape four sides of one frame, inside of which is one object, being the life of the Master Christ, the God Who has appeared in the flesh. In this form, they complete one another. For example:

- ❖ Matthew the Evangelist wrote primarily to the Jews concerning Christ the King.
- ❖ Mark the Evangelist wrote primarily to the Romans concerning the Mighty Christ.
- ❖ Luke the Evangelist wrote primarily to the Greek concerning Christ, the Son of Man.
- ❖ John the Evangelist wrote primarily to the whole world concerning Christ, the Incarnate God.

104. Are we to understand from this that the Master Christ is not the author of the Gospel?

The Holy Gospel did not come down already written, as some may believe, nor did Christ, to Him be glory, write it. The Gospel was written by means of holy men of God, i.e.

the Disciples and Apostles of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who were inspired by God to write:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God...That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:21)

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to instruct first by His Holy Person. This is why we call Him the “Son of Man,” meaning the Friend of Man Who searches for him in order to bestow upon him the gift of precious salvation.

105. Were the Disciples of the Master Christ El-Hawarion? Why were they referred to as such?

Yes, El-Hawarion are the Disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who were called and chosen by Him, and who conversed with Him for the duration of His ministry on Earth. After His ascension, they went out preaching, according to the commission that was given them by Christ when He said, **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is**

baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

They were called "*El-Hawarion*", due to the purity and goodness of their hearts and disposition. The word *hawārey* means counsellor; guide; one with a pure heart. Given that the Disciples of Christ were adorned with such traits, they were referred to as "*El-Hawarion*".

106. If the punishment of sin is death, and Christ died for us on the Cross and saved us, why then do we die?

Christ, to Him be glory, saved us from:

1. **Spiritual Death:** i.e. Separation from God.

“We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:10).

2. **Moral Death:** He restored to us our dignity by making us children of God (1 John 3:1), and temples of His Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

3. **Eternal Death:** We were granted eternal life by the death of Christ (John 3:16), and this is the foundation of salvation.

As for **physical death**, which is the separation of the spirit from the body, it was no longer deemed as a real death, but a departure. It used to be a punishment when, regardless of how man lived his life, his spirit sent to Hades

after departing the Earth. Now, however, it is no longer a punishment, but rather a golden bridge through which we are moved to the blissful eternity, and are made worthy of a greater life.

It is the natural way, which leads us to the glories of the Resurrection. It is common sense that existence in the material earthly body is not the ideal existence for man.

107. What is the status of Christ's Resurrection in our Christian Faith?

By the Resurrection, salvation, which the Lord desired to accomplish by His Incarnation and Crucifixion, is fulfilled.

The Resurrection is the sign of success of God's striving to deliver (save) man, which is why it is the "foundation stone" of our Christian Faith, and our preaching of Christ.

It is the heart of the Christian Faith and the spiritual life, and it is also the centre of our ritual arrangement. Every Sunday is a Feast of the Resurrection, and every Liturgy is a continuation of it.

The Resurrection of the Lord confirmed for us the divinity of Christ. He is risen, and did not, and will not, die. This is in contrast to all those who arose before or after Him, for death exercised its authority over them, and they died once again, in anticipation of the general resurrection.

As for the Lord, He is risen definitively, being the Lord of Life Who could not be contained by death.

Based on this understanding, believers began to despise death, because Christ trampled down death by His death. He bestows upon everyone victory over death, after He had overcome Satan, and bound Him with eternal chains in darkness.

108. Before we speak about the Ascension of the Master Christ, is it true that He spent a duration of His life-between the age of 12 to 30-in India, after which He returned to Palestine to continue His general ministry, which is recorded in the Gospel?

This did not happen at all. There is no evidence or reference whatsoever that the Master Christ went to India, or elsewhere in the Far East.

Holy Scripture does not mention that the Master Christ travelled any further than Egypt at the time of His infancy, being accompanied by St. Joseph the Carpenter and Holy Virgin Mary. Their journey was to flee from King Herod, who had ordered the slaughter of any child two years old and under (Matt. 2).

Holy Scripture mentions also that, during His general ministry, He had travelled to coasts of Tyre and Sidon in

Lebanon, where He preached and performed miracles (Matt. 15; Mark 7).

As for the duration between the age of 12 to 30 of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh on Earth, they were spent in the city of Nazareth in Palestine, where He was known by the people of His city. He worked amongst them as a carpenter, and they knew His mother. This was until His thirtieth year, which is the age of maturity for men, according to the Jews. No one can be accepted as a member of the Jewish council, or to become a teacher (i.e. rabbi), unless he is of this age of maturity, or manhood.

109. What do we mean when we say, “[He] ascended into the heavens, He sits at the right hand of His Father”? Does God have a right and a left?

Firstly: This article is taken from Holy Scripture: “**So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God**” (Mark 16:19).

