

**Introduction**  
**by**  
**His grace Amba Matta'os**  
**Bishop of El-Soryan Monastery**

Dear reader, the book in your hands entitled “Coptic Hymnody, its spirituality and tunes” is a very precious book, it is written by deacon, engineer and musician: George Kyrillos, the Maestro of David Ensemble for Coptic hymns which visited most of the countries of the west and fascinated the audience in the west with its majestic glow.

The book discussed many issues related to the Coptic hymns, like the Coptic language of the hymns, the praise songs in the Old Testament, and the role of the church to preserve its heritage which is inscribed in both our hearts and minds. The heritage was transmitted orally for almost two millenniums and the church preserved it cautiously and never squandered it away.

The author also wrote about the spiritual and musical value of the Coptic hymns, revealing how rich, impressive and serene they are. He also added some spiritual contemplations and musical paraphrasing of eight Coptic hymns. He excelled in their explanation and wrote them in a musical note form.

It is an invaluable research, perhaps the first of its kind in this field, and we are eager to have more, especially spiritual and musical contemplations on the Coptic hymns. we wish that these studies be recoded in a book to

benefit the Coptic hymns admirers, bearing in mind that deacon George Kyrillos is a skilful musician, who knows how to delve deep in the meaning of the hymns and come up with great contemplations, new and old which we take no notice of while we repeat hymns as an ordinary ritual on specific occasions.

We thank brother George for this great effort presented to the church children to benefit from, to encourage people to learn hymns and preserve them as a precious ecclesiastical heritage.

We ask God to bless this work for the glory of His Holy Name, and for the benefit of whoever reads it through the intercession of our mother the holy Virgin Mary and the venerated martyr St. Mark the Evangelist, and the prayers of our blessed father His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the successor of St. Mark the Apostle.

May the grace of God be with us all. Amen.

Amba Matta'os

Bishop and head of the surian Monastery  
Christmas 7 January 2000/ 28 Kiahk 1716

**Another Introduction**  
**by**  
**His Grace Amba Raphael**  
**General Bishop of Down Town Churches.**

The Coptic library has been waiting anxiously for this book ...when musical talent is accompanied by good performance, love, sincerity and honesty in transmitting the information which is the essence of the Coptic heritage, the work then should be described as great, something which always characterizes our beloved brother, deacon George Kyrillos.

The author has soared with us in a spiritual tour so as to make us get acquainted with the origin of the Coptic language, its development, and the impact of other languages, especially the Greek, on it. He also highlighted the spiritual value of the Coptic language by citing verses from the Holy Bible: Old and New Testaments, and from the lives of the fathers and of the church....

He indicated how the Coptic hymns were preserved in our church delineating the splendid roles of the talented choir singers in spreading our marvelous heritage honestly and effectively.

The author has not neglected the cultural value of the Coptic hymns, reflecting the effect of the ancient Egyptian, the Greek and the Hebrew cultures. The issue of the use of musical instruments in church is also discussed.

Finally, he presented wonderful models with musical explanation and spiritual contemplation on some hymns: Ebooro, Golgotha, Hiteni Bresveya, Arihoo Chasf, Amin ton thanaton, Arebsalin and Agios (the joyful tune).

Thanks to the beloved author and to his talented choir 'David Ensemble' and congratulations to our Coptic library for this prime work, which we consider an initiative that enlightens the way before many researchers and interested people.

We consider this book a call for every Copt to benefit from this rich spiritual heritage since strange hymns began to creep towards our church and we fear one day they will tarnish the beauty and eloquence of our immortal Coptic heritage. Let us know more our church and be nourished by its fat, through the blessing of the prayers of our beloved father H.H. Pope Shenouda III and the venerable bishops.

Amba Raphael  
General Bishop  
15/12/1999

## **Dedication**

To... my beloved traditional Coptic Orthodox Church, which preserved the Coptic hymns heritage throughout two millenniums...

To ...my beloved wife who shared me the love of hymnody, and passed the nights awake with me in my ministry and in preparing this book, who accompanied me during training, in ceremonies, recording and trips.

To ...my little daughter, who is nourished by the love of praise songs since her birth, God blessed her with a talent, which excels mine so as to be responsible to carry out my mission after me.

To ...all the members of my family...my late father, my pious mother and reverend brother, father Kyrillos Kyrillos, and the rest of my brothers and sisters, who taught me how to sing God's praise.

To ...all those who supported me, whether by composing words, or by playing a musical instrument, or by a moving consoling voice or even by listening to the songs of praise I chanted ...to those who offered any kind of spiritual, technical, administrative or financial help.

To...all those who exerted effort in this book.

To...all my professors and teachers who influenced me spiritually and musically.

To...all those who, moved by hymns, played a tune that affected the hearts of others.

To...all those who listened to a Coptic hymn and wanted to understand it with their minds and live it with their hearts.

To...those who desire their songs to be filled with the Holy Spirit Who sanctified such songs at those days.

To...all of you. I present this book including the most beautiful hymns on earth, hymns which the world knows now and boasts in just listening to them and seeks them everywhere. We are proud of our church, the source of these hymns, and who was keen on preserving this heritage until now despite our negligence. Indeed, all the nations of the world envy us for such a treasure we possess.

Let us together understand the mystery of these hymns.

The author

## **Acknowledgment**

Coptic hymns are our immortal spiritual heritage, the miracle before which the world stands fascinated and overwhelmed by these tunes which grew in the bosom of the deep-rooted Orthodox Church on the mouths of the singers and in the ears of the listeners deep in the hearts of all Copts.

Ages of persecution have come to an end, whereas the Coptic hymns lasted until this day. Many and various songs intonations totally disappeared and were buried in history, but the Coptic hymns continued throughout ages, penetrating the hearts even of those who know nothing about their language. They feel when listening to them that they have transcended time and space and are soaring high even unto the heaven of heavens.

People of different creeds and religions hear them, and behold all the barriers fall down and disappear. Could this be its spiritual magnificence? Why not!! Were these hymns not derived from the prophets Moses and David, Asaf, Himan and Yadothon? Have the Lord Christ not taught them to His disciples: to Paul and Silas? Did St. Mark not carry them to Egypt after he had learned them from Lord's mouth in the upper room?

Did Athanasius not repeat them while defending faith and all saints received and chanted them after him throughout different ages? What songs did saint Anthony and the saintly Patriarchs chant? Is it not these hymns? It is not strange then that they have such spiritual charm! Bring me one musician who belongs to one of the old or modern musical schools from any country, and let him listen to one of the Coptic hymns and see how he is moved within, the tunes tickling his heart lift him up high, and beyond the

language which he does not understand or the musical school which he belongs to.

We do you injustice, O hymns, we tarnish you ...we mar you when we fail to understand your meaning ...we make you without shape or rhythm without any clear beginning or end ...we destroy your sublimity and waste the import which our fathers have intended by them. That is why I wrote this book; if it sometimes wounds, it heals often. it was necessary to write it so as to change some conceptions regarding the genuine Coptic hymns. I was encouraged by the love and admiration I have seen in the eyes of people of different nationalities, who soared up by these hymns above the noise and troubles of the earth. I will never forget the day when I performed with my brothers " David Ensemble " before the Christian young women Association in 1999, at All Saints Cathedral in Zamalek, Cairo. I will never forget that most of the audience, who were 800 ladies coming from one hundred nations from all over the world, announced that these hymns have brought them up even unto heaven.

I am therefore, grateful first to those saintly fathers who composed these hymns. I am grateful to the Coptic Orthodox Church, which kept these hymns in her bosom, that they might survive for us and within us.

I thank the cantors who learnt these hymns and handed them down to others throughout ages, without perversion. I also thank my brothers the members of " David Ensemble " with whom I was able to present these hymns to those who loved them as well as to others who also loved them through our performance. I thank my beloved country, the fertile soil for



music and hymns since the dawn of history and the lighthouse from which spread musicology and hymnology to all parts of the world.

I could not have come up with this book without the support and the encouragement of many. My dear wife offered me the first hand in computer work. I also appreciate the efforts of engineers ‘ Akmal Hanna’, ‘ Maher Christo’, ‘ Hany Magdy’.

Mr. ‘Albert Youssef’, Mr. ‘Ayad Hakim’, Mr. ‘ Nagy Nasif’, Mr. ‘Rai’f Emile’ and Mr. Iliya Kyrillos together with the librarians of St. Mark church in el-Maadi have helped me with a great deal of references, not to mention the assistance of Dr. Ahmed el-Maghrabi, the cultural attaché in Paris, who adores the Coptic hymns and considers them, not only a private property of the Christians Copts, but of all Egyptian Copts. I am really grateful to him, for he opened to me the gates of ministry abroad beyond my beloved Egypt.

One could never forget Dr.‘Fakhry Sadek ’ and Dr. ‘ Ephraim Emile ’ who collected and revised the Coptic texts and their translation in Arabic and English.

Amba Daniel, Bishop of el-Maddi has honored me with the revision of the ritual material of the book, while father ‘Markos Yassa ’and father ‘ Makarios’, the priests of St. Mark church in Maadi have revised the spiritual and historic material of the book.

Engineer and artist ‘Edward Hanna’, my colleague along the way of hymnody for more than twenty-five years, has revised the Arabic language

and the cover design. Artist 'Iliya Kyrillos' added the artistic touches throughout the book.

My deep thanks to Amba Matta'os, Bishop and head of Soryan Monastery who introduced this book, having first revised it accurately, and gave important comments that enriched its spiritual content.

Thanks also to Amba Raphael, General Bishop of Down Town Churches for his wonderful introduction that added much to the spiritual value of the book.

I am honored also by the contribution of the great American professor Dr. Martha Roy who took much trouble in revising the musical material the book.

Thanks are also due to Mr. Iliya Tharwat Bassili who played a prominent role in publishing this book, which has been locked for quite a long time in drawers. I thank Dr. Joseph Maurice Faltas who revised the theological material of the book. I also thank engineer Rafik Samy and George Fouad from Design Co-ordinators Office for Marketing and Advertisement, and the Office Executive Manager Sherine Raouf.

May God repay all those who shared in making this book hundred times now and in eternal life according to His true promise! May God bless all those who read it, that they may understand and realize how great are these hymns! I ask God that many of those who read the book are moved with love towards hymns and offer a hand that we all may convey these hymns

throughout this third millennium in a magnificent form that fits their sublimity.

The author

## **Preface**

### **Why do we Praise?**

I do not consider myself tendentious, if I say that any human is born musically from the very beginning through his feelings, heart impulses, movements and rhythms. If this symphony performed inside his body pleased him, he would grow up in search for other instruments outside, by which he transforms his musical potential to ingenuities in several fields of science and art, enriching different aspects of life.

I imagine that Adam and Eve when they were at the Garden of Eden they used to hear angels praising, and when they were cast out they exited searching for this kind of praise between the thorns and thistles the earth produced for them, in an attempt to retrieve the sweet memories of the past by praising. Wherefore, I do not wonder when I find Jubal and Tubal, grandsons of Cain, could invent harp, flute and all kinds of instruments out of bronze and iron in this early rudimental age, for Jubal “was the father of all who play the harp and flute ... Tubal-Cain an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron” (Gen. 4:21,22)

The reader may wonder how sons of Cain were able to form iron, bronze and wood to make musical instruments and to sire an elementary form of an Orchestra<sup>1</sup> with its four subclasses: wooden blowing instruments (flute),

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<sup>1</sup> “Orchestra” originally a Greek word, used to mean (dance and sing), then it was used to mean the place assigned for the musical group that accompany the singing performed on the stage (i.e. area between the stage and the audience). By the start of the Opera in the sixth century, the term

bronzy blowing instruments, chorded instruments (harp), and rhythmic instruments which were available in nature around them (striking earth with foot and clapping are simple examples).

Jubal and Tubal were able to establish for all the coming generations the main basis of a praising orchestra, which were exploited afterwards by David the prophet.

Some historians confirm that the term “Jubilee” is a derivative from the name “Jubal”<sup>2</sup>, since blowing of trumpets was accustomed during the celebration of the Jubilee year and was called “trumpet of the Jubilee”.

What the history mentions about the origin of the harp, describes the human need to make an instrument for praise. As soon as the early human saw a turtle moving near, the idea was generated, he captured the animal, evacuated the body, covered the shell with skin, fixed on it a lever and an arch, tensioned chords through it, and the first harp was invented demonstrating the human need for music and praise.

Human interest in music at this rudimental age, and especially the interest of Jubal and Tubal confirm that Adam and Eve received the importance and value of praise from God and angels and consequently passed it to their children and grandchildren.

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Orchestra was used for the accompanying group and from that time the term was widely used all over the world. At the mean time “Orchestra” is used to present a complete musical group that are composed of the four subclasses: Chorded, wooden, bronzy, and rhythmic instruments. The symphony orchestra did not take its present form (80 to 120 or more musicians) except through several stages of development in the time between the classical & romantic eras. Orchestra may be composed only of chorded instruments and called Chorded Orchestra.

<sup>2</sup> Reference book “Ancient Egyptians Music and singing “ by Fekry Boutros

Music does not relate with the soul and spirit only but also with the body, it can move it regardless of its state of sloth and inert and even can cure its organic disease through music therapy.

Concerning music in general, Plato the great Greek philosopher says: “Music is nourishment for the soul and source for stability and prudence, it is a gift from the art free deities converting any bizarre movement inside us to constant succinct, depriving any incoherence to harmonic assortment and enlightening us through the good way”

He also said : “When a person does not know how to sing, that means he didn’t receive any education”. He meant that the person who does not know how to control himself or moderate his words, expressions or feelings, surely that person is uneducated.

Also about music Jacob Jost said: “When the capability of speech surceases, the music starts”, and Thayer Jaston said: “If it had been possible to communicate verbally in what easily communicated musically then there would have been no need for music”

Dr. “Michael Bedie Abdelmalek” in a lecture about “Doxology service in church” at the Patristic center said: “Music is considered one of the elements of creation composition that was emplaced in human soul to achieve soul inner balance and to attain the conjunction between human feelings, as we say in the Prime “Matins”Praise: “those who were intimated by the Holy spirit like the harp”. Music express the individual as well as the congregation

in harmony and entire unity. It was a main expedience for worship in ancient civilizations like Pharaohs and Greeks, it was a method of connection between deities and humans, and it was used in wars to unite different feelings, arouse emotions and activate human movement”.

The music listener gains an experience that plays an important role not only in cultural enjoyment but in forming palate standards, and developing the sense of culture, art and history. Music let the listener interact with life, guarantee its continuity in a better way and make him flourish in his actions.

But not all of what is intonated can be called music, St. Clement the Alexandrian classified music and circumscribed what we should listen to: “Music is then to be handled for the sake of the embellishment and composure of manners. ... but we must reject superfluous music, which enervates men’s soul, and leads to variety, now mournful, and then licentious and voluptuous, and then frenzied and frantic” (The Stromata XI)

It is important then to choose the kind of music we should listen or let our children listen to, it becomes more important when it is related to praising hymns, for these days a kind of hymn’s music is spreading, music that “enervates men’s soul” as St. Clement expressed.

### **Children and Music:**

Plato favored ancient Egyptian rules related to arrangements of music and considered it as a role model that should be followed: “We have to let the children by a particular rule gain the knowledge that the children of Egypt learn through characters, and music must be included within these subjects, for the Egyptians comprehended from a long time the importance of

educating the youngsters on what is situated of perfected hymns, this was a result of their moderate principles that aim to control emotions and passions from the childhood”

Children in Egypt used not to receive any kind of education till the age of ten except what is transferred to them through imitation and emulation, for they were satisfied to raise them before attaining that age on general principles and known examples that brief wisdom and bestir virtues that the elders teach.

At the age of ten they used to learn reading for three years, at the age of thirteen they get trained in sports exercising and harp playing and Egyptians necessitated that they must complete for such practice three years, no more no less as stated by the law, and they did not accept any excuses from the father or the child.

Moses the prophet was raised through this system at the palace of the king of Egypt, he learned reading at the age of ten, then learned math, geometry, music - with its several forms of harmonic, rhythmic, vocal and poetry music - then learned medicine and after completing all civil and military sciences he learned philosophy and theology by the most noted Egyptian professors (Ref book : Life of Moses by Philo the Jew).

How much I wish that those who set the education programs for the children, study ancient Egyptian rules that amazed Plato – who amazed us by his redundant knowledge – for it will help in recognizing how much the fault we went through by setting up the available programs.



May be it is not known to the majority that Moses had a proficient musical personality, by which he was able to formulate the most magnificent hymn known in history, the hymn that was chanted after crossing the red sea with the Israeli people.

I personally consider that Moses the prophet is the one who established the theory of “Worship by hymns”, and David afterwards set the order of assignation in worship.

### **About Praise Singing:**

In praise singing the most regarded music is used, and as music is nourishing the soul with melodies, the spirit is raised levels and levels towards its Creator who is “Fearful in praises” (Ex 15:11), and the body which is weak and heavy gains power and alacrity that enables it to ascend over desires and disjoin from earthly uproar to unite with the heavenly powers and spiritual beings, chanting with them.

When the child Jesus was born, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, suddenly appeared with the angel that stood before the shepherds, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying : “Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth peace, good will toward men”.

What a beautiful praise of salvation the angels composed expressing the peace that came down on earth, and the joy that proceeded into people’s life through the melodies of this canticle, that the shepherds started to iterate as received from the angels, which echo will remain iterated by all humanity till the ages of ages.

The appearance of the son of God on earth among those praises assured that the kingdom of God was extended from angels world to human world , the angels started their service on earth, inviting people to share in the same service, this was the first time people were invited to accompany the chorus of angels.

God when entered our world and became with us, permitted the heaven to open on earth with all its mysteries, glories, ministers, peace, joy and praises. Wherefore our traditional Coptic church cared to let praises partake more space of time in worship rituals than readings, private prayers and preaching.

### **About Praising with Coptic hymns:**

In the book “Description of Egypt” that was written by the savants of the French expedition I quote:

“As we return backwards in time to the ancient eras, we find that music was more prevailing, having a wider amplitude, noble and sober form, and vice versa as we go near to the modern times, musical art starts to loose from its sobriety and austerity to become more trivial and fragile”

This quotation may open the way for me to speak on Coptic hymns, that are believed to be chanted inside churches for about two thousands years. Coptic hymns are considered to be supreme, for as we praise we accompany plenty of saints that praised with the same hymns through generations, both

praises intermingle and our striving church get in contact with the victorious one, diffuses in it and gets empowered by it.

And since those hymns passed with the church all the persecution eras, and continued unmovable and eternal, the listener will recognize – if carefully listened – that they were inspired from one source - constant through generations - from the Holy Spirit.

Like the wine if kept for years and years its effect become more cordial and stronger, also the Coptic hymns as kept so many years, did gain a spiritual charm and a great influence over the chanter's emotions, by which he feels an overwhelming blessing.

And since it is not possible even by using new advanced technology to create new wine having the same attributes, taste and influence of the old one, it is also impossible for a composer to produce one hymn having the same influence, spirituality and sanctity that the immortal Coptic hymns have.

About the Coptic hymns Dr. Michael Badie Abdelmalek says: “When listening to the Coptic music, there appears at once the composers professionalism because they placed it with emotions in response to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. As we listen we don't listen to impassive rituals but to a living (reborn) worship, because the doer in this music is the Holy Spirit who spoke in the prophets at the Old Testament and who is working in the church of the new testament”.

When listening to those hymns a personal enjoyment touches our life, happiness overwhelms us and we get attracted to music, as we follow the structure of a musical stanza - as if it is a huge edifice constructed in front of us - block over block, melody over melody, the hymn develops gradually until it reaches its peak in expression and emotion through our heart beats and internal feelings, we incorporate in this spiritual construction that is manifested at the end of the phrase.

The hymn in the Coptic church is an idea exposed in front of us to share and respond, the interaction with it leads to incorporation, we reach to the peak of the hymn by intellectual siege and responding, and the hymn being heard become linked to our internal life. Through hymns the whole church melts - bishop with priest, deacon with all the congregation - in unity and tight conjunction. This is what St. Ignatius expressed in his epistle to the Ephesians: “Wherefore it is fitting that ye should run together in accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also ye do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp.

Therefore in your concord and harmonious love Jesus Christ is sung. And do ye, man by man become a choir, that being harmonious in love, and taking up the song of God in unison, ye may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you, and perceive by your works that ye are indeed the members of His Son. It is profitable, therefore, that you should live in an unblameable unity, that thus ye may always enjoy communion with God” (The Ante Nicene Fathers volume 1)

The words notated in this modest book, is only an attempt to highlight the beauty of the Coptic hymn (that have been skulked by the poor performance of the few that iterate without understanding) , trying to dive in the music of those hymns, in its historical roots, in the hymn language, in understanding the spiritual objective beyond the music, with a spiritual and musical explanation of some. Through preparing this treatise I found myself – with no intention – to go deep in pharaohs music, its attributes and musical instruments, which had a great role in forming our Coptic music, and I found myself comparing and connecting between how the pharaohs music was and how our Coptic music became.

I found myself also contemplating in our performance of Coptic hymns, and how we sometimes (or most of the times) wipe by our performance (unconscious and unscientific) its profound spiritual and musical structure. I noticed that when the melodies ascend or descend, modes transform or change, rhythms activate or calm down, there are always a profound spiritual objective beyond the music, and since I am overwhelmed by the enjoyment of its beauty I wanted to let everyone share in that musical spiritual state, this book is the outcome which I hope to bear fruits.

**The author**

# **Chapter I**

## **The Language & Development of Hymns**

- 1. Coptic language .**
- 2. The script of Egyptian language.**
- 3. The stages of development of the Egyptian language.**
- 4. The Church role in spreading the use of Coptic script.**
- 5. Etymology of the name “Copt”.**

## **1- Coptic Language**

Before talking about the Coptic hymns and delving into their spirituality, music and history, I would talk a little about the language of these hymns.

The word and the tune have been closely connected since the very beginning to such an extent that one cannot determine which of them began first. Being myself in favor of music, I say “Certainly tunes began first, then they sought words that would apply to them. But some would say, "Nay. Words began first, took the form of poetry, and sought tunes to give them sense".

Plutarch, in a treatise entitled “Predictions of Pythie the Fortune Teller” says, “It seems that the use of language is subject to change just like money. For each of these has different values in the different epochs. For man accepts only that which is known and familiar”.<sup>1</sup>

Actually Plutarch’s words are true from the secular point of view. But of course the case is different when we speak about such a language as that of the Coptic hymns, for these are the basic pillar of the church rituals . The main reason is that the Coptic hymns chanted in this language have never changed along ages as in the case of money or of the songs of other nations or of dealings.