This phrase was repeated fifteen times in the New Testament, which indicates its importance.

See, for example: Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69.

Secondly: Because God is uncircumscribable, He is thus not bound by right or left, nor does He ascend or

descend, because He is present everywhere and fills all things.

Thirdly: Christ, to Him be glory, ascended in His glorified body, and sat on the Throne of Divine Majesty in Heaven by His resurrected body. In this regards, “right” is nothing more than a figurative expression which indicates, in human language, the greatest and most superior place in Heaven. It is a symbol of might, greatness, and righteousness. That is, Christ has entered into His glory (Luke 24:26), and has settled in this power.

The expression “ascend” is the leaving behind of the first descent, when He emptied Himself, returning to His true glory and majesty, which are befitting Him (John 3:13). It is important to note here that the seating of the Son at the right hand of the Father was said, not concerning the Judgement, regarding His ascension into heaven (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

110. Did the Master Christ ascend to heaven with the same body in which He rose from the dead?

Yes, for when the Master Christ, to Him be glory, rose from the dead by the authority of His divinity, He rose with a real body. It is itself the same body in which He tasted death for the sake of the redemption for the salvation of

humanity (that is after being glorified i.e taking a spiritual body). There are many evidences for this, amongst which:

1. He maintained in His body the marks of the nails, and the spear wound, as was witnessed by the disciples, then the Apostle Thomas (John 20:26-29). He kept the marks of the nails and the spear in His humanity.
2. He appeared to seven of the disciples, and ate with them (John 21:1-4). In spite of eating is not the nature of the glorified body, but He did that to prove to them that He is not a spirit nor a ghost.
3. He remained for 40 days after His resurrection, appearing to His disciples as a living proof, prior to His ascension (Luke 24:5-52). He ascending before them in His humanity.

111. Will Our Master Christ, to Him be glory, remain in His body forever?

The Master Christ ascended bodily, and that is how He was seen, openly and visibly, by everyone. He entered into Heaven with the sacrifice of Himself, as a Redeemer, with His body still belonging to him. When He was witnessed by John the Seer, He was seen in His body, as is evident from the different expressions which were recorded in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation.

The significance that can be drawn from this is that Christ, to Him be glory, took our human nature, and united it to Himself. He ascended with it into glory, and seated us on the Throne, which is why we say in the Divine Liturgy, **“Thou hast brought my first fruit up to heaven.”** This is the pinnacle of Christ’s work for us.

What is important for us to know is that this body cannot contain the splendour of divinity on earth. He concealed His divinity in His humanity, and on the Mountain of the Transfiguration, He allowed for the glory to shine forth with measure, relative to the real and full glory which is His in heaven, and in which He was seen by John the Seer.

These images of majesty were witnessed by some of the prophets, such as Ezekiel and Daniel, prior to the Incarnation.

112. We know from before that the Incarnation and the Resurrection were for our salvation. However, what was the Ascension for?

It is for us also, for it is the crowning of the redemptive act.

We have said before that it was not possible for man to reach God had it not been for God’s descent to man in order to draw him near (John 3:13). So, the way to heaven,

i.e. the divine life, was opened for us when Christ ascended into heaven to prepare for us a place, and in order to be for us an everlasting intercessor before the Father.

He ascended in order to raise humanity with Him. His bodily ascension is also for the participation of our humanity in living with Him.

As for the spiritual significance:

The Ascension of Christ is an invitation to us to ascend and rise above all that is earthly, material, and temporal. Our hearts are to aspire towards the reaching of that wonderful homeland, where we will inherit, reign, and delight.

113. Why will He come again?

As can be seen from the Creed, Christ the Master, to Him be glory, has a Second Coming, where He will come to judge humanity for all that they have done.

This Second Coming is fundamentally different in its aim from the First Coming, of which we say in the Creed, **“Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven.”**

The First Coming:

Was for our salvation, and that is why Christ came in the form of a Redeemer.

As for **the Second Coming:**

It is for the General Judgement, and that is why Christ will come in it in the form of a Judge. Scripture says, **“For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works”** (Matt. 16:27).

This means that the General Judgement will follow the Second Coming.

See also: Acts 1:11; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 14:10; 22:12.

Christ spoke many times concerning the Second Coming, which is awesome and full of glory. This is the hope that has been lived by the Church over the ages.

The Second Coming is a comfort for the oppressed, a release for those in trials, and a harbour for those in the desolate wilderness.

114. Does this mean that there is no judgement immediately after death?

The righteous will not be rewarded with the Eternal Heavenly Kingdom, nor will the wicked be condemned to eternal suffering until after the Day of Judgement, when all those who have fallen asleep will rise bodily, but not immediately after death.

The Lord Jesus revealed this in John 5:28-29.

The Apostle Paul also says, “[T]he day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:5-6).

He says also, “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

The body of man and his spirit participated in the good, or bad, works. How, then, can the justice of God allow punishment, or reward, without the body that is asleep and is dust in the tomb, immediately after death?!

See also: 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 6:9-11.

115. On what basis will the Judgement take place?

We have said that the Master Christ will be the Judge, meaning that we will stand before Him to be judged. However, this Judge loves us, and has died for us (Rom. 5:6-8). Just as this Judge is merciful and loving, He is also just. He will deal with us according to our deeds and intentions. Thus, our judgement will be difficult, and will be tied to events of love and charity, and will be revealed in our dealings with the sick, strangers, prisoners, and the afflicted on earth, for in those the Master dwells.

Therefore, the scale will be the measure of our love, dedication to His service, and the ministering to those who were created in His image and likeness (1 John 3:14). God is love (1 John 4:7-9), and he who does not love has no fellowship with God. Thus, his fate will consequently be Gehenna and eternal torment (Matt. 25:41-46).

116. Why is Christ, to Him be glory, the Judge?

Christ, to Him be glory, is the Judge, because, “[T]he Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son” (John 5:22).

He is the Judge, because He acquired us with His blood (Rev. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:18-19) out of His love, in order to redeem us from corruption. Who, then, can judge us, except Our Master to Whom we belong?

He is the Judge, because He died for us, after having united with our nature, in order to set us free from the corruption of sin. He rose, having paid the price of redemption, and ascended into heaven. He is now interceding for us before the Divine Justice (Rom. 8:34).

Man must be judged by another man like him, except without flaw or sin. This is so that man would not protest to God about the great difference that cannot be gapped between God and man. This is why the Son of Man-Christ, to Him be glory-is the Judge.

117. What does the commandment of the Master Christ, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1), mean?

We have said that judgement is the concern of God alone, and it is not for us to look at the transgressions of others, forgetting our own. Or, that we condemn others, while justifying ourselves when we do the very same thing. According to this commandment of Christ, judgement here becomes a sin for which we will have to give an account.

If our aim is the rehabilitation of others, let this be in love, which covers their lapses and trespasses (1 Pet. 4:8). As such, we should love all men as the Lord Jesus loves us, leaving judgement to God alone, Who is the Just Judge that sees what is concealed in the hearts. He will judge everyone according to His Will.

118. Can you please outline concisely the events of the Second Coming?

Some of the chapters of the New Testament outline some of the final signs of the Coming of Christ in wonderful detail. They can be outlined as follows:

- a) The appearance of the Sign of the Son of Man (the Cross) (Matt. 24:30).
- b) The coming of Christ in His glory on the clouds: (Matt. 24: 30; Luke 21: 27; 1 Thess. 3:13).

- c) The great sound of the trumpet by the archangel to proclaim the Judgement (Matt. 24:31).
- d) The rising of the dead from the graves (1 Thess. 4:16).
- e) The changing of the living in a moment (1 Cor. 15:52).

It is worthy to note that these events will occur simultaneously, and suddenly. When man dies, the body will return to dust (Gen, 3:19), and the spirit will return to God (Eccles. 12:7-8). It will either be commended to the paradise of joy, the waiting place of the righteous, if it was good (Luke 23:43); or to Gehenna, or the abyss, the waiting place of the wicked, if it was evil (Luke 16:23).

The spirits will remain in their respective place, and the bodies will remain in the dust, until the day of the General Judgement, when the angels will sound the trumpet, and the bodies will rise, after their spirit entering them, and the bodies will be changed to a spiritual form (1 Cor. 15: 42-44).

We will then meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17), when He comes in His glory with His angels (Matt. 25:31). He will be seated on the Throne of His glory, and will judge everyone according to the deeds that they accomplished on earth, be they good or bad. He will send the righteous to eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the wicked to everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46).

119. Did the Lord delay His coming?

All of time, for God, is as one day. Given that the meaning of the word “day” is “the present,” there is no past or future for God. Both are present before God (2 Pet. 3:8). A thousand years for man is as one day for God, if compared to the eternity that has no end. This means that if the Resurrection of Christ took place two thousand years ago, then it is as if they were two days to the Lord.

So, Christ the Lord did not delay His coming, but He is being patient on humanity, in order to grant it an opportunity for repentance and salvation; **“account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15).**

In the final chapter of the Book of Revelation, the Master Christ affirms the swiftness of His coming, so that we may not be overcome by trials and tribulations, or lose the certainty of the triumph and the conquering (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).

120. I have heard some say that Christ will come to rule for a thousand years. Is this true?

This is not true. The expression “Millennial Rule,” according to the Faith of our Church and all of the other apostolic churches, is figurative, and not literal. It means that the Master Christ has ruled over the hearts of the

believers from the time of His death on the Cross, to His Second Coming for Judgement.