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars of the French expedition- Music and singing of ancient Egyptians, Description of Egypt- translated by Zoheir El Shayeb, El Shayeb Publishing House, Seventh Book,P.46

Therefore, if we deal with the Coptic language as other languages, thinking as some people so, that it is no more in use and unknown to many, this will be the real danger. For this wrong concept will spread, many will accept it, and the Coptic language will disappear gradually. As a result, hymns will be translated into Arabic and will be distorted. The Arabic Alphabet will not be able to bear such a heavy burden as the Coptic hymn. It will be no more a Coptic hymn, but rather an Arabic hymn! An irrelevant title indeed! Because they still bear the name “Coptic” while they have become Arabic.

### **Translating the Coptic hymns into Arabic:**

I, personally, reject completely the idea of arabicizing the Coptic hymns for the following reasons:

1. Translating hymns into Arabic, on one side, distorts the musical characteristics of the hymn, and imposes on the Arabic words the melody which was not intended for such words. So we find a new tune emerging from unequal combination. The hymn is separated from its Coptic words with which it has melt through the Holy Spirit for more than two thousand years. Then it was attached, forcibly, to foreign Arabic words for no reason but ignorance of Coptic language. Moreover, there was no desire to preserve this language or to exert the least effort to learn it.

We have a similar example, the attempt of a large group of artists to translate the Operas of the renowned musician Mozart into Arabic. This attempt faced sharp criticism from many critics because it distorted the



melody introducing words and subjecting them forcibly to the tune. As a result, the transparent tunes which this composer formulated became obscure and weighed down with the burden of the words which could not absorb them.

Dr. El Sanfawy explained, “The universal songs now popular are those which keep their original text and form. Though redistributed and translated into different languages, the original text of the composer is the most important. For instance:

although the Italian language is the most beautiful language in which the world operas were composed, CARMEN by George Bizet, which he composed from the original French context, is considered much better when listened to in French than in Italian. The same applies to German Operas.”

Actually, If those people were so cautious about their songs which merely reflect their own feelings, should we not be cautious about our Coptic hymns which represent, our spiritual past, present and future in eternity.

2. The process of translating these hymns into Arabic usually take place without any musical or spiritual background. This brings forth a completely different hymn- even musically-wise from the original text. Let us take for example the hymn “Hitenne Presvia” which was translated into Arabic: with the intercession of the Lord’s mother, the tune is completely different from the tune of the original hymn. The tune of the Arabic text does not begin with the repeated tone which reflects the persistent request for forgiveness

through the intercession of the holy Virgin Mary. Nor does it express the bowing down when uttering the names of the Holy Trinity, nor does it slow down when introducing “the Praise Sacrifice” to reveal the accuracy in choosing the sacrifice so that it might be like the sacrifice of Abel not like that of Cain.

Likewise the tunes do not rise up high and sharp to declare that the sacrifice which is being introduced on the heart altar has ascended unto heaven, to the heavenly Father to smell it exactly as He smelled His Only-Begotten Son’s sacrifice offered on the Golgotha in the evening.

Actually these beautiful spiritual meanings are lost in the Arabic words, whereas the Coptic text has revealed them all in a short hymn taking only one minute.<sup>2</sup>

From this example of the hymn “Hitenne Presvia” and other hymns translated into Arabic, we conclude definitely such a translation causes a radical change in the musical and spiritual formation of the hymn. This certainly spoils the spiritual meaning which the early fathers intended to convey through melodies of these hymns.

3. If the aim of translating hymns into Arabic is to make the congregation understand what they pray, there are actually many other ways to achieve this aim. Translation is perhaps the easiest way, but why should we use it since it spoils the spirituality and the music of the hymn making it difficult to comprehend?

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<sup>2</sup> refer to chapter 6 “Explanation and Contemplation ...” for more details.

Why do we not for example teach the Coptic language in all churches and in Sunday Schools regularly for a quarter of an hour to teach youths and children the rules of this language? Why do we not allocate a short period in all the spiritual meetings for teaching this language to the attendants?

We would like to mention here the leading attempt of Dr. Emile Maher the Professor at the Seminary (now reverend father Shenouda Maher), to teach the Coptic language. This attempt could have applied to many places, but for the difference of accent he teaches i.e. “the Old Coptic” from the accent used in all learnt hymns of the church. This attempt of Dr. Emile faced hard opposition from many who were keen on maintaining the present accent pure from confusion, seeing that the present accent is that handed down to the cantors from their predecessors.

However, Dr. Emile is of the opinion that the modern Coptic accent is the fruit of significant mistake that caused much harm to the Coptic language. This modern accent -as Dr. Emile says- has been created by cantor Erian Guirgis Mofteh, about the year 1858 A.D. the reason of the difference is that cantor Erian applied the modern Greek sounds to the Coptic words. But the old pronunciation inherited from our forefathers is the correct one; the nearest to our genuine language.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> see Dr. Emile Maher “The Old Bohairic Coptic Pronunciation- History and Preference” part 1, 1978 A.D.

I would remind the readers here of Pope Kyrillos IV who gave much practical care to the Coptic language. He formed a committee in order to write a text book for teaching such a language. Furthermore, he commanded introducing it among the curricula of the Coptic schools. Thereafter, he appointed cantor Erian Guirgis Mofteh as teacher of Coptic. That is why Pope Kyrillos IV was called “the Father of Reform” history testifies to him also that he restituted the Coptic sound to its origin after having deviated a little and words mingled. Moreover, to support Coptic studies, His Holiness chose one of El-Azbakia St. Mark Church priests: Hegumen Thekla, to teach church hymns and melodies to students with melodious voice so that prayers would ascend before the divine throne in attractive harmonious tones.

Why should we not put a plan for teaching the Coptic language within the Christian Religion Curriculum to cover the whole academic years in schools, with practical applications of the most common Coptic hymns used in the Church Liturgy? This would be a step towards maintaining the Coptic language as the mother language, besides drawing the students’ attention to the Coptic hymns which represent an ancient music culture of two thousand years.

Hopefully, some of the rich Christians support the Coptic language revival by the blessing of H.H. Pope Shenouda III. They can even establish branch institutes in some churches in order to encourage children, youths, and old people to learn the Coptic language. In such institutes educational aids and modern technological systems, like

computers, that facilitate teaching languages. Money prizes may also be allocated for those who attain high levels in learning Coptic.

This would restore to the Coptic language its glory, and history will remember for them who will support the revival of this language in our Christian homes as a live language of communication as in the past, instead of being confined to worship within the liturgical prayers.

I remember when David Ensemble was invited to the International Festival (Expo-2000) in Hanover- Germany, H.G. Amba Demian attended the Performance and invited the Ensemble to offer a similar Performance at Saint Mark Church of Frankfurt where reverend Father Bigol Basilli serves. There, we, David Ensemble, were surprised and greatly astonished to see Father Bigol talking with his family members and with some of his congregation in Coptic language fluently. This shows that the return of the Coptic language as a language of communication at home and in churches is not unattainable.

We can use some systems for translation like those used for translating German or Italian texts of world Operas.

Actually, we have a lot of solutions, but I wonder why we choose the weakest! By this we may lose that heritage which the Coptic church has kept with blood and sweat throughout the different persecution ages until it reached us pure without any defects.

No doubt, to maintain such a heritage is more difficult than to neglect it!!

4. since our church has been known throughout the whole world by the name "Coptic Church", what will be her name if the Coptic language disappeared from our prayers and hymns that distinguish her? Can we accept to have her called "The Arab Church"?

In Al Ahram Newspaper issue of 23 February, 2000, my attention was drawn by a line on the first page that reads "Mother Tongues are dying out":

New York - News Agency - In an initiative for protecting live languages against dying out as a result of globalization, Kofi Anan, the General Secretary of the United Nations, calls for doubling the efforts on both national and international levels to activate teaching and using about six thousand languages which are considered a common heritage to all mankind. Anan warned that most of those languages are in danger of dying out throughout the next twenty years due to the prevalence of some languages like English, French and Japanese over the international dealings, in cooperation agreements among countries, and due to globalization. Anan indicated in a statement before the first conference on "The Universal Day for Mother Tongues" that language represents a major element of the national and personal identity, and an important means for established existence in the world. Hence, we should preserve it from dying out.

If the whole world is calling today for protecting languages because they represent a nation's heritage, and because they are considered the main constituent of the national and personal identity and a means of established existence in the world, should the Copts not care for their Coptic language which is considered not only a historical heritage, but also a dogmatic, ritual and spiritual heritage?!

### **The relationship between the Coptic Language and other languages:**

It is well known that the Coptic language is the latest phase of the Egyptian language in which the Ancient Egyptians spoke and wrote more than five thousand years ago. Another opinion says that the Coptic language existed as a language of communication from the most ancient times side by side with the Egyptian language which –according to this opinion- was only a language for writing. Actually, the Egyptian language is related not only to the Semitic languages such as Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic or Babilonyan, but also to Hamitic languages such as East African languages (Galla, Somali and Berber dialects of North Africa)

The modern Coptic language continued to be the official language of the country during the Roman and the Greek eras, and after the Arab invasion till the year 709 A.D. when Abdullah, the brother of El Waleed Ibn Abdel Malek Ibn Marawan, substituted it by Arabic in the Government Departments.

In 799 A.D. Al Hakem Bi Amr Allah prohibited its use even in the streets and houses. But the Copts preserved it inside their churches. Moreover, it

continued to be the language of communication among all the Egyptians, Copts and Muslims for several centuries. However, by time it faded away.

Nevertheless, Al Makrizy could prove that the monks continued to use it as the only language they knew until the beginning of the fifteenth century. Furthermore, the women and children in Upper Egypt used it in their daily life during that era.

The savants who visited Egypt in 1267 A.D. found some Copts still speaking the Coptic language fluently as their mother tongue.



## **2- Egyptian Script**

Egyptians wrote down their language in the early stages in the following scripts:

### **First: Hieroglyphic Script:**

This script was used for inscription on the walls of temples and tombs, as well as for writing on papyri. Writing in Hieroglyphic script actually dates back to the first dynasty epoch (3110-2884 B.C), i.e. more than five thousand years ago. However, some refer it to some hundreds of years earlier. The use of Hieroglyphic script in writing on shank of clay vessels or on papyri extended up to the Christian epochs.

The latest hieroglyphic writing can be traced back to late fourth century A.D., exactly to the year 394. It has been discovered in Feyala Island “Anas Al Wegoud” in Aswan, for idol worship continued up to that time. it is thus clear that writing in Hieroglyphic script continued for about three thousand five hundred years .

### **Second: Hieratic Script:**

This name is derived from the Greek word "Hieratikos", which means "priestly". It was so called because priests used it often in the Greco-Roman epoch. It is actually the simple form of the Hieroglyphic script. Its simplicity and the round bendings are due to writing in haste with a reed instead of using a chisel in writing, which causes sharp angles when writing in Hieroglyphic on stone.

### **Third: Demotic Script:**

The name is derived from the Greek word "Demotikos" which means "popular". It is a very hasty form of the Hieratic Script. It appeared for the first time in the epoch of the Ethiopian dynasty, that is the twenty fifth dynasty (736-657B.C.)

In the Ptolemaic & Roman epochs it became the common script in daily life usage, and sometimes on stone panels. The latest texts in Demotic Script date back to the year 452 A.D. It is noteworthy that the appearance of a certain script never abolished former scripts . But each script had its special use. In the Ptolemy-Roman epoch, the three aforementioned scripts were used together at the same time.

### **3- The Stages of Development of the Egyptian language**

#### **First: old Egyptian language:**

It is the language of the first to the eighth dynasties (about 3110 – 2155 B.C). It includes the language in which the "Pyramid Texts " were written, as well as the official documents, original funerary texts, grave inscriptions containing biographies of some people. From this stage the old language developed into:

#### **Second: Middle Egyptian language:**

It is probably the language of communication in the epochs from the ninth to the eleventh dynasties (2154-1999 B.C). It continued in novels and literary works, then in late years of the twenty fifth and twenty sixth dynasties reviving the glories of the past and imitating the old heritage.

#### **Third: late Egyptian language:**

It was the language of communication in the epochs of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> dynasties. It is the language in which documents, letters, stories and novels were written.

#### **Fourth: Demotic language:**

It is the language used in books and documents since the twenty ffth dynasty up to late Roman epoch (736 B.C.-452 A.D.)

#### **Fifth: Coptic language:**

It is the latest stage of the Egyptian language. It began to appear in the third century. From that time on Copts spoke it (by Copts is meant the Christian descendants of the Ancient Egyptians).

The majority of scholars are of the opinion that Coptic has its origin in the Egyptian language, particularly late Egyptian.

In Centuries before the Coptic alphabet was known, there had been no written records identifying the language of daily life.

The scholar "Chaine" asserts that both the Egyptian and the Coptic languages have existed together since the olden times. He goes as far as to say that the Egyptian language was not a spoken language, but was derived from the Coptic, which he considers the original, and was formulated in such a way that the priests and scribes could use it only in writing. In other words, the Egyptian language was formulated by some Coptic speaking Egyptians merely for writing.

### **The Coptic Alphabet:**

Coptic language used the Greek Alphabet with the addition of seven letters from the Demotic language to compensate for the Coptic sounds that have no correspondents in Greek letters. These seven letters are:

**S      V      Q      H      J      [      ]**  
Shai ; Fai ; Khai ; Houri ; Genga ; Tchima ; Ti

It is worthnoting also that the Coptic is the only form of Egyptian language that provides vowels.

### **The influence of Greek on Coptic language:**

Since Alexander the Great has conquered Egypt in 332B.C, Greek was used in Government offices. Egyptians were keen on learning it, so it spread among all classes: the high, the middle and the low.

This is the reason why some Greek words have been introduced into the Egyptian language, and by time the Coptic language contained so many Greek words. It can be noticed that Coptic books translated from Greek contained more Greek words than other books. This may be due to the slackness of the translator, or his preferring the use of the Greek words rather than the Coptic words, especially when translating certain theological texts, for Copts believed that sacred things get defiled if given heathen names.

#### **4- The Church Role in spreading the use of Coptic Script**

The credit for establishing the Coptic alphabet in the form we know today, and the spelling system, adaptation of rules and style is certainly due to the Egyptian church.

No doubt this was part of the missionary work in Egyptian villages and towns, organized by the church in the during the papacy of H.H. Pope Demetrios of Alexandria, the Twelfth Patriarch, and his successors.

##### **Evangelizing in Alexandria:**

Christianity spread first in Alexandria in the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. The theological school of Alexandria had an effective missionary role. Therefore, as Greek language was prevailing in Alexandria, it was used to preach the Gospel even though preachers were Egyptians not Greek. In such era, there was no need for translating the Holy Scripture from Greek to Coptic because the Alexandrians understood the Greek text well and used it in the liturgy service.

##### **Evangelism in Egyptian provinces:**

By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. Christianity has spread widely among Egyptians. Therefore, most of the believers were not learnt in Greek. No doubt then, the Egyptian language was used in preaching outside Alexandria, especially in the rural areas of Delta and Upper Egypt. It was natural also that some chapters of the Holy Scripture be translated for the inhabitants of those regions who knew only their Egyptian language.

The substitute was the Demotic language which was difficult to understand, therefore the preachers took upon themselves developing the Egyptian language by writing it down in Greek letters and adding seven Demotic letters only.

### **The Coptic translation of the Divine Books:**

Translation of the Holy Scripture started in the third Century A.D. The Gospels were translated into Coptic before the year 270 A.D. We have an evidence in the biography of St. Anthony (251-356A.D): He was a simple Egyptian from a rural area . He was not taught to write. The only language he spoke was Coptic, and when he had to talk with Greeks, there was always a translator. We know from his biography recorded by St. Athanasuis the Apostolic, that once he went to the church, and when the Gospel was being read, he heard the Lord's words to the rich youth, "*if you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me* " (Mt.19: 21). Immediately St. Anthony went out, sold all his possessions and gave to the villagers. How could he understand the words unless they were read in Coptic language?

## 5- Etymology of the name “Copt”

The interpretation of the name “Copt” has been subject to many views, two of which we will present here:

1. Some are of the opinion that the word “Copt” is derived from the name of the city called “Coptos” or “Kepht” in Kena Governorate in Upper Egypt. Kepht was an important trade center since the days of the Pharaohs. Caphtorim<sup>4</sup> was one of the sons of “Mizraim” from whom the people of :epht descended. However, this opinion lacks Biblical and historical evidence.
2. The second opinion, which is acceptable to scholars, says that the word “Copt” is derived from the same word in the Egyptian language from which the name “Egypt” is derived. In Greek, it is “Egyptos”. So the Europeans borrowed the name “Copt” to refer to the Egyptian Christians since the 16th centuries.

Due to the steadfast faith of the Copts, the words “Copt” and “Christian” have become synonyms. However, the word “Copt” in its origin does not refer to the religion but rather to the race. It is the same as “Egyptian”.

According to etymology, an Egyptian is a Copt, whether a Christian or a Moslem. Likewise, we can say the “Coptic Church” or “the Egyptian Church”.

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<sup>4</sup> “Mizraim begot Ludin, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines) and Caphtorim” (Gen 10: 13)



### **The Coptic Race:**

The Copts are the natives of the Mediterranean Sea. They are the immediate descendants of the Ancient Egyptians. They have not mixed with the various races that immigrated to Egypt except to a very little extent that hardly had any influence on them.

Probably the main reason that helped the Copts keep their high purity of Egyptian blood is their holding fast to their Christianity and Orthodoxy that is free from the influence of Chalcedonian doctrines which prohibit marriage from those of different faith or denomination.

### **The language in which the Lord sanctified the Last Supper:**

According to the Gospels –even the Greek Translation- and based on the research works of specialized scholars, we can assert that the Lord spoke Aramaic and Hebrew.

The Scholar “Dalman” translated into Aramaic the texts on Eucharist in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, as well as in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians. Thus the original Aramaic text on Eucharist was restored, and the meaning became clear and harmonious. Dalman wrote also an invaluable book on the Aramaic Grammar in the Era in which Christ lived, where he expounded many of these texts.

However, Dalman is of the opinion that the blessing the Lord uttered over the bread and the cup was in Hebrew, seeing that Hebrew was the language of the mysteries or the sacred language. Therefore, it is supposed that the common talk and words which the Lord –glory be to Him- spoke

were in Aramaic, i.e. the slang language. Whereas the sanctification i.e. the blessing, the explanation of the Mystery and the words of the Covenant, He uttered in Hebrew, which was the sacred language.

### **The language of the Divine Liturgy:**

The Liturgies have been originally written in Greek, then translated in Coptic, without the response of the deacons and some hymns which the congregation chanted.

Under the Arab rule, Abdel Malek Ben Marawan (685-705 A.D.) and his son, succeeded by Al Hakem Bi Amr Allah (985-1021 A.D.) commanded that Coptic language be replaced by Arabic. The latter therefore became stronger, and by the end of the nineteenth century, Arabic has prevailed over the language of the Liturgy also. Coptic became confined to the Praise Songs, the long hymns, and the seasonal hymns.

## **Chapter II**

### **The Spiritual Value of Hymnody**

- 1. The Spiritual value of hymnody.**
- 2. Praise Songs in the Apostles' teaching.**
- 3. Musical Performance to reveal the spirituality of hymns.**
- 4. Methods of praise.**

## **1- The Spiritual value of hymnody**

### **Hymnody in both Old and New Testaments:**

St. Basil said: “Singing hymns is calmness to spirit, pleasure to the soul, and prevalence of peace. It calms the waves, silences the storms in our hearts, appeases the rage of the enraged, restores the debauchees, creates friendliness, expels controversies and reconciles enemies. For who can consider an enemy one who participated with him in singing praise before God’s throne?”

Chanting hymns drives away the evil spirits and attracts the angels’ ministry. It is a weapon against the horrors of the night, and rest from the daily tedious fatigues. It is for the child a friend, a pleader and a protector; for man a crown of glory; for elders a balm<sup>1</sup> of comfort, and for women a suitable ornament.

Therefore the church made hymnology part of worship to create fervor in the faithful, renew spiritual zeal in their hearts, refresh them and kindle the fire of the Holy Spirit in them to worship their redeemer.

### **The effect of chanting hymns evil spirits:**

It is written in the biography of the great St."Paula El Shamy": [One day, while wandering in the desert of Jordan, the saint met the devil, and having bound him with the sign of the Holy Trinity, the saint asked him: Do you

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<sup>1</sup> The balm (or balsam is a tree that gives white flowers like clusters, from which is derived sweet-smelling ointment that soothes and calms down pain.

ascend unto heaven and hear the sound of chanting hymns? The devil said: No, for since we have fallen we could not return or attain the high places except once when Satan (Satanael) our leader entered with the angels into God's presence. At that time, the Lord said to him: "from whence comest thou?" And Satan said: "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it". Then he asked the Lord to permit him to lead Job into temptation, and the Lord permitted him. Ever since he could not enter into heaven another time. As for the angels, they do not utter but hymns and glorification<sup>2</sup>.]

From the biography of "St. Paul" we perceive that wherever there is chanting of hymns, there will be no demons; for they flee away from that place. Hymns are a proof of God's presence, and wherever God is present satan cannot approach.

### **The effect of hymnody on the faithful:**

Contemplating on hymnody, some said, [Navigators shout gladly when they lift up the anchors because they will sail and the ploughman whistles in the morning while driving a cow to the farm; and when the soldiers leave their beloved to go to the battle field they play their instruments melodies of joy and pleasure. Likewise the spirit of praise and thanksgiving does the same like those songs and music. If only we decide to chant God's praise we will overcome many difficulties which cannot be overcome when we are in a state of distress and anxiety. We will be able to perform double the work we do in case of distress.]

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<sup>2</sup>

The reference: Hegumen Youhanna Abdel Messeih Salib, "The life's journey and what after death", P.53

The words of church hymns are but entreaties, supplications and praise brought before the Holy One to gain His blessing and gifts, to seek His pleasure, and to thank Him for His exceeding love.

With these words the hymnists' hearts converse with the Lord, and on their wings the thoughts ascend high unto the heavenly places. In this regard late Hegumen "Youhanna Salama" says: " the aim of the hymns is to stir up the ardor of the faithful as the soldiers in the battle-fields are stirred by means of trumpets and flute and encouraged to face the terrors with steady mind and undismayed soul. For the faithful are surrounded by various enemies who watch to have a chance to hunt them. So, unless they are ready to face the spiritual enemies, their struggle and their patience will be in vain<sup>3</sup>."

Sound spiritual hymns have a great effect on the soul, for they go deep into the hearts stimulating within them due love to the creator for His rational creation. And because God is pleased with the hymns and songs composed to glorify Him in worship, He prescribed chanting hymns and praise songs in the various books of the Holy Scripture.

When Moses and his people crossed the Red Sea, he sang praises to the Lord with the children of Israel (Exod 15). Those praise songs continued resounding high even unto heaven. They are still sung by whoever overcomes the beast, by those standing by the sea of glass, and those having the harps of God!

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<sup>3</sup> Hegumen Youhanna Salama "The Precious Pearls in explaining the church rituals and beliefs" Vol.I , P.184.

### **The greatest orchestra in the world:**

David, whom God granted the kingdom and the prophecy, and who was the best of all in composing divine psalms and praise songs inspired by the spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament, compiled impressive melodies and appointed a huge number for singing in the house of God. For it is written in (1Chronicles 23:5), " '... four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments, which I made,' said David". And David divided them into divisions.

It is evident from this verse how huge was the number of the players on the musical instruments; for the number of players in any great symphony orchestra does not exceed one hundred and twenty divided into four divisions: stringed instruments, wooden blowing instruments, copper blowing instruments, and harmonica.

It is also evident that though the musical instruments industry at that time was primitive, and cutting and forming metals and wood was to a great extent difficult, yet the verse here states that these instruments were made for praising. It seems that there were no instruments suitable for praising the Lord, so the hymnists invented those instruments to be of a different type from those of worldly songs. They certainly surpassed the worldly instruments since what is offered to the Creator must be much better than what is offered to people.

Perhaps this conclusion is right, for "David" the sweet singer of Israel said in Psalm (151), "I was small among my brothers ... my hands made a harp; my fingers fashioned a lyre." With such great patience was David, though king and prophet, wasting his precious time when making an instrument to praise God? Nay. For "it is good to sing praises unto our God".

### **May I see David before dying?**

When the Lord Christ visited the cave of St. Karass the hermit before his death in 451A.D, He asked him what he wanted Him to do for him before his repose. The holy Amba Karass Said: My God and Lord, I kept iterating the psalms of David the Prophet and Psalmist day and night, so if I would find favor in Your eyes, let me be worthy to see David the Prophet while I am still in the flesh before my departure.

Immediately the Good Savior commanded the holy Archangel Michael to bring David with his harp to play it before St. Karass. And Archangel Michael immediately brought David, who played his harp saying, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it". Then our Savior sat down and said to St. Karass: Here is David the Prophet and Psalmist has come to you with what you have longed for in order to hear from you. And David the Prophet said to him: What hymn do you like me to chant to you? And what melody shall I play? Amba Karass said: "I wish to hear the ten strings together and the hymns with the tunes together". So David the Prophet moved his harp playing, and raised his voice, saying "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. O Lord, truly I am Your servant, and the son of Your maidservant."(PS.113: 15)



He chanted also Psalm 37:25, “I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken...” And while David was singing loud with his sweet voice and moving his harp, Amba Karass gave up the spirit in the bosom of our Lord savior Jesus Christ. And the Savior received the soul of the saint, kissed it and gave it to Michael the Archangel<sup>4</sup>.

This is the influence of the hymnist on the listener: that the listener draws images in his imagination for the hymnist, expecting to see a face bright like an angel. But what if he finds him different; the face is not like that of an angel, and the conduct is not like that of David? Truly, a hymnist of this type; will be a stumbling block to whoever hears him.

### **Chanting God’s Praise in the lives of the father anchorites:**

Hegumen "Samaan Al Soryany", in his book "The Father Anchorites" states that St. Ghaleon the anchorite said, [... I remained on the mountain, not knowing where to go and how to be saved from this temptation, so I opened my mouth and I chanted Psalm 17(18): “I will love You, O Lord, my strength .... the Lord is my rock and my fortress ”. I repeated this psalm thrice, so my fright calmed down and my heart became firm; I turned around but

I found no one. Then I chanted Psalm (6): “ O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, neither chasten me in your hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak; O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed....”

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<sup>4</sup> Augnostos (Reader) Rafik Ragheb, "Biography of Amba Karass the hermit ".

Then I lifted up my hands unto heaven praying: “ Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord.”

I then moved to Psalm (19), “the Lord hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend you; send you help from His sanctuary.”; and Psalm (120) “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer your foot to be moved; he that keeps you will not slumber ”

Then I turned round and saw three monks in white clothes, reciting some parts of Psalm (98), “O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He has done marvellous things ...”. Their voices were like angels’ voices. I knew the hymn they were chanting, so I chanted with them. However, I was on my guard, lest they be of the host of satan sent to destroy me, but I remembered that Satan cannot recite the Psalms of David the Prophet. And while thinking, those people drew near chanting with good melody. I responded with the same. We stayed the whole night chanting the psalms of David the Prophet, responding to each other till the morning. Neither did they ask me about myself, nor I about themselves!

Only when we all sat down that I asked them and knew that they were monks from the Monastery of Amba Shenouda, and were wandering in the mount.]

Again about Amba Ghaleon the Anchorite, Amba Isaac the Abbot of the Monastery of Kalamoun, says, [No one in the Monastery was like him in

reading and in memorizing the hymns and the psalms.... so I went to him, and said: “ Take young Moses the reader and instruct him in the church rituals, constitution, and hymns.” And he took the child, embraced him, and said to him: “My son, receive from me the Spirit, which is within me, for on the seventh day I will repose.” So Moses received from him the Spirit, and grew in reading and memorizing hymns.

From the biography of Amba Ghalion the Anchorite, it becomes evident that:

- 1- Itirating Psalms delivers a person from tribulation and diabolic wars.
- 2- The life of those anchorites is continual praise, and psalms never quit their lips.
- 3- The hymns chanted by the three monks anchorites of the Monastery of Amba Shenouda are the same hymns chanted by St. Ghalion the Anchorite of the Monastery of Kalamoun.
- 4- The voices of those anchorites were sweet and similar to the Angels’ voices.
- 5- Satan cannot utter the psalms of David the Prophet.
- 6- Those father anchorites chanted hymns with the octave method, because Amba Ghalion the Anchorite says: “I responded with the same hymns. And whenever they recited a psalm I recited it with them...”
- 7- Those father anchorites were skilful in memorizing hymns, and Amba Ghalion also. There was no one in the Monastery who could read, or memorize, hymns and psalms like him.

8- Coptic hymns were handed down from one generation to another, not only orally but also by the Holy Spirit who acts always in the church, preserving her tradition. For when Amba Isaac, the Abbot of the Monastery of Kalamoun asked St.Ghalion to instruct young Moses in the church rites and hymns, he embraced him and said to him: “My son receive from me the Spirit that is within me, for on the seventh day I will repose.” And immediately Moses received the Spirit from him and advanced in reading and memorizing hymns.

### **The necessity of praising God:**

When bringing up the ark of God from the village called Ba a-le to Jerusalem, they brought it up with songs and hymns and playing of music on all kinds of instruments. And when King Solomon came to the throne of the Israeli Kingdom, he brought singers into the house of the Lord as in the time of his father David.

And in the time of King Hezekiah, Nehemiah and Ezra, the sons of Israel and their priests used the hymns of David in their worship. They used to gather together in the house of the Lord, and when beginning to offer the burnt offering, they chanted the song of the Lord with the instruments of David. They never ignored that.

In the New Testament the church followed this same sound system. She introduced hymnody, praise, glorification, and singing to His holy name in His house. The purpose is to implant such religious facts in the worshippers' minds. This, the church derived from His commandment in Psalm (148:12),

"Both young men, and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the Lord; for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven."

The priests of both the Old and the New Testaments excelled in adhering to praise and glorification, believing that man, being composed of body and soul, is inclined to sing praise of his creator and his glories, not only with the spirits' emotions but also with utterances of the mouth and sounds of the body.

What the Orthodox "Manar Magazine" wrote in this regard affirms the above, for it says, "the church hymnody on musical bases and with suitable melodies, harmony of tunes and voices, pleasant voices, delightful rhythm, serenity and veneration ... all this makes hymns enter readily into the heart of the worshipper, move within him all the sacred and sublime qualities, and lift up all his emotions and thoughts and meditations towards the Lord invoking him to spiritual struggling. When the ears of the person, who stands praying with serenity and veneration, become delighted with such impressive chanting, he will rise above all worldly concerns and attain thoroughly the heavenly places to be among its inhabitants, where there is no sorrow, no pain, no sighs but inexpressible joy and delight.

The sweet and perfect tunes of the praise songs create inexpressible pleasure within the performer, they comfort the soul which suffers under the worldly passions, casting away every distress and sorrow, giving it rapid and continual comfort, stimulating it to entreat God, and stirring in it the longing for heavenly life. Such tunes make the worshipper glorify God, praising and giving thanks to Him for His great and splendid glory and for His deep

benefits. The worshipper thus stands with eyes lifted up towards Him, who dwells in heaven conquering the pains of both the body and the soul, and casting away, the old corrupt man and putting on the new and renewed one, following in all this the commands, the laws and commandments of the Lord God.

The worshipper, standing with fear of God, listening to the divine well-tuned and impressive chanting and the harmonious praise hymns which delight the soul, becomes once moved and impressed, at another time crying with bitter sighs before the Crucified Lord over his sins, or rejoicing at conquering sin and death with Him who arose on the third day from the tomb.

Impressed by this wonderful chanting, the worshipper beholds with his mind how Hades was in pain and embittered when the Lord Jesus Christ prevailed over all its powers. This makes him feel the great joy of the redeemed who were released from captivity, and remembers the songs of the heavenly hosts to our Lord who conquered sin and Hades and destroyed by His death him who has the power of death (i.e. Satan).

The images in his mind pass successively: the fall of man ; the voice of Mercy calling him in Eden, so he cries, "Have mercy upon me, I the sinner"; the fearful voice of the Judge inflicting eternal suffering upon the wicked, so he sighs shouting, "Let it be according to Your mercy, O Lord, and not according to my sins"; then the pleasant and delightful voice of the Redeemer calling, "come to Me".

Church hymnody has great benefits and has the power to alter any bad inclinations to good. It gives the listeners or the performers contrition and awe, implants within the soul the spirit of virtue, love of goodness, and hatred of sin, softens the hard hearts, and lifts the soul up to God to chant with the heavenly host the praise of the Holy Trinity.

### **Congregational praise singing:**

The congregational prayers and praise songs in the church are in themselves a living and rational communion activated and given life by the Holy Spirit to make the church members, through them, one spiritual and harmonious body.

The church is aware of this fact since the beginning, for the history of the solitary fathers of the 3<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>h</sup> centuries tell us that the law of common worship required them to meet on Saturdays and Sundays for praise and prayer the whole night i.e. "vigil". They end with the divine liturgy between the third and sixth hour of the day during summer and winter.

And we read in (Acts 2: 46,47), "So, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God."

And in the fathers tradition it is evident that the early fathers gave the ministry of prayers, vigil and praising a very high value in the church worship. They considered these as racing in the field, while the grace got in the sacraments they considered as the reward or prize.

This draws our attention to the fact that whatever prayer, praise or struggle in repentance we offer to God is actually the work of His grace, being the fruit of the Sacraments, which sanctified our souls and washed our hearts and eyes. This would ensure that our prayers, praise, tears and repentance will be clear from any self-righteousness.

A contemporary father asserts the importance of chanting the psalms tuned with melody, not just reciting them, saying, "...for it is suitable to praise God with the poetic books; because they are composed in such a way that enables people to express their love towards God with all their power."

Besides, when tunes are added to words, they increase greatly their spirituality, lifting them up above the sense of the word, above the literal meaning, and even above reasoning.

David the Prophet, the greatest psalmist knew this fact and out of his own experience he said in (psalm 138: 1), "Before the angels I will sing praises to You."

The Psalms are indeed a model full of praises to God from an honest heart overflowing with thanks and rejoicing. For this, the Book of Psalms has become the method of praising, prayer and ministry within and outside the church all over the world. What gives it this value is its being the beloved Book for the Lord Christ, from which He quoted and taught, and with which He prayed in the temple and praised in His Last Supper. The words of these psalms were His last words on the cross "into Your hands I commit My Spirit" (Ps 31: 5 ; Lk 23: 46).



## **The first chorus in the New Testament**

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of olives” (Mk:14:26)

After the thanksgiving and the partaking of the heavenly mysteries, the hymn took a new form. It is well known that Christ memorized well the psalms, and the chorus of the disciples probably responded “Alleluia”. The psalms they used to chant were: (114) ; (115) ; (116) ; (117) ; (118).

Perhaps the records and interpretations written down in the Jews’ Books give to these psalms a prophetic eschatological character. This is evident in the "Medrash"<sup>5\*</sup>, the “Telmod of Babylon", and the "Telmod of Jerusalem" under the following titles :

(Psalm 114:2), "Praising the Lord in the life to come".

(Psalm 114:9), " Zion in the last days" .

(Psalm 115:1) "Passions in the days of Messiah " .

(Psalm 116:1), "The Messiah era and the prayer of Israel for redemption".

(Psalm 116:6), "The salvation of the righteous’ souls from Hell".

(Psalm 116:9) "The resurrection of the dead and the coming age feast " .

(Psalm 116:13) "The Blessings of David’s banquet after the salvation feast".

(Psalm 118:7) "The Last Judgment".

(Psalm 118:10-12) "The war against Goug and Magoug".

(Psalm 118:15) "The beginning of the Messiah era".

(Psalm 118:24) "The redemption done by the Messiah".

(Psalm 118:25,26) "The chorus singing antiphon in the time of Messiah manifestation”.

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<sup>5</sup> It is the Book including interpretations for the Psalms and the other books of the Jews.

(Psalm 118:27), "God giving the light of salvation."

(Psalm 118:28), "The future of the world".

So, the hymn which the Lord sang with the chorus of disciples, on this basis, represents the true image familiar at that time.

This reveals the sensitivity, inspiration and wisdom of the ancient wise men of Israel in explaining and contemplating on the Psalms, for their hope in the redemption to come was powerful.

Amazing also is the interpretation in the "Medrash" of Verse (24) of Psalm (118) "This is the day which the Lord has made", which the Church uses with its Known tune "Alleluia fai pe pi . . ." (This is the day), that the day meant is "The Day of Redemption" or "The Lord's Day".

It is portrayed as a play on the manifestation of the Day of Redemption, where the men of Jerusalem inside, and the men of Judah outside, forming a chorus responding to each other through the antiphon, while Messiah is drawing near to the doors of Jerusalem. Then both sides: from Jerusalem, and from Judah combine in praise:

"Give thanks unto the Lord for He is good and His mercy endures for ever".

See how the Jewish Medrash has portrayed through this antiphon, long before the coming of the Lord Christ, this live scene representing the moment of His appearance.

### **The Continual Praise in worship:**

A Hymn in the traditional Churches, particularly in the Coptic, is itself worship, whether one chants it loudly or chants it silently in his heart. Therefore the hymnody extends over a very long time in worship in the Coptic Church. The prayers of the priest are tuned, the call upon the congregation by the deacon is tuned, and the response of the congregation is also tuned from the beginning to the end of service.

The same applies to the lections :

The Epistles are preceded by a hymn, the Psalm and the Gospel are chanted with a special tune. Through hymns the soul can express to the Lord all its feelings and emotions, and thus partakes of the Sacraments which the Lord has given us. This is the reason behind the importance of instructing the congregation in church hymns. It makes a believer firm in faith.

Moreover, whoever learns hymnody is considered a pillar in the church, a gifted minister of the holies, skilled in one of the church invaluable mysteries: "Praise of God". Therefore, in every generation, and in every place, God arranges for a leader who teaches hymnody to the congregation to enable them to take part in service. I often feel amazed at the words of St. John the visionary in the Book of Revelation: *"I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the lamb*

*and in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Rev.14: 2-5)*

Hymnody, therefore, is an ecclesiastical mystery which unites the whole church in one body with combined movement and emotion.

Perhaps the words recorded by H.H. the saintly Patriarch Pope Shenouda III, in his book "The Release of the Spirit", affirm the importance of hymnody; for H.H says: “.... I looked, and behold before me a party of luminous angels! They lifted me on their wings upwards, and looking at the earth below me, I saw it becoming growing lesser and lesser till it turned into a bright dot in the open space .... Then turning around I saw many spirits gliding as I am in the endless space. Thousands and Myriads of Myriads of angels are there: Here are the six-winged cherubim and the full-eyed seraphim, the voices of all rise praising in one musical wonderful tune “Holy, Holy, Holy”. Here I could not keep myself from chanting unconsciously with them "Holy is the Father ... Holy is the Only-Begotten Son ... Holy is the Spirit". When I come to myself I hear an inaudible sublime tune that no ear ever heard before.

I immediately turned my face so anxiously towards the voice; and behold, from a great distance, a beautiful luminous city hanging in God’s Kingdom overflowing with praise and singing. Every tune I heard filled heart with joy, enraptured with anxiety!

## 2- Praise Songs in the Apostles' teaching

Hymnology or singing in the Church may be ascribed to the Apostles. This is evident from their Epistles, such as (Ephesians 5:19) "*Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*"

Therefore, early Christians used hymns and chanted them to the Lord in their religious meetings, and the congregation used to respond together to the priest. St.Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage (200-258 A.D), mentions this in his book on "Prayer", and St. Jerome (231–420 A.D) as well in his epistle to the Galatians. Afterwards a certain party was set for singing. Those were called "Chorus" or "Choir".

Socrates, the church historian (+440 A.D), said that St. "Agnatius" who was ordained Bishop of Antioch and martyred in 107 A.D, commanded the faithful to divide themselves into "two choirs" to sing hymns to the Holy Trinity. All the churches followed his example (Book 6 – ch.8).

In the constitutions of the Regional Council of Laodacia held in 264 A.D., it is stated that "No one may sing in the church other than the canonical cantors who go up to the pulpit and sing from their books (a lecture on the ecclesiastical hymnody).

The pulpit of the cantors was usually in the middle of church near the middle door of the sanctuary. Then two places were afterwards allocated for cantors at the two ends of the sanctuary surrounded by fences. These still

exist in the Old Coptic churches and they are called "the inner chorus and the outer chorus", referring to the names of those occupying them (page 10).

Ibn Al-Assal has set in the laws section a chapter for the duties of the Aghnostus (the Readers), the Epideacon (the subdeacons), and the psaltos (the singers) [chapter 49].

And St. Gregory El-Agaeibi (the wonder-maker), Bishop of Caesarea, speaking about his master "Origen", the Head of the Theological School of Alexandria (185–254 A.D), said that Origen, besides theology, taught them philosophy, physics, logic, engineering, mathematics, astronomy and music.

The church history proves that singing was used in worship since the Apostolic era. It is thus stated, "The faithful, standing behind a bishop or a priest -in case a bishop was not present- used to recite certain prayers then read parts of the Holy Scriptures. This was followed by holy songs sung by selected persons "the deacons" during the sacramental celebration of Eucharist (The Lord's Supper). This is testified by the protestant historians speaking about the worship rituals and holy lections in the public meetings in the churches of the first generation. These were followed by prayers they used to recite in the presence of the Bishop, which represented a great part of their public worship ceremony. Then songs were sung, not by the whole congregation, but only by certain persons during the Holy communion and the "agape".

On the worship rituals of the second generation, the Church History states the following: "The Christians met for God's worship...and whenever they

met some prayers were recited, the contents of which were stated by Tertullian in his Defence (section 39). Holy Scriptures were read, and short sermons on Christian duties were delivered in addition to some songs. Finally comes the Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) and the "agape" offered to the congregation."(page 74)

In the Brief History of the Church of Christ, we read that early Christians used to recite certain prayers in their public worship. And St. Justin the Martyr said "we, from all the nation, meet together on Sundays in one place." This is repeated by others also, such as Plinos, the young ruler who said to the king "Christians are used to meet on a certain day forenoon to sing praise to Christ as God."(page 1099)

A Greek Orthodox book entitled "A Pearl Precious on Church Condition" states that Saint Basil the Great wrote about what was happening in the meetings of Christians, saying "Custom running now in all God's churches are consistent and in conformity with each other. People go forth to the house of God at night, and confess to Him in pain with contrite heart and consistent words. After prayers they stand for praising; sometimes they divide themselves into two parties and praise by "antiphon", another time they let one person start praising 'individual singing' while the rest follow with responding tunes "Antiphon Chorus". Thus they pass the night distributing praise songs, and at the meantime praying".(Letter No 207 to the Clergy of New Caesara )

The system which the church now follows in the daily "Morning Incense service" with its hymns as well as in the "Evening Incense service" with its

hymns, is a genuine and a very old one. This system is included in the Didascalia "the teachings of the Apostles"; it says, "You, Bishop, should teach the people and command them to keep to the church every day morning and evening and never quit it. Command them to gather there in the defined hours so that the church would never be vacant nor the body of Christ be lacking its members ... Meet every day, morning and evening, in the Church to pray, and sing Psalm (141) (Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense) Do this in the evening, especially on Saturdays and on the Day of Resurrection (i.e Sunday). You should meet very often in the Church on that day to iterate glorifications to God."

The Didascalia further warns the Bishop himself not to be involved in any other thing or neglect the church. It is thus stated: "If, while you are sitting, bishop, some honorable person of good appearance entered, whether a foreigner or a native, you have to continue speaking God's word or listening to the cantor or reader. Do not stop the ministry of the word to flatter that person or invite him to a seat in the front. Be firm and calm, and do not stop speaking or listening to the reading or the psalmody. The brothers can receive him with the deacon's permission."

As for chanting hymns at the time of liturgy and offertory, the Didascalia says: "The Bishop shall begin the Mass Service with the Thanksgiving Prayer, then while the people are seated he teach them the words of the Holy Scriptures that would instruct them in what suits their life and enables them to be steadfast in faith. He shall reveal to them the way of piety. Then he sings the Psalmody (i.e. the Psalms tuned as hymns) with those who are gifted and are supposed to have received with understanding and wisdom



according to custom. The congregation at that time will sit aware, and listen to them in awe, following them solemnly. Then the priest holds the Bread and the Eucharist Cup, and the bishop takes the incense and walks around the altar thrice glorifying the Holy Trinity. The bishop then gives the censer to the priest who walks with it amidst the congregation, when they complete singing the psalmody, the deacon reads parts of the Epistles, part from the Psalms, and a part of a chapter from the Gospel ... etc.

Mar Isaac, Bishop of Nineveh, asserts the importance of hymnody in spiritual vigil, saying, "For we know from the book composed by St. Macarius that a beginner must not leave his cell at all during the week, nor visit his brother except on Saturdays when they leave their cells at supper time and come to the community while fasting. The whole year, summer and winter, they used to come to the service on Saturday evening. After that they go to the dining room, and after having their meal they set to pray from Saturday evening till Sunday morning without sleep. They start the day with the service of psalms, praise songs, lections and commentary on the Scriptures. Then they allow the brothers to address their questions and listen to the answers from the elders to learn from them. The Sunday Mass was always celebrated at the third hour of the day."

### **Creatures singing God's praise are closer to Him:**

St. Athanasius indicates that the angels are the most close to God, for they always praise Him. St. Athanasius says in this respect: "How dare the ungodly speak ignorantly what is not meet! They are but human beings unable even to describe what is on earth. Could they tell us what their nature is, if they are able to examine it? However, they dare with self-conceit, and

without any fear, invent theories on things which the angels desire to look into (1Pet 1: 12) and which are beyond their intellect even with their excelling nature and sublimity! For what creation is closer to God than the Cherubim and the Seraphim! Nevertheless, they do not even lift up their eyes to Him, nor touch the earth with their feet before Him, nor uncover their faces but on the contrary they cover them and praise Him with unmitigate lips. They do nothing else but praise the divine nature which is beyond description with the Three Trisagion Hymn.