This means that we now live in this time. It is also known that the number 1000 is amongst the numbers of perfection.

The Millennial Rule began when **the Lord reigned from a Wood,**⁴² becoming truly the **“King of Kings, and Lord of Lords”** (Rev. 19:16), and we became His subjects, Who is our King and Captain of our Salvation⁴³. He is a Spiritual King, and not material.

There is no other rule, as is thought by some, in a material fashion that they desire. That would be disparaging to Christ's present rule in the Church.

121. What does “Whose Kingdom shall have no end” mean?

In order to truly understand the Kingdom of Christ, we must first know what are the First and Second Resurrections, and what are the first and second deaths?

The First Death is the death of sin (Eph. 5:11).

The First Resurrection is the life of repentance (John 5:24-25).

⁴² Translator's note: According to the Coptic and LXX translations of Ps. 95:10; “Say among the nations that the Lord has reigned from a Wood” (cf. Agpeya, The Ninth Hour Prayer).

⁴³ Translator's note: Cf. Heb. 2:10.

The Second Death is the torment of Gehenna, which comes as a result of man's indulgence in sin without repentance (Rev. 20:12-14).

The Second Resurrection is either the resurrection unto life, or the resurrection unto condemnation, in the coming of the Son of Man (John 5:28-29).

This means that Christ's Kingdom is spiritual, and without end. It began on the Cross, and continues unto eternity, without end. This negates the notion that the Kingdom is determined by a timely duration, with a beginning and an end, as we just said.

122. Does not speaking of matters which pertain to the End of Times invoke fear?

The matter is not so, for the Final Day will be fearful for the wicked (2 Pet. 3:7-12), but will be a day that is full of glory for the faithful, for the Master will make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

The End of Times should not invoke fear, for it is the day that follows the night, and through Baptism, we have entered the new world which is to come (2 Cor. 5:17).

Speaking of the End of Times should invoke us to watch and to be constantly vigilant, preparing in prayer for the joyous hour when the Son of Man will come.

123. Some say that the First Ecumenical Council, which set forth the Creed, did not speak of anything except the Divinity of the Father and the Son. It was only in a subsequent council that it was deemed that the Holy Spirit should be added to Them. Is this true?

The Council of Nicaea, in 325, stated, “Truly, we believe in One God: God the Father, the Pantocrator... We believe in One Lord: Jesus Christ... We believe in the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁴

It spoke concerning the Three Persons, but not in great detail concerning the Person of the Holy Spirit, because the Council’s primary concern was to respond to the Arian heresy concerning the Person of the Son.

When the Council of Constantinople convened in 381, it elaborated on the article concerning the Holy Spirit in response to the heresy of a man named Macedonius, who appeared after Arius. By this, the formulation of the Creed in its present form was completed.

⁴⁴ Translator’s note: Cf. “The Nicene Creed.” *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*. Henry R. Percival, ed. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995. NPNF, Ser. 2, Vol. 14. 3.

124. What does the article, “[T]he Lord, the Giver of Life,” mean?

It is a sentence which is used to confess the divinity of the Holy Spirit, in response to the heresy of Macedonius, who claimed that the Holy Spirit is a creature like the angels, and come forth from the Father and the Son (in time). Therefore, He is not eternal.

The meaning of this article can be made clear through two points:

Firstly: The Holy Spirit is called, “the Giver of Life,” because He gives the true life to every living being, i.e. He is the One Who grants the breath of life (Gen. 2:7).

Secondly: He is the One Who bestows upon us the life of grace, i.e. He is the only means of the sanctification of the believers (Rom. 8:13; 2 Pet. 1:21), as in the Seven Mysteries of the Church.

125. What is meant by, “Who proceeds from the Father”?

The Orthodox churches repeat the Creed, saying concerning the Holy Spirit that He “**proceeds from the Father.**” Procession is an eternal act of the Father, as was said by the Master Christ, to Him be glory.

The Catholics confused “procession” and “sending forth” by adding, **“Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.”** This is a great theological error, because the sending is a temporal act which was done on the Day of Pentecost, when the Son sent the Holy Spirit to the world; **“But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, Which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me” (John 15:26).**

So, procession from the Father is an eternal act, which is not tied to a place. As for the sending forth, it is from the Father and Son, and is a temporal act that is connected to a place. Although the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, He is at the same time in the same essence with the Father and the Son without any separation.

126. Why do we affirm the worship and glorification of the Holy Spirit?

Worship is a confession of the Holy Spirit’s divinity, because worship is due to God alone, according to the commandment, **“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10).**

Worship is connected to the prayers in which the Church, in all of Her rites and Mysteries, invokes the Holy Spirit, be it Baptism, Myron (Chrismation), Eucharist,

Repentance and Confession, Marriage, Priesthood, or the Unction of the Sick.