### **The pleasure of praising with the Coptic hymns:**

When we chant these Coptic hymns, we should remember that these were the same which the Lord Christ and His holy Disciples and Apostles had chanted, and that the holy fathers composed them inspired by the Holy Spirit, then our bodies will shudder. Our tunes will also aspire unto heaven, and we will feel that they are completely different from any other tunes composed by the greatest music composer. For these hymns matured and grew in the churches throughout two thousand years.

I can never forget that day when I got the honor of leading “David Ensemble”, together with cantor “Ibrahim Ayaad” the teacher of hymnody at the Seminary. With the approval of H.H. Pope Sheouda III the Patriarch of the Coptic Church we represented the Coptic ecclesiastical hymns in the “Festival of Sacred Arts” in Paris in 1995.

The French people who had no knowledge of the Coptic language marveled on hearing it and enjoyed it so much that after the Performance

they clapped their hands strongly and incessantly as if endlessly. Some of them commented, saying, “We felt as if we were in heaven!”

The same happened in the solemn celebration to which “David Ensemble” was invited to present the Coptic Church hymnody in the great “Orient Festival” held in Sweden in June 1997, which was fully covered by the Mass Media. Radio, T.V. and Press recorded honestly the emotions of the Swedish people who listened with deep spiritual affection. They were exceedingly impressed by the music that they earnestly requested the Ensemble to repeat more than one hymn -which never happened before. My tears flowed down at that strong applause. The sweet comment I heard from some Swedish lady who was in charge of the Festival arrangements was the most beautiful my ears caught.

In December 1999 the Egyptian Opera House was celebrating the third millennium, and entrusted Professor Dr. Nabila Erian with the Performance, who invited “David Ensemble” seeing it impossible to celebrate this occasion without the Coptic hymn on the top.

At the end of celebration –which was entirely repeated, as the tickets were over- H.G. Amba Daniel, Bishop of Maadi, and Dr. Tharwat Bassily, Deputy for the Lay Council and Chairman of Amoun Company, as well as some businessmen insisted to go up to the backstage to congratulate David Ensemble for the Coptic hymn they wonderfully performed. H.G. Amba Daniel promised to support this Ensemble with all power because of its capability to manifest the spirituality and musical beauty of the Coptic hymnody.

In January 2000 the Egyptian Embassy in Paris, in coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education, invited “David Ensemble” to present the everlasting Coptic hymms in two great celebrations at “Aghd” in south Paris. This came out of their conviction of the greatness of the Coptic hymnody and its capability to penetrate deeply into the hearts of the audience.

When the Coptic Church in Paris knew about it, they insisted, in spite of the short time available, that a third Performance be held for the Egyptian community in Paris. A Performance was then organized by a businessman “Mr. Malak Shenouda”, and attended by “Dr. Ashraf Iskandar” the Professor of Egyptian Archeology at L’image University in Paris. Dr. Ashraf, being excessively dazzled with the Coptic hymnody and the way “David Ensemble” chanted, arranged various celebrations for some French delegated in St. Mark Church in Maadi immediately after the Ensemble’s return to Cairo.

Another invitation they received from “The Italian Cultural Center” to present alone an entire Performance consisting of some Coptic hymms and some Psalms for which I composed the tune. That invitation asserted that Coptic hymns and Psalms have a deep spiritual influence on all people. Not only this, but also after that Performance, the Italian Consultant for Culture came up to the stage expressing to me his gratitude and deep thanks and sure desire that such an unmatched Performance be repeated.

Moreover, on the occasion of celebrating the “Second Millennium of the Holy Family’s Journey in Egypt” on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2000, in Virgin Mary’s

old Church at Maadi, which was attended by the Prime Minister, the Head of People's Council, H.H. Pope Shenouda III, Imam Sheikh of Azhar, and the high State Officials, the Coptic hymnody was chosen as the most suitable for such an occasion.

Therefore, David Ensemble was invited to the opening night to begin the celebration with the "Ebooro Hymn". It was live broadcast to the whole world. This hymn was intended to be a spiritual and musical introduction to the Operetta "Blessed by Egypt My people", composed by the great writer "Mohammed Salmawi" and directed by the outstanding artist "Mohammed Noah".

All this affirm the unmatched spiritual and musical power of Coptic hymns. With such power these hymns are able to penetrate into the hearts of all people whatever their tongue, their faith or their musical approach. But, to have such effectiveness, hymns must be performed in a sound way, with the proper speed, the spiritual depth which they bear, and the awareness of their musical composition, as well as with the proper initiatory pitch.

### **3- Musical Performance to reveal the spirituality of hymns**

I was in wonder at the response of the whole world towards the Coptic Hymns in spite of the language difficulty. So I set myself to analyze and examine some hymns to know the secret behind all this, and I came out with the following conclusion:

1. These hymns are rich with tones, reversals and pitches which can only be composed by one acquainted with all types of tones and reversals.
2. These hymns express very well the spiritual significance implied in the words. In other words they are composed in such a way as to express a certain spiritual meaning. It means that they were not hymns for certain words then quoted for other words.
3. These hymns have specific speeds, defined by the early Fathers by the Spirit. These speeds can be measured by the number of beats per minute. If these speeds are altered, the significance of the hymn will materially change. In other words, making a rapid hymn slow or the opposite, would deform the features and the context of the hymn.
4. These hymns have determined pitches based on the tonic, and any change in these

tunes whether higher or lower “Transposition”<sup>6</sup> may spoil the spiritual context of the hymn. An example is: “Golgotha Hymn” chanted on Good Friday is a serene and sad hymn expressing the events of the Lord Christ burial through a slow speed and a low pitch. If we increase the hymn’s speed or raise its pitch, it will become a harsh military march bringing the congregation away from the crucifixion feelings.

Another example is the joyful and cheerful hymn “Ebooro” full of happiness. The power and joy of this hymn are clear in its vivid speed and high pitch. If the speed is decreased and the pitch dropped, it will turn into a mere sad hymn which does not express the joys of “Ebooro” – the King of Peace.

5. Performance of these Coptic hymns needs a spiritual understanding of the meanings implied in each word, so that the Performance might be convenient to the meaning. In other words, a word that needs a “Forte”<sup>7</sup> singing should not be sung “Piano”<sup>8</sup> or the opposite. For these ways of performance transfer the hymn’s spirituality from the chanter to the listener.

For more clarification, I quote here the words of Aristotle in his “Eloquence” Book III, Chapter I: [Eloquence means that one knows how to change the tone of his voice according to the feeling which he wants to inspire; and how –if required- to give it power or gentleness or mildness; how to use he tunes whether sharp, rough or in between;

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<sup>6</sup> Transposition is copying, transforming, or playing a piece of music of another pitch.

<sup>7</sup> It is powerful performance and loud resonance.

<sup>8</sup> The gentle low performance and sweet resonance.

and which harmony accords with each of these tunes. Actually, there are three things to be noticed: The space or extent, the harmony, and the rhythm. By these one can achieve success in competition.]

Therefore, I feel much depressed when I find some deacons in the churches disort the spiritual and musical features of these hymns with their bad performance, bad memorizing, and changing the speed (often faster for lack of time), exaggerated change of pitch (mostly to the lower for fear of sharp tunes insome hymns that need a gift to perform), and sometimes changing pitch by a sudden drop while the hymn is at its climax. This in fact destroys the holy climax which the early fathers introduced to lift the faithful to the most sublime spirituality. This is mainly due to their inability or ignorance of the aim of the rising tune.

Such bad performance of hymns in some churches gave some people a bad impression about them. Therefore some people hate to listen to these Coptic hymns in spite of their exceeding beauty. Some others turned towards new songs to find some comfort in them.

Some deacons, not understanding well the meanings implied in these hymns, perform them in a boring monotonous way <sup>9</sup> without expressing what they imply of joy or sorrow, power or weakness, confidence or dejection, love or hatred, pin or wholness, pride or

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<sup>9</sup> This discription “monotonous” is said when the performanceis repeated in a boring way, andis given to such a piece of music.



derision, power or humiliation, glory or disgrace ... and all such meanings.

The gift of musical expression, composition, and change of tunes <sup>10</sup> “Accentazione”, whether by low performance “Piano”, or powerful performance “Forte” ...etc., helps in understanding the meaning of the Coptic or Greek words included in the hymn.

Therefore, the priests and deacons who think that spirituality in prayer can only be achieved by weak, low, and sad voices in performance, are regrettably mistaken. Take for example the hymn “Thoak Ta Ti Goam” which means “Yours is the power, the glory, the blessing and the honor for ever”, could such a hymn be chanted with a weak and sad performance, whereas it bears words referring to power and glory, which fill man’s heart with joy and hope!

6. Whoever studies thoroughly the Coptic hymns will find them “expressionist” <sup>11</sup> rather than “impressionist”. This requires us to

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<sup>10</sup> In composing musical stanzas and pieces, certain tunes should be diversified as in word syllables which are accentuated by being made stressed or feeble, flexible or hard, connected or separate.

<sup>11</sup> In art the term “expressionism” is a theory opposing “impressionism”. It calls for giving free reins to sentiments and emotions to express one’s feelings without being confined to reality or to the traditional rules of composing music. The history of music ascribes beginnings of expressionist music to “Schunberg” (1874-1915), the musician who invented the no-pitch system. From my own point of view, the expressionist music began with the establishment of the Coptic Church; for through my study of a great number of Coptic hymns I found that they express the feelings and emotions of the saints towards their beloved Lord Christ. And through such feelings, they became separated from reality and soared high in chanting their wonderful hymns even unto heaven. Through the tunes they translated and explained the meaning of the words.

perform them in such a way that conveys the meaning of the words, and makes performance like an explanation of words instead of doing away with both tune and words by bad performance. Furthermore, proper articulation of words has an important role in conveying the meaning of the hymn to the listener.

I admired much what the savants of the French Expedition stated in the book “Description of Egypt –Vol. IX”; for they laid down the principles of chanting, which can be summed up in the following:

- + The more wonderful and purer the tunes are, the more impressive they become on our emotions through the powerful vivid vibration they cause in our nerves rather than on our souls.

- + The voices which seize our admiration more than others, because of their purity and wonderful tone, scarcely move the feelings or touch the hearts in the same degree of their purity and wonderful tone more than the others.

- + Very often, an admirable play actor who may not have such a voice that can attract admiration but knows how to convey emotions in his tunes, can make those emotions penetrate powerfully and effectively into the depths of our hearts and feelings. On the other hand, the best singer cannot convey to us the thought or the experience he wants if he relies only on the purity of his voice and skill. Though such a perfect voice may delight our ears and please our souls, the heart remains cold, not being impressed by it.

+ It is impossible for music to achieve actual development whenever it is not subject to the rules of the heart and mind, or when it sacrifices the intended meaning for the sake of delighting ears or obeying tastes or running after futile new styles.

Perhaps these principles which those scholars have laid down give us some peace. For we can deduce from their speech that a tune is received, not only through a sweet voice, but rather through its ability to convey the thought implied in the hymn, and to please the soul. That is why we used to enjoy spiritually the Divine Gregorian Liturgy when Late Amba Benjamin, the Bishop of Menoufeia, administered the service, more than when any other priests or bishops did who perhaps had more tender voices than that of Amba Benjamin. The reason is the ability of H.G. Amba Benjamin to make the tunes of the Divine Liturgy penetrate powerfully and effectively into the depth of our souls –as those savants explained.

7. Some deacons used to sing through the nose producing a nasal twang. This way of singing very often hinders conveying the spiritual meaning. It may even suppress the features and the syllables, making them difficult to understand.
8. These hymns consist of musical stanzas and phrases, so the performer should be aware of the beginning and the end of each. This is necessary to enable him to determine the “aspiration” points and the suitable way of ending each stanza, or what we call “Close Up System”. Music stanzas resemble composition in literary writing with respect to their formation. The way of communicating a predicate phrase

differs from the way of communicating an interrogative or exclamatory one ... etc. The same applies to performance of hymns: each musical stanza differs when performing it according to its content.

Last but not least, dear reader, I'd like to remind you that the teachings of the Apostles in the Didascalia made it clear that chanters of Psalmody should be chosen accurately so as to be distinguished for prudence, wisdom and talent. In other words, they should be gifted in chanting hymns and should have received with understanding and wisdom according to tradition.

## **4- Methods of Praise**

The early Apostolic Church, which was full of wisdom, established various methods of praise. The objective of these methods was to imitate the different ways of praise that will be used in heaven, to create a type of singing dialogue among singers, and to help the faithful concentrate their thoughts on praising in order to avoid the feeling of boredom that could be caused by monotonous performance. Among these methods are the following:

### **1- Singing in two choirs:**

This is known as "Antiphonal Singing", which is the singing performed by two choirs, one on the north and one on the south responding to each other.

Scholars are uncertain as to the origin of antiphonal singing. Some stated that St. Peter the Apostle had a vision about it, others thought that this method was introduced into the church of Antioch by saint Ignatius the Theophorous in the first century A.D. (Socrates – church history 6:8). It was derived from the system of worship in the Jewish synagogues. This method of singing was transmitted from Antioch (i.e. Syria) to Palestine, and then to Egypt.

It is related that St. Ignatius saw in his vision angels singing, reciprocally, hymns for the Holy Trinity. This is in conformity with Prophet Isaiah's prophecy, *"I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered*

*their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory'. At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke" (Isa 6: 1-4)*

In fact, singing in two choirs is a very ancient ritual that was used in the temple, since the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, for the Scriptures say, “*When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: “He is good; His love to Israel endures forever.” And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.*” (Ezra3: 10,11).

And also, “*At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right.... The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction ...the two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God ..the choirs sang...*” (Neh 12:27-40)

It is believed that the Coptic translation of the Psalms is taken from the Hebrew text named "Massoretic", that was in use by the Jewish hermits of

Alexandria before their conversion to Christianity. And that the Copts received from these hermits the antiphonal method of singing, that is by responding.

Philo, the Jewish scholar, in his book about the life of the early church in Alexandria and all Egypt while still retaining its first Jewish tincture (45-55 A.D.), mentions that those hermits used the antiphonal method in their vigil praise; and so the antiphona was transferred from those hermits to the church, as a ritual for divine service. The Latin churches in turn took this method of praise from our church.

It is noticed that the church organized an antiphona and a similar method of singing for Easter Day in the form of two choirs, one inside the altar and the other outside, chanting Psalm (24) " lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in." This is a continuation of the tradition that aims at participating in the Lord's procession in His second coming.

The church's liturgy shows another form of antiphonal singing at the twelfth hour of Good Friday after the altar's door is opened as a sign of reconciliation between the heavenly and the earthly beings. At that hour, a dialogue starts between the group of deacons inside the altar and those outside, when they sing "Thoak The Ti Goam" alternately responding to each other.

The Gospel according to Mark and Mathew states that the crowds that went out to meet Christ divided themselves into two groups: a chorus that

went ahead of Him, and another that followed, "*the crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted ( opposite to each other ) 'Hosanna to the Son of David'*" (Mt 21:9).

Moreover, the Lord Himself wished to draw the attention of the disciples and the crowds that followed Him to Psalm (118) and its interpretation as contained in "Al Midrash", by saying: "*for I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, ' Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'*" (Mt 23: 39); as if the Lord is putting on their mouths beforehand the antiphona that they were to say upon his entry to Jerusalem a few hours later.

For the Lord after the supper sang this Psalm. And the disciples shouted 'Hosanna' in a liturgical method, which is lively and realistic, as if they felt that they were singing the annual and traditional salvation praise to celebrate a current salvation-taking place before their eyes; for the disciples represent the church as a whole surrounding Christ in His Second Coming.

A salvation that was fulfilled, a current salvation, and a salvation that will be fulfilled through the Eucharist and in the Lord's presence is expressed in this Psalm, in singing it using the antiphonal method, and in the 'Hosanna' shout of joy and hope.

Also St. Basil, in his letter no.207 to the priests of Caesarea, confirms the importance of the antiphona, saying: "the people go to the house of prayer (church) by night, and confess before God in repentance and continual tears. Finally they move from prayers to chanting psalms in two groups opposite to each other. After that they turn over the onset of the hymn to one of them and the rest of the group respond back."



In the Book of Revelation also, when all creation sing praise to God's glory and the four living creatures (representing all creation) respond by saying: Amen (Rev 5:14), is this not a wonderful heavenly picture of the church singing with all her ranks, one opposite the other saying: Holy, holy, holy. Amen. Alleluia?

## **2- Responsorial singing:**

Some historians of music wrote that responsorial singing is a method known in the fourteenth century, taken from the ancient Coptic church, where the choir or the congregation used to respond to the cantor, "the single singer". This method led to the emergence of the proficient singer "virtuose".

This confirms that the performance of the single singer "the cantor" was so wonderful that those who were from outside the church were overwhelmed and moved by his accurate sweet performance.

The single singer chanted verses while the congregation listened, then they respond at the end of each verse with the same response every time.

It is related that St. Athanasius the Apostolic used to instruct the deacon to chant the Psalm and the congregation to respond, saying: "For He is good, His love endures forever." This is to say that he instructed them to sing Psalm (136) by the method of single and responsorial singing.

Philo specifically recorded the vigil hymns they performed on the occasion of the great feast, showing that while one was chanting the others listened quietly participating only at the end. It is said that the Egyptian

monks and a number of the parish churches in Egypt did not practice, in the past joint singing, but they used to listen to the singer and respond only in some parts as in psalms for example by saying: "Alleluia".

### **3- Collective singing in one voice:**

This is like all the responses that the whole congregation sings and the liturgy book (Euchologion) refers to by the words "the congregation says". They are generally litanies said with persistence and vigor, such as the hymn of "Amen Ton Thanaton", in which the congregation undertakes to preach the death and holy resurrection of Christ. There are also the hymn of "Erepoo Esmo Ethouab", and the hymn of "Os Pereen Ke Este Esteen", and many other hymns which the congregation sings with long and complex tunes.

### **4- Solo singing:**

Solo singing in the church is a method of singing that distinguishes the Coptic Church. For all the prayers that the priest or the bishop says is a form of solo singing.

Other forms of solo singing are when the deacon chants the Pauline, or the Catholic or the Praxis prelude, or when he chants the Psalm during the Holy Mass, or when he chants it in the sad tune of the Passion Week.

This is also affirmed by St. Basil in his letter no.207 to the priests of Caesarea, in which he said:

" ...They start chanting psalms after dividing themselves into two groups standing opposite to each other ... and after that they turn over the onset of the hymn to one of them and the rest of the group respond back".

But solo singing should not lead to self-conceit as a result of the singer's soft voice, but should rather be a declaration of the singer's personal love towards God, whereby he promises God to love Him more than anyone else.

St. John Chrysostom stresses this meaning in his Commentary on Psalm (42), saying: "Therefore do not think that you come here to merely utter words, but when you say the response consider that as a vow. For example, when you say, '*as the deer pants for stream of water, so my soul pants for you, O God*' you promise God that you will have preference for nothing but Him, and that you have a burning love for Him."

## **Chapter III**

### **Preserving the Coptic Hymns**

- 1. Preserving Coptic Hymns.**
- 2. The World and Coptic Hymns.**

# 1- Preserving Coptic Hymns

## Church role in preserving Coptic hymns

What the Coptic Orthodox Church did to preserve the Coptic hymns that were delivered to her from the early church fathers is considered to be a great miracle. If the west get astonished in witnessing our Pharaohs heritage that stood firmly for thousands of years, how more amazingly they regard those hymns and ask: “How were you able to keep those melodies that move in the air and are transmitted through emotions & feelings, for two thousand years, in an era with no recording machines? How did they survive in the heart of the church through generations before the existence of musical notation<sup>1</sup>?”

It is a miracle by all means, a miracle of Oral Tradition, a miracle of receiving and delivering through generations. It reflects how Coptic church is determined to preserve all what she received from the Apostles, whether rituals or prayers or sacraments or priesthood order or unblemished spiritual concepts or hymns. It might seem to the knowledgeable impossible to keep all these hymns for twenty centuries without musical notation or recording. Coptic Church for this objective appoints singers or Cantors<sup>2</sup> that have the ability to preserve all these hymns - with their diverse ways<sup>3</sup> specified for different occasions - in memory, in spite of long durations between occasions (some hymns are chanted only once a year). In each generation arise calibers that have the ability to deliver and others that have the ability to receive, this role happened with no doubt by the upholding of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup>Musical notations was known in Europe in the beginning of the nineth century, and was called “newmz”, this notation resembled the writing signs like dots, slashes, comma ... etc. and it was placed over the poetry words to let the singer remember the tones, whether rising up or getting down and these signs was used only to determine tone duration and to assist in moving from one tone to another. This way in musical notations was used till the end of the eleventh century until Franco of Colona city in Germany invented new signs that have different shapes, each one specifying an interval (each sign equals one third of the next one ahead). In the fourteenth century Philip De Vitrei added other signs, signs kept changing & improving until the present time with their shapes & names. The musical notations helped a lot in preserving musical works from loss, deterioration & forfeiture and the new signs that were added improved the accuracy and capability to record stanza details including stances of breath as well as colors and shadows of performance.

<sup>2</sup>“Cantor” is the singer or chanter in the Coptic Church. This term also is used to call the musical leader in the Lutheran church in Germany.

<sup>3</sup> Ways: are specific ritual tones for Coptic hymns to differentiate between occasions through the Liturgical year (joy way, mourn way, kyahk way, shaanini way, fast way, yearly way ). One of the well known Coptic hymns is called “The Seven Ways”.

## **Cantors role in preserving the Coptic hymns**

It is known that ancient Egyptians preferred blind singers, and those used to put their hands on their cheeks while singing! This idea was passed to the Coptic Church who depended on blind singers in receiving and delivering hymns from generation to generation. Blind are gifted with strong memory, capability of concentrating and remarkable ability in imagining tones and rhythm forms which they called “jars”.

They were chosen very carefully with the ability to produce accurate vocal performance of tones and rhythm forms, and were called “teachers” or “Cantors”. Up to the present time, each church has her own cantor, his main duty is to chant in the Mass and other church services as well as to deliver and teach the hymns to deacons. During Mass and liturgical services deacons stand in two choruses, north chorus and south chorus, and ahead of the north chorus stands the Cantor who acts as a maestro<sup>4</sup> or a leader who by doing few signals by his hand leads the deacons and determines the suitable hymn speed and points out the starts and finales.

The cantor also plays on the timbrel instrument accompanied by a deacon playing on the triangle, especially while chanting a joy hymn.

About the signals that cantors usually do while leading the chorus Dr. Ragheb Moftah says: “it has been noticed according to the pictures found in the old Egyptian art, that the signals done by cantor Michael El-Batanony while singing hymns resemble to a great

<sup>4</sup> Maestro is the orchestra leader. In the eighteenth century the term was used for the church musical leader as well as for the harpsichord performer. The role of the maestro is to deliver the melodies to audience in the most perfect way, by the assortment and coordination between the performers and singers, directing them to produce the melody accurately. He should be musically informative and able to understand the nature of the melody as well as the tactics of the production time, he should have a sensitive musical ear and strong memory, leading & loving personality, and capable to perform on one or more instrument. The maestro usually have his impact on the melodies according to his own sense and personal view, so the output can differ from one maestro to another. From ancient days, the leader in praising God was known. In the First Book of Chronicles (15:22) (Catholic Translation) it is mentioned that : “Chenaniah, leader of the Levites, was instructor in charge of music, because he was skillful”

extent the signals used by singers & musicians in the pharaohs era” [Al Fikr-Al Fan El Moasser Magazine, Cairo – issue 140, July 1994 P. 152]

Sometimes the cantor stops when he feels content with the performance of the chorus or if there is another one doing his role or if there is an Archdeacon leading, as if by his silence he is recognizing his success in creating another generation capable to preserve this spiritual and eternal heritage. Cantors role is accomplished when they succeed in implanting the love of Coptic hymns in deacons’ hearts and preparing a new generation of musically talented children as the future deacons.

### **Factual example of oral tradition**

I cannot forget “Naguib Salib” the cantor of Marmina Church in Shoubra, who used to come to our house which was so close to the church, to teach Coptic hymns to my older brother “Mounir Kyrillos” (Fr Kyrillos Kyrillos afterwards). By that time, I was a young child, nearly six years old, so fond of Coptic hymns and I used to sit nearby and enjoy the fine private lesson. At the end of each lesson the cantor Naguib used to ask me to recite what I memorized, and with candies and sugar cubes attract me, for he knew that I have more ability to swallow a lot of candies than to memorize the melodies.

Time passed and this cantor departed to heaven to share praising with angels, and the story of hymns in the church does not end, for another capable cantor (Kamel Ayad Kellini - 1939-1994) took his role to sow a new plantation and deliver hymns to deacons. My love to hymns grew faster than the rate of classes in the church so I had no choice but to follow my older brother and have private hymn lessons.

The holy zeal found its way to the church. Deacons became desirous to learn more hymns, more difficult and longer, and the small house of the cantor turned to be a place for competition, at its gate a deacon or more waiting for others inside till they finish their lesson, with curiosity listening and trying to figure out the name of the hymn learned inside

to compete by one more difficult. Deacons learn from each other in a loving environment and the preceding one proudly takes the position of a teacher for few moments.

I personally have received hymns from more than one cantor or deacon, I recall the noted cantor “Fahim” (St. Mark church in Klotbek), Mr. Nazmy Banoub (Fr. Kernilios the monk in St. Macarious monastery afterwards), Eng. Fayez (Fr. Stephan Fayek priest of Marmina church in Shoubra afterwards), Eng. Safwat (Fr. Bishoy Sidki afterwards), Mr. Younan (Fr. Younan Aziz priest of St. Demiana Adawya afterwards), Mr. Atef Atta, Dr. Wahid the competent deacon and Fr. Morcos Guirgis (priest of Marmina Church in shoubra ) the possessor of so pleasant a voice.

By the end of the sixties I heard about a clear-sighted cantor with a pleasant voice teaching hymns at Alnahda Coptic Association twice a week. Immediately I joined the Association with a group of deacons, this was the cantor “Ibrahim Ayad” who was chosen by H.H. Pope Shenouda III afterwards to be his dedicated cantor, and who had joined David’s chorus several times in festivals inside & outside Egypt.

The previous depiction of the contest in learning Coptic hymns, is a real picture of what I practiced in Marmina church in Shoubra: It is a sample of what the ancient Apostolic Church had gone through from the beginning and what contemporary Coptic Churches are practicing. This practice is one of the main reasons having Coptic hymns preserved for about two thousand years. It will continue in each church till the time come when we all praise together holding harps of God by the sea of glass:

*“They sang as it were a new song before the throne ..and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14:3-5)*



The same picture & practice continued with me with all the details when I moved to a new location to Maadi district, and the center of my church ministry was transferred to St. Mark church at El-Maadi. There I found Cantor “Samuel” doing the same role, implanting love of hymns in the children and deacons to continue keeping the mission of oral tradition.

When I used to do the final tryouts of the praise Performances for David’s Ensemble the most reverend H.G. Amba Daniel (Bishop of Maadi) – well known for his love to Coptic hymns – was keen on attending part of these tryouts to make sure that the Coptic hymns chanted (their speeds and jars) are exactly typical to what his reverence memorized through years, and frequently he stopped us introducing some important remarks. Fr. Morcos Yessa the priest of the church and the spiritual father and sustainer of David’s Ensemble was keen also on attending all of the Performances and most of the tryouts.

It is clear from the above that the church with all her orders and institutions supports attentively the transfer of Coptic hymns. When I teach hymns, I use musical notations (that may be considered new for many) and I make sure that it is done accurately according to the church plan of “regular succession between generations”. I will continue unceasingly proclaiming that musical notations must be the main expedience for teaching hymns at the “Music & Hymn Department” of the “Institute of Coptic Studies” (The main Acaemic Institute for teaching hymns). For all choruses and orchestras that I direct, I adhere to musical sheets in teaching hymns which I write using the records compiled by Dr. Rageb Mouftah, and recheck their accuracy with the deacons in David’s Ensemble who were chosen from different churches, It is also a must for Clerical Colleges to teach hymns with this scientific method which has been well known since centuries.

The previous picture in spite of being a personal experience carried out from the mid of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty first, there are several other similar

practices in many churches, through different generations, all showing the church care for this eternal heritage and the persistent attempts to preserve it.

I will introduce here two persons that strived to preserve the heritage of the Coptic hymns, from the end of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century, spending time and money and sparing all their life to act as a ring in the giants chain that preserved this heritage.

### **The role of cantor Michael El-Batanony**

This brilliant savant and notable artist was born in the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1873 in Cairo, his father who was a simple officer loved Coptic hymns and mastered a lot for he had received them from the noted monk “Botros Mouftah” who departed in 1875.

Michael in his childhood was partially clear-sighted, his father observed his talent and introduced him to the church to learn hymns, not sparing any money to accomplish this task. Michael took his preschool education at “Abouelsaad Kottab” in Azbakia district from 1879 to 1881, then he joined “AlKobra” school - that was originated by Pope Kyrillos IV (The father of reform 1845-1963) - from 1881 to 1885. In the same year he joined El-Azhar to learn Arabic language (from 1885 to 1891).

Michael learned hymns from cantors : “Morcos” and “Arsanios”, the pupils of cantor “Takla” (Fr. Takla afterwards) who was the one teaching at the Patriarchal school before the start of “Alkobra Coptic school”.

When Pope kyrillos IV observed that the condition of hymns require his personal attention and care, asked cantor “Takla” –an admirable musician– to care for Coptic hymns. Takla added some beautiful Greek hymns and chose seven talented singers and concentrated on teaching them, those seven afterwards became the pioneers in church music , two of them were “Morcos” and “Armanios” the teachers of Michael.

All the circumstances helped Michael to benefit from the available knowledge resources and church art. All the musical talents bunched up in him, for his ears were musically very sensitive, his rhythms of tunes was so accurate and had so pleasant voice of Baritone<sup>5</sup> tone. By the time he reached nineteenth he had mastered most of the Coptic hymns and as soon as he joined the Seminary in 1891, he took the post of the “Chief Cantor” at St. Mark cathedral.

He was appointed as hymns teacher on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, 1893 at the Seminary. He was known for his accuracy, his lovely voice and his ardency in preserving the hymns original tunes.

His new post as teacher did not detain him from learning more about this art and confirming the hymns with the noted Cairo cantors especially after the departure of cantors “Morcos & “Armanios” . He also searched for any new hymn, not known to him or not used in Cairo, he got some hymns used at Menia province (like the hymn: Abet geek evol” which is chanted before reading the Catholicon).

Cantor Michael founded a school for blind cantors at Zaitoon district in 1901, where “Saad Basha Zaglool” (Minister of Education at that time) visited him.

He was granted the appellation of the “Bakawia” for his great efforts in transferring the Coptic mass to the Arabic language in the paacy of Pope Kyrillos V (1874-1928) who was known for his love and care for Coptic hymns. Pope kyrillos embraced the talented cantor, supported him and took care of his education.

To assist blind cantors, Cantor Michael prepared and published books for Coptic hymns in Brail format.

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<sup>5</sup> Baritone is the mid vocal tone for men. It is middle between the sharp tenor & the coarse bass, and is characterized by its flexibility in performance.

Dr. Rageb Mouftah narrates about his memories with cantor “Michael El-Batanony” (Cairo magazine - issue number 140):

“One day we were in Alexandria and Cantor Michael heard from one of the early cantors a short refrain, not known to him, immediately with great interest he said, “I want to hear it once more”, and soon he grasped it very easily”

Dr. Rageb continues : “I have traveled a lot and lived among many nations, but I never heard about a man in the age of eighty five so eager and persistent in work like this man. He liked to deliver the hymn trust which he was entrusted with to each one seeking and caring to gain. He cheers up when seeing a pupil having a musical talent and gets delighted when one of his schoolboys masters a difficult hymn.

I remember when I gathered the senior cantors, his early disciples, asking him to regulate the melodies of the “Gregorian Holy Mass” for them, after they received it all, we assigned for each one a part to practice so we can record the mass for the next generations. One part - which was given to an admirable cantor - was really difficult; each time we try to record, the cantor errs so we try again. Finally he did it correctly, and before finishing the recording cantor Michael in his ecstasy stood up and applauded happily. With his applaud we lost the chance to record this part, the chance we all were waiting, for we were so exhausted and the place was narrow & hot, in a big gathering of priests , deacons and cantors who angrily complained, so I went to him sweating and welcomed him cheerfully and said to all: “Do not get angry, for cantor Michael as a brilliant artist could not bridle his joyful feeling”.

He always cheered up when hearing an accurate performance, always encouraging his pupils. Truly he was the cantor of the cantors and an encyclopedia of Coptic hymns. I heard a lot from priests and deacons (like Fr. Morcos Guirgis of Matay) how they prefer to receive hymns from cantor Michael – in spite of his old age and senescence of his voice–

than receiving from others for his strains and accents were clear and accurate, easily delivered and understood by others.

In our last meeting, before his death by three days, he introduced to me a talented boy saying : “This boy deserves a lot of support & encouragement” and he spent hours teaching the boy, I was caring too much to let him save his voice, but I couldn’t but bow to him respectfully. This bright star did not vanish for he is singing the universal hymn with the angels”

In sincere words full of love and respect Dr. Rageb elegizes Cantor Michael, saying :

“You did not die, you immortal one, your great spirit and power will continue, you son of the Pharaohs. You are like the Nile river in its flooding covering the whole valley; for your teaching covered the whole country from one end to the other, you had an immortal impact like the pyramids that overlook on each epoch without shaking.

The Coptic hymns – echoing throughout the valley from thousands of years - you had preserved for us in a generation always changing and altering. You are crouching amidst us like Sphinx, for you will continue to be the pioneer teacher.

You – the great heart - had exhaled from this tiny room to the universal world to be one of the singers of the melodies of the holy of holies, each melody of them excels all the hymns on earth whatever its spirituality. You are now talking with Didymus - associates talk - and Athanasius is listening, for the church became enlightened by you both”

### **The role of Dr. Rageb Mouftah:**

Dr. Rageb Mouftah was born in 1898 to a respectable Coptic family (one of his ancestors was Raphael Mouftah who lived in early seventeenth century). We can find reference to the great services his family did to the church in the codices number 75 at the Coptic Museum (dated 1613). He learned music in Germany, and one of his main

achievements was collecting the Coptic hymns heritage from the tongues of the cantors and recording it vocally on tens of tapes to be a lantern for coming generations.

He hired from England the expert “Ernest Newland Smith” (professor of “Royal Music Academy of London” and a music composer). The deal stated that Mr. Smith should stay in Egypt for seven months each year (from first of October to the end of April) to write down the musical notes for Coptic Hymns. All the expenses of traveling, accommodation and stipend were covered by Dr. Rageb. This work was accomplished from 1928 to 1936 in sixteen volumes covering all the rituals of the Coptic Church. Mr. Smith depended upon the cantor Michael El-Batanony in recording the hymns on sheets for his pleasant voice and accurate performance.

In 1940 Dr. Rageb assembled several choruses, one for singers from the Seminary, and the other two from the university students. He invited Mrs. Margaret Tout - the Magyar musician and one of the students of Bella Partok the great musician – to add the musical ornaments<sup>6</sup> to the Coptic hymns sheets recorded by Dr. Smith.

In 1931, he traveled to England to give lectures at Oxford, Cambridge and London. The following year, he was invited to the international music conference that was held in Cairo, thirty music professors attended from several European universities, and one of the main topics was Coptic Music. Dr. Rageb invited the conference members to a Holy Mass at El-Moalaka Church and held several meetings for them at his house in ELHaram district to study the Coptic music. As an output, the conference decided to record on discs some of the hymns and portions of the Holy Mass (produced by Gramophone company).

In 1989, he was invited by Berlin radio station to visit Germany and record some portions from the Coptic melodies.

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<sup>6</sup>Musical ornaments or melody trappings are added tones placed to adorn the musical work with beauty & diversity, either written as signs or symbols placed before, after or above the main sounds. When written, it does not take its time interval from the measure but from the main sounds that precedes or comes after. Musical ornaments have many kinds and names like :Abodgatora, Chkatora, Mordent, Gretto, Tyrell...etc

In 1992, he granted all his work to the Congress Library in Washington to be preserved for generations using the most recent technological devices.

In 1998, he issued a book, entitled “The Coptic Orthodox Liturgy of St. Basil with Musical Notations”, which was published by the American University of Cairo.

**The experience of Dr. Rageb (Pluses & minuses):**

On this experience and the book previously mentioned I have some comments that might help in continuing this march and assist others in their own trials

+ The huge and great effort in recording the Coptic hymns from the mouths of the noted and accurate early cantors on cassette tapes was a magnificent and splendid work. History will attribute that to Dr. Rageb for his work will be the only genuine and trustee reference - without any distortion or alteration – for he had fetched to us the raw melodies from their origin before doing any scientific reparation.

I personally depend mainly on these records when writing the musical note of hymns I present through David’s Ensemble. When someone asks me about the accurate source for learning hymns - for there are several records by monasteries and well-known cantors – I refer him definitely to the authentic, accurate and complete (covering all hymns) records of “The Institute of Coptic Studies”, for this institute is the official Institute representing the Coptic Church inside and outside Egypt.

+ Regarding the book mentioned previously, it is really a considerable work of dedicated years of three persons that loved and spent their time and effort: Dr. Rageb Mouftah the Coptic Egyptian, Dr. Margaret Tout the Magyar Catholic and Dr. Martha Roy the American protestant. This kind of ecumenical gathering around Coptic hymns was a sign of communion and love.

I have no comments on the content of the book but I have some remarks regarding the musical notations produced by Dr. Margaret Tout:

**First-** Coptic melodies are special reflecting the culture of the ancient Egyptians, Mr. Smith, in one of his lectures (at Oxford in 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1926) expressed how difficult it was for him as a foreigner to write musical notes for Coptic melodies since they differ totally from other nations music. That is why no one can accurately write those notes unless he is an Egyptian, knowing the rules, modes and bars of Egyptian music as well as the scientific methods to accomplish the task. In my personal opinion, the experience of getting a foreigner from Europe to write musical notations for Coptic music, or getting a Magyar to add the musical ornaments should be taken cautiously.

I quote here the opinion of the noted maestro Youssef Elsisy, who after observing some musical notations of a group of Coptic melodies that I personally recorded, said :

“Dr. Margaret Tout is the most capable musician to write the Magyar popular music heritage, but she may not be capable to write the heritage of the Coptic melodies. Those notations should be written by a deacon, conservator of hymns heritage and musically educated... like you !!? “

**Secondly-** The musical notations in this book manifest Coptic music as if it has no rhythmic modes, bars, or keys. I heard the same remark from some great musicians caring for Coptic hymns, after checking the notations included in this book.

**Thirdly-** I think that notations were written accurately in terms of tone & time measures using the Milo -graph, but it seems that she who operated this device having not understood the essence or the spirit of the melodies, she did not reform its tones inside the musical measures, and since she is not an Egyptian she could not understand the modes of those melodies, she did not set the proper “Key signature” for them in the Armattora (Musical sheet), and did not choose the normal suitable vocal league for scale stability. Thus the Coptic hymns appeared as if they had no modes, rhythms or time signatures, though on the



contrary it is well known scientifically and internationally that the old Egyptian music is the one that set up the rules of modes, rhythms and time signatures for music of other nations.

As a simple evidence, while performing we hold the timbrel and triangle to sign in uniform rhythmic modes, these modes were the same ancient Egyptian modes that were praised by musical scientists like Plato and Phithagore, for each mode a key signature that differentiate it from other modes. (Refer to books speaking about Egyptian music rules)

**Fourthly-** The ornaments and trappings that filled the book– that have no rapport with the main Coptic hymn - had entirely confused the main Coptic hymn. Its sedate identifications was lost amid huge numbers of ornaments and trappings that showed the Coptic melody in a form that shaded its reverence.

There are with no doubt some ornaments and trappings – that most of the singers and cantors agree upon - which are considered within the main part of the melody contexture, but the ones that are added by each singer according to his own view and personal feelings does not count as a main part of the melody.

About the musical ornaments in the Coptic music, “Nabil Kamal” writes in his Master’s Tractate:

“The singer adds while singing some extemporaneous ornaments with an objective of beautifying the melody and expressing the meanings, each singer with his personal method adorn these hymns according to his feelings and vocal capability (as proceeding from his sentiments). No two singers may accord on the same ornaments for any specific hymn, but even with the same singer while reduplicating the same melody he will not iterate the same ornaments exactly”.

How then could we record for history melodies with ornaments that no two singers agree upon? Or ornaments that cannot be iterated twice by the same singer?

The ornaments or trappings or arabesque miniatures are additions added by each performer according to his personal view and his interaction with the melody, its words and meanings, but it may differ for the same person from time to time according to his spiritual and psychological state. Therefore writing those ornaments - that do not relate to the main melody (canto fermo) - are considered records of tones of instant emotions and personal feelings that belong to a person and not a hymn.

Dr. Adel kamel confirms that saying (in Cairo Mmagazine-issue number 140):

“The nature of our Coptic music is exactly the nature of public music<sup>7</sup> in any place having ancient folklore heritage, and writing musical notations is only a record for the time measures and sound intervals, but such music has its way of performance including accurate details that could not be written since it changes from one performer to another”.

When adding these ornaments to the musical note of the original melody, it confuses the main tones because its musical moves are usually faster than the original tone moves.

How much I wished that before producing a book like that a revision of all musical notations had taken place. The revision in my point of view, should let a musician or more - experts in reading the Egyptian music notes – read the sheets right away in front of a credible cantor. This revision to the musical notations are very important before publishing and granting the notations to foreign institutions, that can by their financial capabilities use them – with their mistakes – in performances through orchestras and international choruses.

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<sup>7</sup> I disagree with Dr. Adel Kamel in considering the Coptic music having the nature of public music.

It is a critical matter since these orchestras will not be capable to perform the Egyptian musical modes like sika<sup>8</sup>, bazrak, iraq, awg or fine fingering the nems & teeks (from our eastern Coptic music mysteries) or performing the “Egyptian tetra chords” : “saba” , “hozam”, “bayaty” or “rast” with their strange intervals to the European vocal chords and ears that are not adapted to our unique Coptic Egyptian music.

I hope that those foreign institutions do not export back to us those musical notations recorded on cassette tapes and compact discs (that may be received eagerly and with curiosity to see what foreigners have about our heritage even if it is a deformed heritage ) and after a hundred years or so it will be normal for people to doubt the accuracy of the cantors and give the credit to the hymns received on fancy compact discs (which shall take its authenticity from this fancy authenticable book)

For the unmusical reader I will try to simplify the matter of how difficult to a foreigner to read and write Coptic melodies, If you can think of how many foreigners lived in Egypt for years and tried to learn Arabic language with all its details and difficult rules, some Arabic letters (O were an obstacle in their task, for they could not articulate them accurately. All the letters that have similar letters in their native languages were easy, only the extraneous letters were difficult. Similarly in the Coptic music there is no problem in writing and performing any tone similar to a tone available in the European music, but only the special tones of Coptic music are an obstacle.

For the musical reader, I have no doubt that he agrees with me, for I had discussed this matter with several noted musicians before writing those words.

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<sup>8</sup>The Persians set names for tone rhythms in the Egyptian musical scale (rest which means straight) being the main scale in the Egyptian music. These names were the names of the used numerical numbers, to indicate how the musical scale was in order, the first tone was “Yaka”, the second “Doka”, the third “Sika”, the fourth “Gharka”, the fifth “Bengika” (Elnoy), the six “Sishka” (hosainy), the seventh “Hefka” (awg), the eighth “hetshka” (kerdan), Also some city names were used for eastern scales like “nahawend”, “hegaz” & “iraq Elkordy”.

We have some attempts of presenting Coptic music in modes different from their original modes. The result was negative, deformed melodies without the quarter of tone<sup>9</sup> (Microtone). There is a certain group, for example that tried to produce several hymns, one of them was the joy hymn “Eporo”, after removing from it the three quarter of tone. The hymn changed to another mode than its original one (Bayati mode); it turned to be a distorted hymn, not an Egyptian or a western. This happened due to their inability to produce it in its original Byati mode, or more probably the inability to distinguish the low “Be mol”<sup>10</sup> degree. Performing the quarter of tone in general requires a sensitive ear capable of distinguishing it, and in the Coptic church it requires a more sensitive accurate ear, for the quarter of tone in the church music has a comma<sup>11</sup> added to it than in general eastern music.

**Fifthly** - We should discuss the objectives which that book tried to achieve. If it was published to preserve the heritage for next generations, then it should have been written in the first place in an accurate scientific way, showing the rhythms, scales, time signatures and modes, especially for those hymns that are chanted using the timbrel. The ornaments that reflect personal feelings which are mere individual tones should not have not been written (for they show the instability of the melody and sometimes disjoin from the main melody when the singer fails to choose the suitable kind of the ornament, besides, the long ornament sometimes do away with the regular scale of the melody.)

If the objective of the book was to teach Coptic melodies using the musical note, then the method applied in writing hymns in that book make it so difficult for great musicians to read<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Quarter of a tone is the tone produced from the distance between two successive tones in the musical scale, equal to a quarter of complete distance and it is used frequently in the eastern music. Europe in the past used to use it according to the ancient Greek music, and after the development that happened in the European music all scales under the semitones were exempted.

<sup>10</sup> “Be mole” degree is the musical tone that was dropped by a semitone.