It is worthy to note that the Church, on the day of the Feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, prays at the Ninth Hour (3 P.M.) the Office of Kneeling, and so, according to this order, the Church receives the work of the Holy Spirit while She is kneeling. It was called the Office of the Kneeling, because most of its prayers are done while the people are kneeling.

All of this is in negation of the claims of Macedonius the Heresiarch, who taught that the Holy Spirit is a creature (i.e. not God), and is therefore not of one essence with the Father and the Son. This teaching is contradictory to Holy Scripture, as it is known that the Spirit of God is nothing other than His life; **“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth” (John 4:23).**

Also, Christ’s commission to His disciples, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19), is evident that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are Three Hypostases of One God.

127. Is it possible to say that Christians worship the Three Hypostases together?

Yes, we offer our worship to the Three Hypostases. We say, for example, **“O Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.”** We can also offer our prayer to one Hypostasis. For example, we say:

- ❖ “Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful...God the Pantocrator, the Father” (Prayer of Thanksgiving).
- ❖ “[T]ear away the handwriting of our sins, O Christ our God and deliver us” (Sixth Hour Prayer).
- ❖ “O Heavenly King, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, Who is in every place...” (Third Hour Prayer).

This is all meant to demonstrate the equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and their participation in our salvation.

128. What does, “Who spoke by the prophets,” mean?

It means the One Who inspires the prophets to speak and teach.

The word “inspire” carries the meaning of “the Spirit.” It is intended to convey the Divine Truth, i.e. the Divine Teachings, by way of man, whereby the Holy Spirit makes the writer (prophet, apostle, or disciple) infallible, i.e. free from error, but leaves him the freedom of expression.

The Holy Spirit makes the writer infallible in what he writes. However, the life of the writer itself is not devoid of error and lapses. There is no deprivation of freedom for the writer in either expression or writing. Traditionally, we paint halos of light around the heads of the saints, to symbolise the Holy Spirit Who has descended upon them.

129. What is meant by the word “prophet,” and how many are there of them in Holy Scripture?

The word “prophet” is derived from the verb “to prophecy.” He is the person who speaks, or writes, what is in his heart, without this being from himself or from his own thoughts, but is derived from the counsel of God’s Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

Holy Scripture mentions more than 40 prophet, 16 of whom wrote prophetic books in the Old Testament. This is

⁴⁵ Translator’s note: *nabiy*’, n.: a prophet. With the idea of a prophet there was this necessarily attached, that he spoke not his own words, but those which he had divinely received, and that he was the messenger of God, and the declarer of His will. (cf. *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon.*)

in addition to the names of some female prophets, such as Miriam, the sister of Moses the Prophet (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), etc.

The prophets are typically men of the Most High God, who were sent throughout the ages in order to relay certain messages to the people. This was done through rebuking, warning, teaching, or otherwise. Some declared their message orally, and some through writing.

130. Is Christ's promise of sending the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8) a sign of another coming that is after His?

Some place a great importance on this promise, claiming that the Master Christ, to Whom be glory, prophesied concerning the coming of another when He promised that He would send the Holy Spirit.

This deceitful perspective is erroneous, misleading, and completely unacceptable for a number of reasons. The most important are:

❖ **Existential Error:**

The Master Christ promised His Disciples a "Spirit," and not a person or a man. This is precisely what took place on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Disciples in the form of tongues of fire (Acts 2).

❖ **Historical Error:**

The Master Christ promised that He would send the Holy Spirit after a few days (Acts 1:5). This promise coincides with what happened historically, when the Holy Spirit descended on the Disciples only ten days after the Ascension of Christ, to Him be glory. At the same time, it does not coincide whatsoever with what happened historically, more than five or six centuries, after the Nativity of the Master Christ.

❖ **Linguistic Error:**

When the Master Christ spoke concerning the sending of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, He used the Greek word *paraklētos* (Comforter). It is a legal word, which refers to one who stands in court to defend (John 16:8).⁴⁶ Some writers confused the matter, and mistook it for another Greek word, which is *periklytos* (illustrious; praised). This linguistic confusion caused some to understand erroneously that the Master Christ was referring to another, but this did not happen at all.

⁴⁶ Translator's note: *paraklētos*, n.: one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defence, legal assistant; an advocate; one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor; a helper, succorer, aider, assistant. (cf. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*.)

131. Can the Holy Spirit work in unbelievers? Is this supported from Holy Scripture?

Yes, the Holy Spirit works in unbelievers so that they may believe. How else would they believe if the Holy Spirit does not work in them?!

Holy Scripture says, “[N]o man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). The story of the baptism of Cornelius (unbeliever) supports this (Acts 10:44-45).

An Important Note:

The work of the Holy Spirit for Faith is one thing, and His permanent dwelling in the believer is another. The Holy Spirit can work in the heart of an unbelieving person in order to call him to the Faith, or to perform a miracle for him, or a miracle that would be a means to his believing. However, after he believes, he must be baptised and receive the anointing of the Holy Myron in order for the Holy Spirit to work, and dwell in him permanently.

132. What does the word “Church” mean linguistically and terminologically?

The origin of the word is Hebrew, which is taken from the word *kanīsa*, and it means “congregation,” or

“assembly.”⁴⁷ Some say that its origin is Greek, *ekklēsia*, which means the place of the calling.⁴⁸

The term “Church” has three meanings:

❖ **Place:**

The place where the believers congregate, and where the Holy Spirit dwells amongst them. It is the building which is consecrated for that purpose (Acts 11:26).

❖ **Clergy:**

The orders of the priesthood that are responsible for the ecclesiastical work (Matt. 18:17).

❖ **People:**

The gathering of the believers throughout the world (Matt. 18:20), which lives a holy life, and participates in the Divine Mysteries that are performed by the Holy Priesthood.

As for the expression “Coptic Orthodox Church”:

It means the Egyptian Church that is upright in teaching, because Her Faith and doctrine have not changed since Her inception at the time of the Apostles themselves. She was established by the Holy Apostle Mark in the first century.

⁴⁷ Translator’s note: *qēhillah*, n.: an assembly (cf. *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*).

⁴⁸ Translator’s note: *ekklēsia*, n. (fr. *ekklītos*: called out or forth): a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly (cf. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

133. What is the function of the Church in the world?

The mission of the Church is purely spiritual, completely separate from the politics of the world. The spiritual mission entails the following:

- ❖ Prayer and teaching.
- ❖ The practice of the Mysteries, as means of Grace.
- ❖ The authority to loose and bind sins.
- ❖ The spreading of peace, and the ministry of reconciliation.
- ❖ The witnessing to Christ in all places and time.
- ❖ Spiritual care. Her aim is to prepare all those who believe for the Kingdom of Heaven, and Eternal Life.

134. What are the characteristics of this Church, according to Her doctrine?

There are four main characteristics of the Church, which are repeated in the Creed:

One:

(Rom. 12:5). Her Christ is one, and the faithful are one body, having a common Faith, communion in the same

Mysteries, and are subject to One Head, Who is Christ, to Him be glory.

Holy:

(Eph. 5:25-27). Her Founder is Christ, Who is the Holy of Holies. Her members are called to be holy, and She separates from Her choirs the guileful and the heretic, like Arius, Macedonius, and others.

Catholic:

(Matt. 13:47, 48). She gathers many nations, be they from the Old Covenant, or the New; from the Sojourning Church (on earth), or the Dominant Church (in heaven).

Apostolic:

(Eph. 2:20). Her Faith is built upon the foundation of the Apostle's Faith and teachings, which were received from the Master Christ Himself, to Him be glory.

135. I have heard the expression, "The Church, the Body of Christ." What does that mean?

This expression is taken from Holy Scripture: "**So we, being many, are one body in Christ**" (Rom. 12:5).

It is said to indicate the close link between Christ and the Church. In the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch, "[W]herever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Translator's note: In *Epistle to Smyrnaeans* 8.

The Church and Her Founder are inseparable. The Church is Christ with us, and Christ did not leave the Church when He ascended to heaven, because He promised that He would be with us always, and unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:20; 18:20).

The expression, “the Body of Christ,” demonstrates that the Church is united in the Mystery of Thanksgiving (Communion), because the Eucharist is what creates the unity of the Church (1 Cor. 10:17; Col. 1:24).

136. What did the Master Christ mean when He said to the Apostle Peter, “[T]hou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church” (Matt: 16:18)?

The Master Christ made this statement when the Apostle Peter, in the presence of the Disciples, made his great confession, “**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God**” (Matt. 16:16).

The Master Christ meant by the rock the Faith that was proclaimed by the Disciples in the person of the Apostle Peter, and not at all the person of Peter.

In the New Testament, as well as the Old Testament, there are many references to Christ being the Rock and the Chief Cornerstone in the building of the Church: 2 Sam. 22:2; Ps. 18:31; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5, 7. The Disciples,

then, are the stones, or pillars, of the building of the Church and Her foundation.

It is noteworthy that the Catholic Church explains these verses incorrectly by referring to Peter as being the rock upon which Christ establishes His Church! From this explanation, it began to claim that the Pope of Rome is entitled to preside over all of the Christian churches throughout the world, given that Peter is the first bishop of Rome.⁵⁰ This explanation is rejected by our Orthodox Church, because it is unacceptable Scripturally, linguistically, historically, or spiritually.

137. How can we say “One Church” when the Church is divided into many denominations and factions?

The Church enjoyed unity in the first centuries, and Her patristic ethos was, “[O]ne heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32).

However, as time passed, divisions and schisms seeped in, and the heresiarchs were separated from the Church. In turn, they lost their membership in the Church, but the Church never lost Her unity.