<sup>11</sup> Comma is a very small distance that can not be calculated , it is the difference available between two tones having one tandem sound

<sup>12</sup> I heard from Dr. Martha Roy that Dr. Tout will produce a cassette tape (having the recorded sound) to be attached to the book. This will help in reading these difficult notations.

But if the objectives from this publishing is to study different kinds of ornaments that Coptic cantors use, their classification, and indicating their impact on the original melodies, then such a book will be useful only for the few persons that seek such a study (like Robert Lakh who was specialized in studying the Melisma<sup>13</sup> and the ornaments in the eastern music, and like the researcher Elona Porsay that published a paper about the kinds of ornaments in the Coptic music)

Unfortunately from the time Dr. Smith finished these musical notations in 1936, those notations were kept unexposed for more than sixty years, not accessed to musicians to be able to read, comment, sing while reading and perform using musical instrument. If they were exposed, the accuracy of the notations would be revealed, mistakes would be corrected, and then and only then would be published, for a lot of Coptic musicians were caring for this heritage but had no notations until this recent publishing.

The noted Coptic maestro, late Youssef EL-Sissy, invited me several times to his house spending hours to search around the Coptic hymns. This heritage was occupying him but he had no sheets except the records collected by Dr. Rageb Mouftah, and the modest information that I know about the hymns and what I have wrote by myself.

I wish that a special Coptic chorus be assembled, capable of reading the musical note accurately (after correction) and their hymns be recorded and produced so that the two pictures match (the read & the heard). Are sixty years not enough to find twenty deacons only capable of reading musical notations?

Though I am not dedicated (I work in the engineering field), I was able to assemble a modest group (also undedicated, I often wished that we all be dedicated for this ministry) that know how to read musical notations, love the Coptic hymns and understand there meanings. I was caring to explain to them the spiritual and musical meanings implied in

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<sup>13</sup> Melisma is a method of elongating the single verbal portion of the word with several musical grades, and it is different than the conflation method that have one musical grade for each single verbal portion of the word.

each hymn, to make their performance reflect these meanings. We presented in many ceremonies several hymns after I wrote their notations and rechecked them with Cantor “Ibrahim Ayad” (Coptic Hymns teacher at the Institute of Coptic studies). We were also honored by him accompanying us in Performances, and representing these hymns in their scientific and accurate form inside and outside Egypt, and had a great impact on the audience. He always incites me to prepare more hymns using the same method for he had observed that the Coptic hymn had dressed its original dress.

The great and pioneer experience of Dr. Mouftah opened the way to many others to add a step or more on this important path.

God had presented for us in every generation a witness to preserve the hymns He had entrusted His saints with, and in this generation this great hard worker as a witness to preserve His hymns to pass these hymns safely and unblemished from this century to the third millennium.

I will not forget this historical day when I met this giant, in the celebration held to lionize him at the American University in Cairo (13<sup>th</sup> of January 2000), and I was invited with the chorus to present some Coptic hymns and at the end of the celebration he said with humbleness: “The hymns you represented today were great, they were the most beautiful thing in the celebration”. It was a warm meeting that made me cry from his compliment and encouragement and I talked to him about this book, about his great works I mentioned in the book, his role that will not vanish, and about my critique regarding Dr. Tout’s work, and he replied : “The reason is because she is highly influenced by the trend of “Bella Partok” that depends to a great extent on exaggerations in writing the ornaments in a very detailed way”. I was afraid that he might criticize me for using some musical instruments accompanying the hymns, but on the contrary he favored the performance of David’s chorus.

I thank God for giving me favor in his eyes, and I ask Him to give me the power to continue the mission of this great man that consumed all his life to preserve this immortal heritage received from the holy apostles and fathers.

### **The role of St. Mark the apostle:**

The Coptic Church stayed preserving what she had received from the talented fathers who had applied the Coptic hymns to psalms and ancient prayers without any new composing, not in the modes or ways, whereas the western church - who had received from us in the past – developed in this field unlimited modes and ways.

Coptic hymns started with the beginning of the church, the history of Coptic hymns started with St. Mark at Alexandria (which was an important cultural center at that time). St. mark himself was learned in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. He established the Seminary which was teaching music, philosophy, logic, medicine, engineering as well as religious topics, he chose “Youstos” for managing the college, and its prominence spread all over, even to the leader of pagan philosophers like “Amonios ELSakas” who used to attend its lectures. (Refer to the book of St. Mark written by H.H. Pope Shenouda III). Perhaps this is a main evidence that the Coptic hymns were not only inspired by the Holy Spirit but is also an output of an academic scientific study.

What will also may cheer you up is that the Coptic hymns are genuine, having their tones and modes adjusted at the apostolic era, the era of pouring out of gifts abundantly.

Eusebius the Caesarian (264 - 340A.D.) - the noted historian – writes conveying from Philo the Jewish historian (20 BC - 55 AD) who lived at the time of the apostles:

“They do not just spend their time in meditations, but they compose songs and hymns to God with all kind of modes, and classify them to different scales”

In fact this quotation as it comes from an eyewitness is considered to be one of the main references about the beginning of producing such powerful hymns in the Coptic church.

Those fathers had arranged the elementary basis for the Liturgy and other church services whether psalms or hymns, specifying their time and occasion. It is well known that after accepting Christianity the church in Egypt lived for two centuries in a peaceful and calm state, God's providence desired for her to concentrate on establishing in Egypt the traditions that were received from the apostles.

When Cassian speaks about the church life as received from St. Mark, we discern that the church arrangements were set and established from the early days of faith. Both Cassian and Eusebius agree upon the time the church regulations were set concerning the daily worship, number of psalms, and the ways of their modes and melodies.

Today there are within the church a huge number of hymns, all having accurate vocal modes, each hymn expresses wonderfully its meaning. To compose something similar it is not only difficult but impossible even by the greatest composer.

Copts should be proud of their church tradition because it was the base for most of the churches in east and west, regarding the prayers system and canonical hours, the Coptic church is the instructor of the whole world.

Praises and its methods whether antiphon or responds , psalm numbers and service of all night praise, all these church arrangements were established in Egypt from the first century, and through Egypt after about three centuries the church system were spread by foreign monks who came to learn from the desert fathers, to Palestine by Hilarion the monk, to Babylon by Ogeen the monk, to Cappadocia and Asia minor by St. Basil, and to France and Italy by St. Athanasios the apostolic (in his second exile 340-346 A.D.) and John Cassian.



All those came and visited the church in Egypt and transferred her succinct system in worship, asceticism, prayer, and especially in praise, they all knew a rite that connects all prayers with special delightful tones and ways.

## **2- The World & Coptic hymns**

The eyes of the whole world began to turn towards the everlasting heritage of Coptic hymns. This heritage the church has preserved so far and delivered one generation after the other through prayers, fasting, metanoia, tears, humility, sweat, and blood. The church could cross with her heritage the waters of bitter persecutions along lengthy generations. Though not recorded musically, and in spite of the lack of recorders (which spread only in this century), the repetition of tunes, their timing and rhyming beats were the only means through which these hymns survived for twenty centuries.

This way is the most difficult for survival. The Psalms of David the Prophet, for instance, being written down without their musical tunes, were kept for thousands of years, but without those tunes. Due to their great spiritual value, many musicians tried to create for them certain tunes to enable enjoying them.

Had Beethoven not written his nine Symphonies, not even one tune would have reached us (perhaps only the wording of the fourth movement of the ninth Symphony). Evidently it is a miracle that we received such a heritage of Coptic Hymns after 2000 years although they have not been recorded.

It is a miracle indeed that indicates how keen is the church on preserving the tradition handed down from the father apostles, whether orally or written (imitation is not meant here).

The Coptic Orthodox Church is the only Church that kept what she received from the father apostles with incomparable honesty. She kept every thing as received, for each rite has its origin, its movement has its meaning, each form of worship has a spiritual significance, each rank has a role and a garment and a type, and each hymn has its importance on the suitable spiritual occasion, and nothing of these has fallen away!

Untraditional Churches, on the contrary, stand now before these symbols, rites, forms, ranks, instruments, garments and hymns without understanding their significance and thereupon without awareness of their importance. That is why those untraditional churches cancelled whatever they wanted of worship forms or rites, priestly ranks or garments - thinking them of no use- and hymns as well – seeing they are difficult to learn.

This resulted in a new image of the church different from that engraved in the Lord Christ's heart and in the holy apostles' minds. The new image neither the Lord nor the apostle recognize. It is an image far from the doctrine of the Lord Christ, the teaching of the apostles, and the Gospel; an image in which the holy orders are lost, and Stephen the Archdeacon and First Martyr vanished, Timothy the Bishop disappeared, and the See of St. Mark dropped; an image where there is no censer, no icon of the holy virgin, nor Coptic hymns. The praise song, which the Lord and His holy disciples sang and went out to the olive mountain, has no existence in this new image, nor even St. Mark and his liturgy and hymns which he taught to the students in the Seminary of Alexandria.

Our Coptic Orthodox traditional Church really deserves the honor it receives from the whole world for preserving that holy image depicted by the Lord Christ to His holy disciples in the form of rituals, worship forms and deep melodies expressive of holy feelings.

### **Christ leads the chorus of disciples:**

+ I think that some of these hymns the Lord chanted with His holy disciples; for after He gave them His holy body and precious blood in the upper room, as St. Mark the owner

of that room says in his Gospel, “*And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of olives.*” (Mt.14: 26)

I cannot imagine that one of the disciples dared to lead the Lord Christ and the other disciples to teach them singing! The Good teacher alone taught them everything, and taught them how to sing a new song. Nor can I imagine that the apostles neglected the hymn they sang with the Lord Christ, but rather that they included it in the tradition they handed us with the Eucharist rite.

+ I think also that most of these hymns was composed at the time of the descending of the Holy Spirit on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, "*and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" (Acts2: 4)

+ I believe that some of the hymns of Midnight Praise Songs were chanted by Paul and Silas in Prison; for we read in the Book of Acts, "*But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the Prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.*" (Acts 16:25)

Is it reasonable that such hymns that had shaken the foundations of the prison and opened all the doors immediately and loosened everyone's chains were not preserved in tradition, while other hymns that had done no miracles like that were preserved?

And how could St. Paul the Apostle require us to speak to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord (Eph 5: 19), and repeat this request in another way, saying, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*”(Col.3: 16)? How could he

require us to do that unless he had set for us a model of such spiritual songs which he certainly used to sing to the Lord?

The Holy saints John Chrysostom, Basil the great, Augustine, Origen and others assert that Paul the Apostle referred by these verses to the ritual church prayers that were well known to the readers of those Epistles. It is also evident that St. Paul was aware of the importance of music as a basic element in worship, therefore he classified it into three divisions: Psalms; Praise Songs; Spiritual Songs. All traditional Churches therefore followed this classification and included it in their tradition.

Once more, when Christ healed the blind man who was sitting by the road begging and who cried out to Him, saying, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me*" and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God (LK. 18:43). How could they sing? And what did they sing? Is it not that which they learnt from Jesus the Son of David, that sweet singer of Israel? Probably their song was one of the hymns we sing now, which was preserved by tradition till we received it.

+ There is also Anna the prophetess, the daughter of phanuel of the tribe of Asher, the widow who sang with the others and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. It is not unlikely that St. Luke the Physician, Evangelist and Artist who recorded the event in his Gospel (LK.2: 38) has also recorded the melody of that hymn to be handed down as a model of praise songs to all those waiting for the Lord.

+ Furthermore, part of the hymns we chant on Palm Sunday is probably derived from the hymn which the disciples sang near the descent of the mount of olive. For St. Luke wrote in his Gospel, "*The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*" (Lk.19: 37)

In my opinion, the multitude of the disciples could not praise with one voice and one hymn unless: either they all had learnt that hymn one day in any place (in the sea, in the upper room, in a deserted place, or on the mount before the sermon), or the Holy Spirit had descended on them so they composed that hymn with one spirit!

+ Those disciples, who were continually in the temple praising and blessing God (LK 24:53) are the source that handed down to us the tradition, the rituals of the intellectual worship and the hymns so that we may sing like them in the sanctuary continually. Certainly they were aware of the significance of praising to God and that it is "the sacrifice of the New Testament" that makes God's heart glad, as St. Paul the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Hebrews; "*Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*" (Heb 13:15)

## **Chapter IV**

### **The Cultural Value of the Coptic Hymns**

- 1. The Cultural Value of the Coptic Hymns.**
- 2. Cohesion of Coptic music with Pharaohs Music.**
- 3. The Impact of Pharaoh Melodies on the Coptic Melodies.**
- 4. Reciprocal Influence between the Coptic and the Hebrew Melodies.**
- 5. The Holy Liturgy and its Hymns.**

## **1- The Cultural Value Of The Coptic Hymns**

### **Egypt and the musical culture:**

Egypt is one of the most ancient countries in the world. It was a lighthouse through which many countries derived civilization, sciences and arts. Thus the ancient Egyptians were the first nation to attain such a high cultural level and such progress that made them an example for the whole world, which knew only the darkness of ignorance. Then the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans followed Egypt's steps.

The ancient Egyptians were the first to use music and singing in their religious ceremonies inside their temples, where they offered their oblations to their gods.

The writer Fikry Botros, in his book "Music and singing for Ancient Egyptians" Says, "The name music given to this art is derived from "Muse" the name of the goddess of art, and from it the word "Musica", i.e. Music in Latin language, has been derived."

"The Coptic Music", the author continues, "rich in the artistic treasures, has its basis in the Pharaohs Music. It is the remaining feature of the genuine Egyptian Pharaohs Music .

Many scientific researches have proved that the Egyptian Music heritage is the oldest in the world now. Undoubtedly, the Coptic music used in religious ceremonies is the legal heir of the ancient Egyptian music

preserved by the Egyptians. Pythagoras<sup>1</sup>, in the sixth century B.C., got his musical knowledge from Pharaohs Egypt. Even the musical notations ascribed to him have their origin in Egypt, where he lived for twenty-two years.

### **The impact of Egyptian Music on Greek Music:**

Music, poetry and rhetoric in the very ancient ages of Egypt formed one subject. Musicians, alone, were the poets, orators and historians. They were sometimes honored by giving them the title "Saints" as their poems were full of wise and deep proverbs and great ideals. Their poems always gave moral lessons to refer to whenever the matter is related to the interests of nations or individuals. The principles they contained make barbarians civilized and brute nature gentle.

Therefore, in ancient Egypt, no songs were recognized as beautiful except those that were in conformity with virtue. Other songs were rejected and

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<sup>1</sup> Pythagoras was a philosopher and mathematician (582-507B.C.) he spent part of his life in Egypt, his study of music focused on the relationship among sounds through mathematical formulas and numerical ratios. The invention of the monochord is ascribed to him. He discovered the effect of the length of the resonant string on the tune, and proved that the ratio between the main tune and its response is 2:1. whereas the ratio between it and the complete fifth dimension is 3:2, and between it and the complete fourth dimension is 4:3; and between it and the third great dimension is 5:4. By this the ratio between the various tunes could be determined. His discovery is still used up till now.



their composers were severely punished. Many philosophers and historians assert that ancient Egyptian music had a great influence on the Greek Music.

Plato for instance said in this regard, "The Greeks should choose from the Egyptian music whatever they like, if they want to know something about the music and the arts of others, as it has good artistic moral and educational characteristics unlike the music of other peoples". The Greek historian Herodotus also said "some of the songs and melodies of Egypt which I heard became afterwards in Greece popular songs chanted everywhere".

It is obvious now from the words of Plato and Herodotus that the Greeks were undoubtedly influenced by the Egyptian music; that is why it spread among them and coped up with their tastes and turned into popular Greek songs.

### **Egyptian music and Astronomy:**

The Egyptians believed that sacred sciences and arts such as medicine, astronomy and music are closely related to each others. These, like religion, are confined to clergymen, who alone have the right to study them. They found a great similarity between the heavenly bodies in their regular movement and discipline and the musical tunes from which the melodies are composed, as the latter also have an accurate and regular order.

Mercury, Venus, Mars, Pluto and Jupiter were the main planets Known to them. So the musical notation was fivefold, and when the known planets became seven, after adding the sun and the moon, the notation became seven too.

They referred to each of the seven tunes with the hieroglyphic symbol given to the related planet. By this they managed to define the seven main scales for their notation.

Everything to them consisted of seven: seven musical notations, seven planets and seven days of the week, in the following way:

Venus	Pluto	Mercury	Mars	the Moon	the Sun	Jupiter
Friday	Thursday	Wednesday	Tuesday	Monday	Sunday	Saturday
Fa	Do	Sol	Re	La	Mi	Se

So they managed to find the ratios and dimensions that accord and discord with the tunes. They also found that every hour of the day accords with a particular tune of the seven; for instance the first hour of the first day of the first week accords with one of these seven tunes, whereas the second tune accords with the second hour and the third with the third and so on till the seventh. Again, the first tune accords with the eighth tune, the second with the ninth and so on.

### **Astronomy and harmony for the Egyptians:**

As the day has twenty-four hours whereas the tunes are seven only, so, the first day ends at the third tune, and the second day begins with the fourth tune. Hence, it is clear that the first hour of a day accords with the fourth tune corresponding to its similar tune on the previous day.

If the tune that accords with the thirteenth hour for instance is played, suppose it is "Fa", then the same tune of the same hour of the previous day will be "do", and the day before will be "Sol", and so on backwards for the other days to obtain "Re", "La". By this, the fivefold circle of the modern music rules has been known. This circle organizes the music notations together in a fantastic regular harmony.

Through this genius and strange astronomic process, it has been discovered that the first and the fourth tunes, or the first and the fifth, are the most harmonious tunes. This has become the basis on which "Harmony" science, i.e. the science of agreeable sound, is based.

### **The acceptability of Coptic music to harmony and polyphony<sup>2</sup>:**

It is established that the Egyptians were the first to know the music notations and the harmony of sounds. Despite that, we have not even one proof that there were variety of sounds in Coptic songs in the early Apostolic Church, though the Coptic melodies accept that. I myself formulated harmonic and polyphonic melodies for some hymns, such as "O Kerios Mettaso" which presented stealthily within the illustrative music of "Saint Minas" by Samir Seif the Great Producer. I introduced it also in the long hymn "Kyrea Eleysoun" which I presented on "Devair Circus" theatre in Paris in 1995; again in the illustrative music of the documentary film "the Holy Journey" by the producer Emad Nasry. This was to assert the acceptability of the Coptic music to harmony and Polyphony.

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<sup>2</sup> Harmony is the plurality of harmonious tunes when played at the same time.

Polyphony is the plurality of harmonious melodies when played at the same time.

There is also a thesis entitled "Polyphony and Harmony in Coptic Music", presented by Adel Kamel Hanna to the institute of Coptic studies for the Ph.D., that includes applied studies proving the acceptability of Coptic hymns to harmony and polyphony.

Moreover, the Institute of Coptic Studies has issued a cassette tape entitled "Classic Coptic music", on which various melodies based on some hymns like "O Mono Genies" "Meghalo" and "Ni Esnos tyro" are recorded. I think the aim of this tape is to prove the acceptability of the Coptic hymns to the polyphony (i.e. plurality of melodies horizontally) and homophony (i.e. plurality of melodies vertically).

We do not mean by all these studies and issues to introduce the Coptic hymns into the liturgy in a polyphony or harmonic style. We do not also mean that chorus of deacons be divided into sections of "Tenor", "Bass" on one side, and women's voices "soprano" and "alto" on the other side forming four varied voices in the church, nor to introduce symphony Orchestra to play music inside the church nave during the Divine Liturgy. The purpose rather is to throw light on the greatness and the beauty of the Coptic melody so that a greater number of people, including those who love the universal classical Music may enjoy it. However, it must be presented within the liturgy in the same traditional Monophony "that has one sound" which the church had preserved up till now.

### **Egyptian music for all fields:**

Though we talk about Coptic hymnody and melodies, I would like to throw light on singing in general to get an idea - through the recognized

importance of music in general in all fields of life - about the great importance of hymnody in church on every occasion and in every ritual. Egyptians had songs in all fields of life. The Greeks followed their steps. According to "Athenaos", music was only used to perform whatever is honest and beautiful. And songs had various types and names, among which are:

- "Peans", i.e. war and triumph songs.
- "Dithyrambes", i.e. praise poems.
- "Joulos", i.e. songs for spring and vegetation.
- "Hymns", which were offered to gods.
- "Hyperkhima", which was performed by two persons, one sings while the other dances, alternately .
- "Scholyon", i.e. table songs.
- "Aierotickon", which were love songs.
- "Epthalmion & Hynmayon" which were wedding and nuptial songs.
- "Silos", i.e. satirical poems.
- "Therenos" i.e. elegies, "Epicedion", which were funerary songs.
- "Ausikhoforiun", or the songs chanted by vine harvesters.
- "Alinos", these were melodies performed both in cases of joy and sorrow, as they give comfort and calmness in both cases.

Our Coptic Church also has many melodies that are performed in both cases of joy and sorrow, such as the "Baik Thronos" hymn, as well as other hymns chanted on "Apocalypse" night; he eve of joy Saturday. In this hymn, the first part of the hymn is in sad tune that expresses the passions of the Lord Christ and Hs crucifixion. The other part is joyful, expressing the salvation & resurrection waited for. The whole hymn is a means of passing

from death to life, the introductory hymns to the Pauline Epistle, the Psalm and the Gospel.

The Ancient Egyptian songs included also:

- "Aletes", i.e. the beggars' songs.
- "Katabaucaleses" or the songs chanted by mothers or suckling women to babies to bring them to sleep.
- "Epimylios", i.e. the songs of grinders.
- "Himaeos", which were sung by workers lifting up underground water by water-wheel buckets, to regulate their movements.
- "Tyrocopicos" or the songs of those churn milk .
- "Boucolismas" or shepherds songs.

Thus the ancient Egyptians devised sorts of singing for every feast and occasion, and for every season, state and age. The Coptic Church likewise set melodies for every occasion, feast, fasting and ritual.

The Egyptians paid the art of music so great consideration and veneration that they were very careful, and even meticulous about choosing the words. They allowed only certain songs in accordance with definite rules, and rejected others. Moreover, they forced everyone to study music and to teach it for a certain period of time. Music thus constituted one of their sacred worship and formed all their religious songs. Music had produced surprising results and continued to arouse recognition and admiration, and the ancient Egyptians achieved great success in the field of music.

The title of musician or singer was most honored . Most famous poet musicians like “Milapus”, "Orphius", "Homer", "Mosaius", "Phithagore" were formed in the Egyptian and they received recognition more than many others .

### **Musical instruments and the Pharaohs:**

Though the Coptic Church prevented the use of musical instruments in her ritual prayers, the Holy Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments mentioned repeatedly the musical instruments where it was necessary. Because of this close connection between what the Holy Scripture mentioned, and what musical instruments the Ancient Egyptians had, I preferred to present in this part some of the musical instruments of the Ancient Egyptians. As for the musical instruments mentioned in the Holy Scripture and those used in joyful rituals, I will tackle them in a separate chapter.

Egyptians, in olden times, used various musical instruments. These instruments were pure Egyptian, of limited types. But after the increased communication of Egyptians with the surrounding Asian Peoples, musical instruments developed greatly, and foreign instruments were introduced into Egypt.

Egyptian musical instruments may be divided into three main types: Stringed instruments, Brass instruments, Percussion instruments.

### **Stringed instruments:**

"Gink" is considered one of the oldest stringed and most common instruments. It is composed of a wooden box and a number of vertical strings coming out of it and fixed at the end. The types and sizes of "Gink" varied, and the shapes developed. One of the oldest types was of medium size, placed on the floor directly or fixed on a base to enable the musician to play it while sitting. Later on, a huge type was used. It was wonderfully decorated and higher than the height of a man. The musician could play it while standing.

The "kinara" is an Asian wooden instrument, its 5 strings extend parallel between the sound box and the wooden frame, and long horizontally or vertically during playing. The Egyptians used also the "tambour", which is a circular wooden box from which a long neck stretches ( which is shorter sometimes ). It looked like the present lute, and was carried on the chest in a horizontal position, as the violin today, or vertically as the rebeck . The player of "tambour" uses a feather to play on 5 its strings.

### **Brass instruments:**

The clarinet is the most important instrument, and it has various types. A short type is used in a horizontal position, whereas the longer type is used in a vertical position bending a little towards the back. The double clarinet was afterwards known. It is composed of two clarinets that meet at the mouth then separate as they move away.



### **Percussion instruments:**

They are among the oldest musical instruments in Egypt. Among the important types are the metal and wooden castanets that produce a sound when they are struck against each other, such as the cymbals, clicking instruments or sticks.

As for the tambourine, it was usually composed of a rectangular wooden frame covered with thin skin and used mainly for dancing. Drums were cylindrical in shape, made of metal or wood, and hung on shoulders while struck clapping with hands was mostly accompanied by some types of music especially when combining with singing and dancing.

Egyptians used also clanks, usually made of a metal frame in the form of a horseshoe with thin bar inside it that ring when moved. These were used only by women and for religious purposes.

### **Music and "Aghabi":**

Egyptians were fond of taking their meals while listening to music. This habit might be the origin of the meetings of the Christians in the early Church called "Aghabi". Copts used to use the flute in their Aghabi meetings till the year 190 A.D. When Saint Clement of Alexandria replaced the flute by the cymbalon .

The habit that spread wide was bringing a music band to play for guests and share in singing and dancing during festivities and parties. These bands were composed mainly of men, and by time, the number of women in those bands increased till they were altogether women bands. In the ancient

dynasty these bands were composed of one or more players of Genk and clarinet and percussionists and singers.

In the modern dynasty, players of tambourine, tambour and kinara joined the bands the musicians and singers included a big number of blind musicians<sup>3</sup>, especially among "Genk " players. However, not all musicians were professional. For many Egyptians were amateur musicians or singers. In the tomb of "Moroka" (one of the Nobles of the Ancient dynasty) in Sakkara there is a scene depicting him sitting quietly and relaxed listening to his wife's singing and playing the "Genk".

The court of pharaoh had a private music band. Music also had its role inside the temple, during religious rituals, in funerals, feasts, and festivals. The paintings of military battles were full of the pictures of soldiers blowing brass instruments and beating drums.

Egyptians were highly interested in Percussion. This helped fixing the time of the tone and regulating points of pause and transfer of the melody. Clapping or raising hands and arms or producing sounds by using fingers were the means to that. Probably the use of bells in the Coptic Church is a type of inherited interest in percussion.

The Ancient Egyptian music was distinguished for its development and progress along centuries. It was quiet monotonous during the era of the ancient dynasty, then it tended to be violent and noisy at the era of the

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<sup>3</sup> It is well known that the Coptic church derived from the Ancient Egyptians the idea of employing blind singers as "Cantors", because those have a strong memory that helps them learn and remember hymns and melodies.

modern dynasty, when "Genk" with its twenty strings. and the double clarinet, the drums and the strong tambourine were used. However, it stuck to its unique style that attracted the admiration of the ancient Greek visitors. It was perhaps wisdom on the part of the early Coptic Church to forbid using musical instruments during the Holy Liturgy fearing that violence and noise would creep into its sacred tunes if they were misused.

### **Egyptian music for treating diseases:**

The Pharaohs were the first to discover music therapy. It is said that "Abidos Temple" was the largest Medical center in ancient Egyptian epochs, where they treated diseases by tuned songs. It was believed that music draws patients to the gods and wins their satisfaction, and thus cures them of their diseases.

Therefore, there were music bands that play music in hospitals, and the singers and dancers joined them. Music was played beside the patient and suitable tones were selected to each according to his illness.

Plato stated about music therapy that it is an ideal means of healing all kinds of diseases, especially if the music imitated human voices, Aristotle and Pythagoras asserted the same.

Dr. Nabila Mikhael mentioned in her Ph.D. Thesis entitled "Music in treating organic diseases": Music therapy is the regular Percussion of movement inside the living body by using the music waves, either through relaxation or by attaining a certain proportion of harmony between breathing and the speed of pulse. Music therapy depends on using the musical sounds

that help release the extra energy from the body defending the soul. Thus it helps getting rid of psychological pressure that causes various diseases .

As Hippocrates, one of greatest men of old medicine, says, “every patient needs a certain sort of music according to his case, so the choice of music should be careful so as not to cause passive effects”.

"Athanasius El Nahwy", who lived in the second century B.C., asserted the importance of music therapy. He wrote: It is possible to cure a muscle disease by playing hymns in a joyful tune over the diseased parts.

The British Museum, John Relandes' Library, and Michigan's Museums in U.S.A. included many papyri in Coptic language since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century – the flourishing epoch of Copts, on which were written pieces of advice on medical cases similar to those of the Pharonic era.

Some of those pieces of advice recommended chanting hymns for healing. The papyri contained the story of "Saint Abu Tarbo" who used to cure epileptics by a certain prayer called after his name "Abu Tarbo prayer" in which parts of the Holy Scripture are read and Psalms chanted.

So the entire world began to be convinced of music therapy. Now there are about sixteen universities in U.S.A. for music therapy based on Practical and theoretical basis. There are also more than six hundred hospitals for this type of therapy.

I've read in "Broadcasting and TV. Magazine", issue of 15/8/1998, an article by "Nagy Hekal" that presented a talk with Dr. Nabila Mikhael in which she said: Nervous Blood pressure can be healed by playing music beside the patient. The pressure will decrease while listening to music till it returns to its minimum when the suitable dose. After the first dose of music which extends 30 minutes at least, pressure will decrease ten points, then five on the second day and so on till it attains its normal level.

Studies and new medical research have proved the capability of music to cure paralysis in its early stage, and curb its passive effect. It has been proved also that we can get rid completely (100%) of insomnia by listening to music in a sound way, besides following the advice of the physician and complying with his commands; provided that the patient continue the music therapy regularly.

The results of these studies have proved the positive results of music therapy on heart diseases; it is also useful for indigestion and its pains, as music contributes to the speed performance of the digestive system. Moreover some physicians tried to treat addicts by using music by giving them clarinet to play on. This would help them give up addiction, on condition that the addict occupies his time in listening to music. It succeeded in some cases.

Listening to music is, sometimes, considered a sort of protection, as it leads to widening blood arteries and resisting arteriosclerosis that attack the aged and diabetics.

We conclude from the above that music plays an important role towards the body, how much rather would be the role of the Coptic spiritual music, which is more sublime, elevated and mature, towards the body, the soul and the spirit.

## 2- Cohesion of Coptic Music with Pharaoh Music

No one can cut off the coherent connection between ancient pre-Christian era music and ancient Coptic music. This connection between the old Pharaohs music heritage and doxology heritage was originated from the time of St. Mark the evangelist, when the Alexandrian Jewish worshipers - who were specialized in praise – met with Copts - who were specialized in deities music with its mysteries - in one church, side by side accepting the joyful faith in Christ.

This connection between the two genuine types of music, was not by any means extraneous but coherent, due to the high convergence and harmony between the two.

We can remark this close connection in the method Pharaohs used to approach their deities, the following religious anthem – which was addressed to the great Amon - shows that:

“O Amon you are the master of the unvoiced,  
who comes on the sound of the poor,  
when I hailed on you in my distress,  
you came to save me”

We can see the verbal & psychic closeness between this anthem and how David the prophet approaches the Living God in his psalms:

*“In the day of my trouble I will call Upon You, for You will answer me”* (Ps. 86:7). *“Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck”* (Ps. 69:1)

They are so close, expressing feelings of a human seeking God in his distress and affliction, asking for deliverance. Despite the first is hailing an anonymous deity and the other (David) is hailing the true God, the music expression of the spiritual state they both went through – even through using different jars and tones - would be on the same chanting track.

Another anthem from the Pharaohs era (reference book :“History of Egyptian culture”) chanted by priests to Amon the deity:

“Thank you Amon Rah god of Karnack, the dominant in Tiba,  
Greatest one in heaven and biggest one on earth.  
Lord of all beings, who settle on everything,  
Has no similitude in nature between the deities,  
Chief of all gods, lord of truth, father of the deities,  
Who created humans and animals.  
Who creates fruit trees,  
Who originates the green herbs and supplies the cattle,  
Who created everything on earth and in heaven,  
Who enlightens the two regions,  
Who permeates the heaven in peace,  
Rah the reverent, master of the terrestrials, the most powerful,  
Lord of strength, the commanding one, creator of all earth,  
Most powerful in his nature from any other deity,  
Who other deities rejoice in his beauty,  
Who are worshiped in the great temple,  
Who other deities love his beautiful odor,  
Who have a strong volition ... who have the great visage  
Worship to you ... who had created the gods, raised the heaven and  
extended the earth.”



We can go through several other anthems by Akhenaton and other kings, most of them coincide in purport and words with what David, Asaph, Heman, Ethan and all who praised the true God wrote, for the ancient Egyptians were searching with certainty for the true great God, creator of all things, who raised the heaven and extended the earth and has no similitude between deities. This may explain how it was easy for Egyptians to accept the Christian faith.

### **First Egyptians to accept the faith:**

When St. Mark the apostle entered Alexandria city, his sandal was torn because of the much walking in preaching and evangelism. He went to a cobbler in the city, called Annianus, to repair it. While he was repairing it the awl pierced his finger. Annianus shouted saying "O, ONE GOD". When St. Mark heard this phrase his heart rejoiced exceedingly (as Pope Shenouda expressed in his book "Mark the Evangelist Saint and Martyr"), which was an appropriate chance to begin talking to him about the One God.

Pope Shenouda continues: "It was not suitable for the saint to start a theological conversation with a wounded and suffering man, the Apostle had to ease him first from his pain, he took some clay, spat on it and applied it to Annianus' finger, saying, "In the Name of Jesus Christ the Son of God heal this hand", and the wound healed immediately, as if nothing happened to it.

Annianus was surprised at the miracle which was done in the name of Jesus Christ and opened his heart to the Word of God. St. Mark asked him about the one God he called, but Annianus replied that he heard about him, but did not know him.

When his sandal was repaired he was invited to go to Annianus' home to talk more about that God.

As St. Mark entered the house <sup>4</sup> he made the sign of the cross and asked God's blessing to fill it. He stayed with this family talking about Lord Christ. When Anianus asked to see the true God, St. Mark assured him that he will, he talked with him about the scriptures, the prophets, the incarnation, the miracles, the crucifixion and the great sacrifice He provided to the world. Arianus and his family became believers and St. Mark baptized them, this home was the first fruit in St. Mark's preaching in Egypt."

St. Mark then ordained St. Annianus to be the Bishop of Alexandria, and after the martyrdom of St. Mark he became the first successor and Patriarch of the see of St. Mark.

Accepting the Christian faith was not difficult for old Egyptians since they had this belief of the One God, their anthems and worships showed that kind of belief without seeing, touching or knowing Him truly. They searched for Him, and produced some melodies expressing their state, until they knew the true God, forsaken the idols they shaped and worshiped the Lord creator of all things, and started to produce other melodies expressing their new spiritual state.

### **Comparison of Pharaohs era attributes and those of Christian era:**

Hymns were not the only thing that linked ancient Egypt with Christian Egypt. There are several studies comparing between the attributes of old

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<sup>4</sup> This house became a church afterwards, as stated in the Synaxarium (20<sup>th</sup> of hatour), and in the book of Ebn Elassal : "History of Patriarchs"

Egyptian religion and Egyptian Christianity. The researches concluded that Christianity in Egypt took some symbols from the religious intellect in ancient Egypt.

One of these studies is the research work of the French savant “Doresse Jean” (“From the hieroglyphic era to the cross”), a study about what attributes did the Christianity in Egypt had taken from the past era. The French scholar traced the concepts and norms that Christianity in Egypt inherited, not from theological point of view but through customs and traditions.

Another study written by the Egyptian savant “Aziz Sourial Atia” , in his book (“History of Eastern Christianity”) where he enumerates the parallel and similar things between ancient Egypt and Christian era. He considers this similarity to be one of the main reasons that smoothed the path for the new faith which is totally different in essence from the Pharaohs’ beliefs.

From which we mention:

- 1- The idea of “the Oneness of God” which was known by Egyptians from the time of Akhenaton the rebellious (1383-1365 B.C.) and by the eighteenth dynasty.
- 2- The sign of “Ankh”, sign of eternal life for ancient Egyptians, which had the shape of the cross the sign of salvation in Christianity.
- 3- The belief of life after death and the rituals that show the belief of resurrection and death as a path to life, not an end of it. There

- were also the custom of the living sending letters to the deceased relatives, seeking their support in their daily sufferings. (This might be considered as a form of intercession that the Coptic church believes in).
- 4- The customs of grief for the dead, rituals of burying the bodies, making of pavilions and banquets for funerals , and the remembrance at the fortieth day.
  - 5- Feasts, Egyptians used to celebrate several occasions, most important feast was the feast of Diana (Artemis) (the deity with a cat head), they used to go with boats to Talbasta ( Zakazik nowadays) while playing music.
  - 6- The way of building churches, dividing it to an altar, chorus and public hall, with the pattern of the old temples that had the sacrifice in front, the place of priests near to the altar, and the big hall for the public worshipers. (Even the similarity is clear between Solomon's temple as described in the Old Testament and the architect of Luxor and Karnack temples).
  - 7- The belief of paradise in heaven, at its door stands "Yahor" who controls the truth's spear which prevents any untruthful person from entering. The persons who enter are bestowed with the presence of the deities, protected by God, holding their wands, wearing the most beautiful purple linen clothes, eating figs, drinking wine and perfumed with the most lovely perfumes.

8- The word “Amen” which is used in church prayers, matches with slight change the word “Amon” the deity.

### **3- The Impact of Pharaoh Melodies on Coptic Melodies**

We hear often that Coptic melodies were originated from the pharaohs music, we cannot deny this phrase but I have a personal opinion regarding this matter. Naturally the ancient Egyptians - who were specialized in deities music – when accepted Christianity they could not forsake the music that lived in their sentiments, mingled through their life and stored in their unconscious, so they composed through the Holy Spirit that overwhelmed them new hymns and melodies. The melodies produced might have had in between some ancient musical themes<sup>5</sup> or some musical sentences from the unconscious storage (that are exported to the consciousness when they harmonize with the feelings required to be expressed ). The dissolution of the old musical themes with new sentences, produced a new musical textile tintured by the Holy Spirit with a Coptic Orthodox tincture.

This opinion agrees with what “EL-Faraby” confirmed in his book (Musiqā Kitobi) that music are not created from nothingness.

To elucidate this musical concept to the unmusical reader, imagine that on the day Mozart (the noted artist) was born, he was taken and kept with a dumb lady in the desert, away from noise and music, until he reached thirty years old. If it was so, no one would expect from this brilliant musician to produce any melody of his redundant work of sonatas, operas and symphonies, for how he can produce any if he had nothing collected inside, except sound of winds in the desert. What I mean is that, what Mozart

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<sup>5</sup> Musical theme is the musical idea that through it the melody's subject are constructed with the varieties and methods of development to this musical idea. Mostly the musicians take their idea from a public song or known melody or from his own initiatives.

produced was an outcome of what he had heard through his life from diverse types of music, of different cultures, after they were mingled inside him, and then produced in a new form, with a new vision, by a new spirit.

Many studies show how Coptic music had an impact on Mozart, though he did not live in Egypt (born in Salzburg 1756), studies confirmed that some of his themes and musical statements were taken from or inspired by the Coptic music (Refer to the research work of Soliman Gamil).

One of the great producing establishment in France (E.M.I. Virgin) produced jointly with the “Egyptian center for culture and art” (managed by Dr. Ahmed Elmagreby) a compact disc named “Mozart in Egypt”, confirming the previous concept. I had an opportunity to share in this work, with David’s chorus and the soloist “Monica George” (8 years old girl, who was chosen for her pleasant voice, by the French producer “Ogas De Corso” to chant “Golgotha” hymn alone on the stage of Opera Marcellia and at the Basilica of San Dony in Paris on June 1998, thus making the “Golgotha” hymn intermingled with the funeral mass “Requiem”<sup>6</sup> produced by Mozart).

Anyone listens to this CD will find how music of Mozart have fused and merged with the Egyptian Coptic music in one textile, in a wonderful way making it difficult in some moments to differentiate if it is a Mozart’s or an Egyptian’s tone. In this CD also the Egyptian themes that inspired Mozart were exposed.

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<sup>6</sup> Funeral mass is a musical mass in the catholic church, around a religious Latin phrase that starts with the word “Requiem”. Several musicians wrote funeral masses like Berlioz, Verdi and Prams.

This is not extraneous, for Mozart was so fond of Egypt. He also gave Egyptian names to some of his works like “Thamos king of Egypt”, “L’ oca del Cairo” and “Egyptian symphony”.

If Mozart - who did not live in Egypt – produced music that was influenced by Egyptian music, then certainly Coptic music was influenced by Pharaohs music, the music which was practiced by the composers before accepting the Christian faith.

Early Fathers with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit produced the Coptic hymns with the impact of the ancient music.

### **Considering Coptic melodies absolute Pharaoh:**

Were the Coptic melodies absolute pharaoh and Coptic words were composed through it, some say so depending on feeble points like extending of jars, the Melisma toning, and the names of hymns that have old Egyptian cities (like “Sengary” hymn that refer to an old city with the same name in the north of Delta at the time of Ramses the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the Atriby hymn “Keiperto” that refers to town “Atriba” at Sohag province in upper Egypt), but in my point of view this opinion is weak for the following reasons :

- 1- Melisma toning was used in pharaohs music, Demetrius the Fleuron (297 B.C , one of the managers of Alexandria library) clarified that : “Priests of Egypt praised there deities through the seven vowels, they sang through it one after another, and by iterating this letters, they produce pleasant voices” . This shows that the method of singing by Melisma toning was known in the



- Pharaohs era, and continued in the Coptic church as a technique and not as inclusive melodies.
- 2- It is not logic that a Coptic letter extends with a melody, taking sometimes several minutes, for no reason except for using an old pharaoh melody.
  - 3- Melisma toning in Coptic melodies always comes to express a spiritual meaning, to explain a verbal purport, if it is not so then it turns to be a naïve hymn, for an example the intense melisma toning that we find in hymn “Arihoo tchacf sha nei eneh” is there to express effectively the meaning :“Exalt him above all ... for ever”.
  - 4- It was possible at that time to choose – from thousands of old melodies - melodies that suit the number of Coptic words required to be intonated, or choose sufficient musical statements from the old melody that equate the number of required Coptic words and close it up smoothly, for it was not befitting for the church to choose a long old melody to express with it few words and complete the work with tones without any spiritual objective or even a logic music objective.
  - 5- Most probably, the few that have this opinion did not support it with any scientific proofs or ancient codices or musical notations of pharaohs’ melodies that are used currently in the

Coptic church, for definitely at that time musical notations and recording equipments were not known.

6- The several trials of composing words on melodies was produced without using Melisma toning. All Coptic hymns that were translated to Arabic did not use Melisma toning (hymn “Onof Emmo Maria” & hymn “Epchoic Evnoty” & others from the mid night praise, all were translated without melisma toning).

7- Several books in church history confirm that our ancient fathers used to spend time in composing songs and hymns to God, like Didymus the blind and St. Athanasius the Apostolic (most probably he is the one that composed the magnificent hymn “Omonogenees” that are chanted on the Great Friday). Also as we previously mentioned, the phrase of Philo: “They do not just spend there time in meditations but they compose songs and hymns to God with all kinds of modes, and classify them to different scales”.

I have no doubt that there were composers among the Egyptians that accepted the Christian faith, composers that studied musical sciences in the Catechetical school of Alexandria, and as their emotions turned to Christ they started composing and praising the Lord with “a new song” expressing their love to Christ the King.

Philo the philosopher mentioned also in another phrase: ”the first Christian congregation took melodies from ancient Egypt and placed

for it Christian texts. From these melodies “Golgotha” which was chanted by pharaohs during the embalming operation and in funerals, and hymn “Pek Ethronos” in which its first half - sad melodies - were used at the Pharaoh’s funeral and the other half - joyful melodies - were used in the induction of the new Pharaoh”.

The contradiction that may appear in the two phrases of Philo (1<sup>st</sup>: “they compose songs and hymns to God with all kind of modes” & 2<sup>nd</sup>: “took melodies from ancient Egypt and placed for it Christian texts”) can be explained through my previous clarification (the fathers could not forsake the music that lived in their sentiments, stored in their unconscious, so they composed new hymns through the Holy Spirit that overwhelmed them. The melodies produced might have had in between some ancient musical themes or some musical sentences from the unconscious storage. The dissolution of the old musical themes with new sentences, produced a new musical textile tintured by the Holy Spirit with a Coptic Orthodox tincture)

I can clarify now my personal inference – it is up to the reader to accept or refuse - Old pharaohs music that appear in our Coptic music, are not inclusive hymns but musical themes, terms or musical sentences in which Coptic words were composed on their tones (otherwise we might give the church the face of Plagiario that steals other’s productions).

8- By accepting that we deny the spirituality of the hymns, and contradict ourselves,

and cancel what is written in the Scriptures about the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, filling them with spiritual wisdom and several gifts: *“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple ... praising God and having favor with all the people”* (Acts 2:46,47).

9- If we now - as a strong Coptic orthodox Church stable through centuries – refuse spiritual hymns that are produced by the youth because they compose their words on secular songs, despite that they are not chanted in our sacred liturgy or inside the church but recorded on cassette tapes and heard at homes, trying to prevent the spirit of secular songs to penetrate to the hearts, thus dispersing thoughts out of the spiritual meanings (Some spiritual institutions stood against this cassette tapes, Rev. Bishop Hydra published a book against such hymns, and also “Watany newspaper” published several articles) , do we think that the Apostolic church in establishing the spiritual concepts, traditions, rituals, prayers and praises, permitted using some melodies in the sacred liturgy that were at the same time used by unchristian people in their worship, thus dispersing thoughts and confusing the worship of God with other cults !, I do not think that the ancient wise Apostolic church permitted that.