⁵⁰ Translator’s note: See Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*: “After the martyrdom of Paul and of Peter, Linus was the first to obtain the episcopate of the church at Rome. Paul mentions him, when writing to Timothy from Rome, in the salutation at the end of the epistle” (3.2).

Now, there are many faithful attempts, from a number of directions, to bring about the unity of the Church. They all revolve around the theme of “Ecumenical Unity.” These efforts have resulted in many positive advances, and their results will be revealed in the near future.

The vital issue that must be understood, however, is that the unity of the churches should be in Faith, doctrine, and teaching before it is realised externally. This is what is pleasing to the heart of Christ, to Him be glory, as He revealed it in His final prayer (John 17:11). We too desire this when we recite the Creed.

138. Please provide a concise summary of the Church’s divisions throughout the centuries.

The Church remained one until 451, when the tragic Council of Chalcedon convened. The One Church was divided over the nature of the Master Christ into East and West.

In 1054, the Byzantine churches (includes Greeks, Russians, etc.) and the Western Catholic Church separated over the addition of the clause “and the Son” to the Creed.⁵¹

⁵¹ Translator’s note: Traditionally referred to as the *Filioque*; “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son” (emphasis mine).

In the sixteenth century, Protestantism appeared as a reaction to Catholic extremes. The famous Reformation was led by Martin Luther.

139. If this portion of the Creed is concerned with the defense of the Holy Spirit's divinity, why does it extend to the Church, Her characteristics, Baptism, etc.?

We have said previously that the Church is the Body of Christ, that is to say that She is where Christ is present and is transfigured. The Holy Spirit is the One Who fulfills the statement, **“The Church, the Body of Christ,”** through His work in the Divine Mysteries.

As God spoke to man in the Garden saying, **“Increase and multiply, and fill the earth”** (Gen. 1:28 LXX), thus establishing marriage and making it possible, it was the union of man and woman which fulfilled the word of God. Likewise, it is the Holy Spirit Who fulfills the presence of Christ in us, because Baptism is the door through which the members of Christ are born and are united by the Holy Spirit. So, we mention it in the Creed, because it is the first step of the Christian life.

140. What is Baptism?

It is a holy Baptism, in which we are born once again from above of water and Spirit by our immersion in the water three times, in the Name of the Holy Trinity, **“of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).**

The Mystery of Baptism:

The first of the Seven Mysteries, and is like the door through which the believer enters to God; **“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God” (John 3:5).**

It should be noted that when the Mystery of Baptism takes place, the Baptised person is accompanied by his own guardian angel.

141. What does it mean that Baptism is for the remission of sins?

St. Augustine responds saying, **“By our birth from water and the Holy Spirit, we are purified from all sin, whether they are from Adam in whom all sinned, or by our actions, or our words, for we are washed from them by Baptism. In Baptism, we receive the forgiveness of all of our sins-the ancestral and the present-and we**

become members in the Body of Christ, which is the Church.”⁵²

If man sins after Baptism, he is in need of repentance, and the door of repentance is open. If man is born once, he repents several times. This is why the Church has prescribed that the Mystery of Baptism be done once, but the Mystery of Repentance can be done at any time.

142. Why do we describe Baptism as being one?

We describe Baptism as being **one** in order to convey that it cannot be repeated. Baptism is a spiritual birth from above, and just as man cannot physically be born except once, spiritual birth also cannot be repeated. Baptism also is the likeness of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Christ too died once (Rom. 6:4-10). It is done by immersion in water, because that is what is understood from the act of burial, and because this was how the Master Christ was baptised (Matt. 3:16).

⁵² Translator’s note: Cf. *The Enchiridion* 64, “For, setting aside the grace of baptism, which is given as antidote to original sin, so that what our birth imposes upon us, our new birth relieves us from (this grace, however, takes away all actual sins also that have been committed in thought, word, and deed): setting aside, then, this great act of favour, whence commences man’s restoration, and in which all our guilt, both original and actual, is washed away” (Philip Schaff, ed. NPNF, Ser. 1, Vol. 3. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1995.).

This is why we proclaim in the Creed, “[W]e confess **One Baptism, for the remission of sins**” (cf. Eph. 4:5).

143. What is “the resurrection of the dead” that we look for?

The General Resurrection, or the Resurrection of the Dead, is the restoration and union of the spirits to the bodies by the command of God the Creator, and His exalted power. Both the spirit and the body rise gently as one person in expectation of the Judgement and recompense.

We believe that our spirits are immortal, and that, by death, they are separated from the bodies. The dust will return to the earth, as it was, whereas the spirit will return to God, who gave it (Eccles. 12:7). The spirit will rest in Paradise, or Hell, until the day of the Great Judgement.

On the great day of the Lord’s coming: The dead in Christ shall rise (1 Thess. 4:16), and the bodies of the living will be transformed (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:17), so that the awesome Judgement may take place (Matt. 25:46).

144. What is death, and who are the dead?

Life is a gift from God, and death is contrary to the original human nature, because God created man immortal,

and made him in His own image (Wisd. 2:23). Death, then, is the result of sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23), which entered into the world through man the day when he obeyed the call of the devil (Heb. 2:14) to turn away from the Source of Life.

This means that death occurs as a result of God's absence. Where God is, there can be no death. Therefore, the soul that is thirsty for God, and that is always seeking to live in His presence, does not die, for its desire for God keeps it alive.

Moreover, the life of man continues after death in as much as it is connected to God. That is, the one who lives on this earth in Christ, continues in this life after his death, for Christ is the Bestower of Life (John 8:51).

145. What did the Master Christ mean when he addressed the Jews saying, "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51), given that those who have believed in Christ have died like anyone else?

The Master Christ was not referring at all to physical death, for it is assumed that man will die, and will not remain alive forever in this world. He was referring to spiritual death, for the righteous man who keeps the words of his Saviour Jesus Christ will never see death, i.e. will remain alive in the heavenly glories. His body will die, and

will be buried in the grave. His spirit, however, will remain alive in the presence of God forever.

The Master Christ said elsewhere, **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25)**. That is, whoever believes in Christ Jesus our Lord, His teachings, that He came to save the world from sin, and to die in order to redeem him on the Wood of the Cross, then he will remain alive in spirit, even if he dies physically. Corporal death is not the ultimate end of things, for the believer sleeps in hope of the Resurrection in the Living Christ, Who is risen from the dead. It is only a departure.

146. Why do we believe in the necessity of the General Resurrection?

The General Resurrection is inevitable, because God's providence for the creation of man is to always heal him. The General Resurrection is also important for the Judgement of the works of the body and the spirit, be they evil or good (John 5:28-29).

We must add that man himself strives for a joyous life with God in eternity. This end will not be realised, unless the spirit returns to the flesh, and through the resurrection.

147. What is meant by “the life of the coming age”?

The life of the coming age is the eternal life that is looked for by the faithful. Man is a celestial being who, naturally, lives as a foreigner on the earth, always striving to connect to heaven, be it through his desires and prayers, or even through his charity and intercessions.

The life of the coming age is the Kingdom, and what is most beautiful in the Kingdom is that we will ever be with Christ (John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17). The Kingdom of God is unparalleled to anything on earth, and is brighter, greater, and more pleasant than all the sights of the earth, with its inventions and material delights. God there has prepared for us what an eye has not seen, nor an ear heard, nor what has entered the heart of man (1 Cor. 2:9). All will delight in the joy of the Divine Presence, and the unspeakable joy that is full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8).

148. What does the word “Amen,” which concludes the Creed and all of our prayers, mean?

It is a word of Hebrew origin, which means, “steady; firm; verily; faithful.”⁵³ It is commonly used by the people

⁵³ Translator’s note: ‘*amen*, adj.: firm, faithful; adv.: truly, verily, amen (cf. Gesenius’ *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*).

of the earth and its religions, and is said almost in the same way, with a slight difference in pronunciation at times.

This word, in Holy Scripture, carries four meanings:

1. As an affirmation in an oath, covenant, or the fulfillment of a matter, as in Deut. 27.
2. Carries the meaning of “Hearken, O Lord,” or “Grant this, O Lord,” as in 2 Cor. 13:14).
3. Meaning “truly,” as when the Master Christ said, “Verily, I say unto you” (Matt. 18:3). In its original language, it would be, “*Amen*, I say unto you.”
4. As a description of the Name of Christ, as in, “These things saith the Amen (i.e. Christ), the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14).

It is commonly known that the word “amen” is used after prayer, in order to express our faith in God, and our trust in Him that He is capable of answering us. To Him be all glory and honour forever, Amen.

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This book was first published in 1990 in the Metropolis of Beheira, Matrouh, and Pentapolis, and has been republished a number of times ever since in different publications. Its targeted readership is primarily the youth of secondary school and university (16-25), at whose age questions and inquiries recur concerning our Holy Faith.

So, we have gathered a number of these questions, categorised them systematically according to the articles of the Creed, and set them in the form of sequential dialogues of a 148 questions and answers. We sought precision, simplicity and depth, in order to present this work in a practical and fitting manner, so that it may be simultaneously comprehensive and concise to our youth in every Christian family, and so that it may be beneficial to all who ask a reason of the hope that is in us.

Our aim is to present the basics of our Christian and Church life in the form of questions and answers, as it is one of the most beneficial and effective forms of Christian education for all ages.

“Without faith [it is] impossible to please [Him]” (Heb. 11:6).

Pope Tawadros the Second