10- It is well known that the apostolic church prohibited the use of musical instruments in the sacred liturgy - despite that they were used as a main element in the old temples - to let the congregation concentrate

on the divine words, and to prevent any intellect connection with worldly cults.

If the early Apostolic church had prohibited the use of musical instruments – the innocent instrument which can be used for positive or negative purposes – since it was used for hymns of other cults, would the church leave these same melodies inclusively, with the same structure that usually clings to the mind, so during chanting in the sacred prayers – that raise the heart unto heaven – a pharaoh melody gets the worshiper attracted to old forms of worship?!. I think the early wise Apostolic church did not permit that.

11- It is also known that old pharaohs music was connected logically and intensively with dance, but the Apostolic church prohibited dance totally as she did for musical instruments. Despite that dance and musical instruments were mentioned in the old testament “*Miriam the prophetess took the timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances*” (Ex 15:20), and when “*David danced before the Lord with all his might*” (2Sam 6:14)) the objective of the church was so clear, to cut off all what is related to other cults whether musical instruments or dance or melodies or clapping ... etc.

Finally, I iterate that this is a personal inference, and I ask from the specialized researchers to confirm it or prove the reverse.

#### **4- Reciprocal Influence between the Coptic and the Hebrew Melodies**

If we want to know to what extent is each of the Coptic and Hebrew melodies influenced by the other, we have to search into the Holy Scriptures. We read in the Book of Exodus:

*"Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already) ..the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Ex.1: 1-7)*

From this text of the Exodus we know that the children of Israel, i.e. the twelve tribes, lived in Egypt and listened to the Egyptian Pharaoh melodies for the four hundred and thirty years they lived in Egypt (Ex.12: 40). No doubt, throughout those years, the six hundred thousand men - besides children - of Israel who journeyed from Rameses could learn many ancient Egyptian melodies. Those melodies had their influence on them, and became implanted within them. They learnt well the modes, the distances, the bars, the rhythm, the forms and the compositions of those melodies. They carried them from Egypt with their emotions, their memories and the rituals of their worship.

On the other side, St. Mark lived for some time the tunes of David of Bethlehem resounding in the synagogues of the Jews, then in the Upper Room on the lips of the Lord Christ "Jesus the Son of David". The twelve

disciples chanted those melodies with the Lord Christ when they praised and went out to the Olive Mount. Certainly, St. Mark carried those melodies with all their details with him to Egypt, probably chanting them to refresh himself on such a long and hard journey in which his shoes were torn. Undoubtedly also when he established the "theological School" in Alexandria he taught those melodies and music side by side with the theological subjects. Some of those melodies he added to the Divine Liturgy he compiled, which is the oldest Liturgy known in the Coptic Church.

We conclude from all this that both Coptic and Hebrew melodies mixed together and each influenced the other.

However I once read a certain point of view in a specialized book that says, [It is completely impossible to say that the Coptic melody is derived from the Hebrew or copying from it not even one of its marvelous motions. But we can only say that the Coptic melody followed the established ways of chanting the Hebrew psalms, and preserved its own spirit and genuine Coptic scales.]

Nevertheless, I prefer that professional music researchers interfere and determine accurately to what extent the Coptic and Hebrew melodies are influenced by each other.

### **The environment in which melodies emerged:**

When the Lord Christ was hung on the cross, they asked Pilate that the inscription of His Accusation be written above the cross. So an inscription

was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: “This is the King of the Jews” (Lk.23: 38).

This reveals that when hymns emerged in the Coptic Church of that time, there were three Civilizations: the Greek, the Roman, and the Latin on one side. On the other side, there was the ancient Egyptian Civilization. This means that those melodies and hymns emerged in the synagogues of the Jews, in the imagination and minds of the Greek about their gods, and in the Ancient Egyptian temples.

The Coptic Church has adopted some musical pieces from the Jewish music, especially the finale "hallelujah" of the psalms. That is why there are many melodies for the word "hallelujah", the most famous of which is that said before "the Procession of the Lamb" as a beautiful long introduction to the hymn "hallelujah fai pe pi eho-oo". This hymn is a marvelous hymn, genial in its music, its spirituality, its expressivity, its rhythmical and mode motions, and its unique musical stanzas. Other similar hymns are Kiahk Allelujah (response of the psalm); and the finale Allelujah of "Bek Thronos" hymn, which is chanted at the twelfth hour of the Good Friday.

The German Scholar Hekmann says, [Though the music of the Jewish synagogues has played an important part in the development of the Syrian and Byzantine Liturgies, the case is different in Egypt. The opposite happened, as the Jewish music has been influenced by the ancient Egyptian prayers. This is due to the period which the children of Israel spent in Egypt



away from home, for they certainly merged with the Egyptian environment and life<sup>7</sup>.

There was also mutual production and exchange of music between the Greeks and Egyptians. In this atmosphere many cantors excelled, among whom are "Dedymos Al Nahwy" and "Dedymos Al Valerony" who recorded the musical keys which were familiar at that time (the first century A.D.) And in the second century there was Claudius the Ptolemic who adopted the keys in his music.

These were succeeded by "Alekius of Alexandria" in the year 360 A.D., who laid down the musical signs, and Discorus in the fourth century, and valentinus and Brocolos. All of them lived in a Greek –Egyptian atmosphere and wrote on music.

However, after the dissension that happened in the Calcedonian Council in 451A.D. The Copts cut every relationship they ever had with the church of Byzantia and Rome. They preserved their traditions and melodies pure from the Byzantine influence. Nevertheless, in late centuries, some Patriarchs introduced a collection of Greek hymns with their full melodies into the Coptic Church. But the slow rhythm and Egyptian bar distances prevailed on performing these hymns. An example is "Ei Parthenos" hymn.

When the Byzantine Church persecuted the Copts of Egypt and deposed their patriarch, the Patriarch went to "Sheheit desert" where the monks of St. Macarius Monastery received him with Coptic hymns and songs, expressing their holding fast to the sound faith.

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Michael B. Abdel Malek, a lecture at the Patristic Studies Center.

Furthermore, there are some common hymns between the Coptic and the Greek Churches. But due to the work of the Holy Spirit and the great impact of the Ancient Egyptian musical culture, the Coptic Church began to compose the music and modes of these hymns in a way that suits the Egyptian music basis.

There happened also a merger between the Coptic and the Syrian Churches, so some monks went to learn at the Syrian Church (near the Dead Sea) and quoted what is called "the hymn law"<sup>(2)</sup>.

It is said that there was a group in Alexandria called "Serapotia", which consisted of some desert hermits who were known for some musical pieces derived from old pharaoh sources.

## 5- The Holy Liturgy & its Hymns

The Holy Liturgy in Arabic “Koddas” is a Hebrew Syrian word introduced into Arabic in the tenth century through the translated Syrian works. The Syrian verb is “Kaddash” and in Arabic “Kaddas”. The plural of the Arabic word “Koddas” is “Kadadis” or “Kodasat”, and it is derived from the Syrian word “Koddasha”. The word means “sanctification” and refers to the prayers of the Holy Mass for sanctification of bread and wine. It refers also to the Lections and the Sacraments.

The Christian meaning of the word is participation in the Thanksgiving Service and in praising God with the heavenly host.

The word “Koddas” (Liturgy) is used not only in the Eucharist Offering (the Thanksgiving Sacrament, or the Offering of the Bread and Wine), but also in the Liturgy of Water and the Liturgy of Baptism.

The Lord of glory has founded this Sacrament and handed it down to His holy Apostles. This is evident from the words of St. Paul, *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup ... ”* (1 Cor 11: 23-25)

This is not confined only to the Eucharist Sacrament but applies to all the other Sacraments as St. Clement who ministered side by side with the

apostles says: [The Lord handed down all the Sacraments orally to the apostles.] Eusebius of Caesarea also asserts the same, saying that he knew from the ancients that the Lord before His ascension handed down the apostles all the Sacraments in the Upper Room of Zion.

### **The Liturgy of St. Mark (known as the Liturgy of St. Cyril):**

The first one to use the Liturgy in the Coptic Church is St. Mark the Evangelist (martyred on 30 Baramouda, 67 A.D.), one of the seventy apostles and the writer of the second Gospel carrying his name. The Liturgy he used precedes that of St. Basil (according to the Scholar Ibn Kebr), and it is addressed to the Father that of St. Basil.

This Liturgy has been written in Greek and translated into Coptic language. It differs from both the Liturgy of St. Basil and of St. Gregory in that the sanctification prayers come after all litanies.

This Liturgy continued to be handed orally up to the year 330 A.D. when Pope Athanasius the Apostolic, the 20<sup>th</sup> Patriarch wrote down and handed it to St. Fromentius the first Bishop of Ethiopia.

Pope Cyril the Great, the 24<sup>th</sup> Patriarch (412-444 A.D.) added many parts to it and rewrote it. That is why it was ascribed to him and carried his name since that time. The original Liturgy before the additions made by St. Cyril “the pillar of faith” has been discovered on some parchments, which are still kept in the Oxford University<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Reverend Father Kyrillos Kyrillos: The Three Liturgies together

### **The Liturgy of St. Basil:**

It is the Liturgy commonly used in our church due to the simplicity of its hymns and short prayers. It is used the whole year and addresses the Father, the same as the Liturgy of St. Mark.

This Liturgy differs from the Byzantine Liturgy that carries the same name with many additions. This Byzantine Liturgy is used only on the Lent Sundays and on some feasts because it is the longest Liturgy they have. Most of its prayers are said secretly.

### **The Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian:**

It is less common than that of St. Basil. It is rarely used because of its long prayers and hymns. Often few parts only are used and is used on feasts. It is ascribed to St. Gregory the Theologian of Nazianz.

It is the only Liturgy in our Liturgies that address the Son. It is also known to the Church of Constantinople. There are other Liturgies addressing the Son used by Syrians and Ethiopians.

Both the Liturgies of St. Basil and of St. Gregory are ascribed to the Cappadocian Fathers, but those received their education in Egypt.

St. Basil the Great (330-389 A.D.) performed some ministry in the Bachomian Monasteries in Upper Egypt; then he moved to Cappadoc where he laid down the famous laws for monasticism and asceticism.

St. Gregory Nazianzen was a disciple to Dedyms the Blind in the 4<sup>th</sup> century at the School of Theology in Alexandria.

## **Liturgies of the Ethiopian Church: <sup>9\*</sup>**

Our Coptic Church prays only the three recognized Liturgies of SS Mark, Basil and Gregory. However, the Ethiopian Church <sup>10\*\*</sup> recognizes fourteen Liturgies and say they have received them from our Coptic Church. These Liturgies are:

1. The Liturgy of the Apostles
2. The Liturgy of the Lord
3. The Liturgy of John the son of thunder
4. The Liturgy of St. Mary
5. The Liturgy of the three hundred
6. The Liturgy of St. Athanasius
7. The Liturgy of St. Basil
8. The Liturgy of Gregory
9. The Liturgy of St. Epiphanius
- 10.The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
- 11.The Liturgy of St. Cyril
- 12.The Liturgy of St. Jacob Al Serougi (the Saddler)
- 13.The Liturgy of St. Discorus
- 14.The Liturgy of St. Gregory II

The Liturgy of St. Basil is completely similar to that of our church. The other two are completely different.

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<sup>9</sup> His Rev. Morkos Dawood: "Liturgies of the Ethiopian Church", Cairo, March 1959

<sup>10</sup> Christianity entered Ethiopia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the days of Pope Athanasius the Apostolic, the 20<sup>th</sup> Patriarch.

## **Praising and Liturgy:**

The Scholar Decks says:

[The introduction of the praise with the Cherubim hymn is considered a distinct development of the Thanksgiving Prayer with which the Mass prayers start.] But the fact is that it is a substitute rather than a development of that prayer. It is a Liturgy itself because it ends taking its place wherever it occurs. Not only this, but moreover its existence (as in the Liturgy of St. Jacob) removed the concept of Thanksgiving completely from the stanzas that follow it. For instead of expressing thanks to God after the praise, it says. "Holy You are" (This applies to the Liturgies of SS Basil and Gregory in Egypt). When we examine the Liturgy of St. Mark we notice the same thing in Alexandria where the praise ritual and the introduction. ]

From these words of Decks, it is clear that St. Mark the Apostle, when composing the Divine Liturgy, was keen that praise be the spiritual atmosphere that overwhelms the prayers of the Mass. It is clear also that most of the melodies and hymns of the Divine Liturgy have been composed since the days of St. Mark the Apostle, and were handed down to us orally.

**Chapter V**  
**Music instruments in Doxology**

- 1- Music Instruments in Doxology**
- 2- Prohibiting the Use of Music Instruments**
- 3- Using Timbrel and Triangle**
- 4- Do the Coptic Hymns Yield to Instrumental Music**
- 5- Praising on Earth and in Heaven.**



## 1- Music Instruments in Doxology

### David and music instruments:

No man on earth was more eloquent than David the prophet in expressing his love to the Lord of Glory, his dedication in praising Him all the time and in inviting each soul to praise the Name of the One he loved.

As an outcome of his continuous praise David got his heart purified, to him the Lord gave testimony and said, "*I have found David the Son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will...*" (Acts 13:22).

He also deserved the honor to be called the "father of the Savior", for Christ was called "Jesus Son of David", since he gained a purified heart & resembled the angels in continuous praise.

David as he loved to praise, invited not only humans and all kinds of instruments to accompany him in praise but included the whole nature, even the silent nature, as he praised saying:

*"Praise Him, sun and moon .... And you waters above the heavens!  
for He commanded and they were created.*

*Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all the depths;*

*fire and hail, snow and clouds;*

*stormy wind, fulfilling His word;*

*mountains and all hills;*

*fruitful trees and all cedars;*

*beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl"* (Ps 148:3)

David did not discard any known instrument but invited to join him in praise:

+ *“Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;  
Praise Him with the lute and harp!  
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;  
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!”* (Ps 150:3,4)

+ *“Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals”* (2Sam 6:5)

+ *“So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet”* (2Sam 6:15)

With no doubt, praising with musical instruments has spiritual power over evil spirits, as stated in the Scripture:

*“And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.”* (1 Sam 16:23). That’s why David was eager not to praise alone but to awake his musical instruments to join him in his praise:

*“Awake, lute and harp!  
I will awaken the dawn.”* (Ps 108:2)

David made some developments to the harp which was first invented by Hermes since it was not capable by its three strings (sharp, coarse & medium) to match the plentiful tones produced by him:

*“I will sing a new song to You, O God;  
On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You”* (Ps 144:9)

Surely, the melodies produced by David the musician and prophet contained many tones that could not be performed on the harp of Hermes which was capable only of producing the basic points of stations in the melody.

The diatonic seven musical scale for sure was completed by David the prophet at that time and tones of David was covering areas on the musical scale more than octave<sup>1</sup>. It is clear that his fine tones contained the sharp/bass, sharp/shrill, coarse/low, and coarse/shrill as well as medium tones, thus raising the need of new invention - the harp of ten strings<sup>2</sup>.

The Coptic Church took David's idea of the ten strings and produced a hymn called "Ettay Parthenos" for the Virgin Mary, showing her virtues on the ten strings. "This Virgin today had earned honor, this Virgin today had earned glory, and her clothing is woven with gold, in robes of many colors."

David moved the first string of his harp and shouted saying: "At Your right hand stands the queen", and then moved the second string of his harp and shouted saying: "Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house ..... ", and so on the hymn proceeds counting on each string a prophecy about the virgin that was prophesized by David in his magnificent psalms, and finally on the tenth string he moves it saying: "For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place "

### **Prophets & musical instruments:**

Although most prophets were not talented to play on several musical instruments like David, we capture them while prophesying collaborate with others who know how to praise using musical instruments, as did Elijah the prophet :

*"But now bring me a musician, then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him" (2kgs 3:15)*

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<sup>1</sup> Complete musical scale that consist of seven tones with the repetition of the first tone at the end of the scale

<sup>2</sup>This instrument can be seen on the frontage of the great temple of Dandara & in Elthia caves in the small temple at Feyala island.

In spite of not having the talent, Elijah asked for a musician, in order to seek God's mercies to inspire him to prophecy in front of Jehoshaphat King of Judah.

### **Praising with instruments turns earth into heaven:**

One of the most noted passages about the influence of praise with musical instruments we find in the second Book of the Chronicles:

*"...and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets, indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying:" For He is good, for His mercy endures forever", that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God" (2Chr 2:12-14)*

It is clear how praising with cymbals, stringed instruments, harps, trumpets and instruments of music, set in a magnificent spiritual environment, that turned earth into heaven.

### **Musical Instruments in the New Testament:**

This remarkable concentration on musical instruments found in the Old Testament is seen also in the New Testament; in the Book of Revelation as clearly reveals how praising in heaven will be accompanied by celestial musical instruments & with a similar picture to the one captured in the second Book of Chronicles:

*"And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant*

*of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints" . . . . The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple" (Rev 15:2-8)*

### **Comparative Doxology:**

In comparing the two previous forms of praise, we find very close resemblance between them:

- 1- **Using musical instruments**, in the first form: cymbals, stringed instruments, harps, trumpets and instruments of music, while in the second: harps of God.
- 2- **Place of worship**, in the first: house of God while in the second: the temple on the sea of glass.
- 3- **Singers**, in the first: Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and priests, while in the second: those who have the victory over the beast.
- 4- **Words of praise**, in the first: song of David (For He is good, for His mercy endures forever), while in the second: song of Moses, the servant of God.
- 5- **Efficacy of praise**, in the first: the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God while in the second: The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God.
- 6- **Result**, in the first: priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud, while in the second: no one was able to enter the temple.

This comparison shows how praise in heaven is a continuation of praise on earth, and the hymns & songs we are singing here on earth with true feelings, from the bottom of the heart & with full consciousness might be used also in heaven, for the years could not overcome the song of Moses but survived for eternity. Similarly, all those years could not wipe off the Coptic hymns and their tones which was not written but kept in memories & passed from generation to generation.

The song of Moses the prophet attracted the attention of many, someone commented:

“What is so impressing about the song used by Moses and repeated by the Israelis after him, upon crossing the red sea, is its noble & fine enthusiastic nature. In this state of great blissfulness that Moses felt, after having the honor of leading the people of Israel in crossing the red sea walking on its ground as the water retreated from its depth and the joy of the successful escape from the Pharaoh’s carriages which was drowned and sunk in the sea, Moses chanted driven from the bottom of his heart to thank and glorify the eternal God, raising his voice and saying:

*“I will sing to the LORD,  
For He has triumphed gloriously!  
The horse and its rider  
He has thrown into the sea!  
<sup>2</sup>The LORD is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation;  
He is my God, and I will praise Him;  
My father's God, and I will exalt Him ...”*

This magnificent song continues with the same fervent spirit and virility, for nothing was in front of Moses but the influence of the great majestic hands of God. He could not be content with amazement or an ecstasy as a reaction to the miracle of the deliverance of himself and the Israeli people but he proceeded chanting as if he was walking alone and no one is around, and shortly his enthusiasm passed to all the congregation and the women expressed their feelings with their dances”.

This explains how this song deserved to be heard in eternity, for it contained no supplications but was driven only from love and gratitude towards the Lord for His goodness, and His mercy that endures forever. I may consider that Moses, this great musician who learned all kind of music at Pharaoh’s palace, was the first to set the concept of (Worshipping God with melodies)

### **Consecrating Singers:**

Paul Macoman said: “Both instrumental & vocal programs of the Hebrews were organized. Leaders, teachers, players & singers had part in the program. It was expected from players to be consecrated as well as singers and altar ministers. They spared no effort to make the temple services magnificent and meaningful”

Accordingly, I ask: why not to have in each Coptic church consecrated chorus of deacons, a small number (five for example) as a start, to be chosen with much attention having the talent, understanding & spirituality, to care, preserve & sing the hymns with people in the church, thus not sparing hymns to others that may have neither the talent nor the know how.

If you do find in each church gatekeepers, cleaners, Korbana bakers & secretaries ... etc, & all of them get paid for their work, how much more important to have chorus of deacons dedicated for doxology ministry which was passed to us from the apostles who instructed us in the Didascalia (Apostles' Teaching) that singers of the Psalmody (psalms hymns) should be full of understanding, wisdom & talent (i.e. talent of chanting hymns & with understanding & wisdom received hymns according to the sacred tradition). The apostles included that in their teachings because they realized that the Lord himself in His ministry time did not discard Temple services & their beautiful music but on the contrary He used to attend & contribute. The Savior told his disciples several times: “*You have heard that it was said to those of old ...But I say to you...*”, He was always correcting beliefs of old traditions, wasn't He capable of correcting the music program inside the temple if He is not accepting and contributing to?!

The Levites were consecrated for doxology ministry offered to the Lord as a living sacrifice:

*“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially. Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering. And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel. So you shall bring the Levites before the LORD, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites; and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD like a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the LORD. Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites. And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then offer them like a wave offering to the LORD” (Num 8:5-13)*

Those musicians were consecrated & their lives were dedicated for only one purpose, to lead the congregation in worshiping the Mighty God in doxology ministry. They used to have special clothes (2Chr 5:11-12); they were taking salaries in return for their ministry (Num 18:21) and they were dedicated for the ministry day & night (1Chr 9:33).

Doxology ministry in our Coptic church needs a stance & an eye on the Old Testament to realize how important praising to God must be more magnificent & spectacular than worldly songs. I feel so jealous when I see how singing for humans is produced by a huge orchestra of 120 players & a chorus of about 70 singers while in praising God we do not find even ten dedicated deacons in each church having the talent. Why not some rich Christians that love this ministry adopt the idea of consecrating a general chorus & orchestra for praise to take the role of the Levites in the Old Testament, to glorify God in an image appropriate to the Lord for His goodness and His mercy that endures forever. The



offerings of the rich should not be limited to the poor but should extend to reach other ministries & more importantly doxology ministry.

### **The necessity of praising on earth:**

It would be a calamity if people stopped praising God as St. John showed in the Book of Revelation when he described the curses that will fall on Babylon the day of its destruction: *“The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore”* (Rev18:22), accordingly, unhearing the sound of praise is a sign of havoc & destruction.

Learning to praise on earth is a necessity for praising in heaven or say it is practice. We can through training, practice and striving to be ready to praise in heaven & without practicing on earth we will be ignorant of praise in heaven.

St. John says in the Book of Revelation:

*“And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth”* (Rev 14:2,3)

The harps & the prayers of the saints will be combined in eternity as St. John states:

*“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy....”* (Rev5:8)

### **St. Athanasius & the musical instruments:**

It appears to me that St. Athanasius the apostolic used to listen to the harp and knew its secrets. He wrote in his letter to Marsilinus:

“The soul that has the Mind of Christ - as the apostle stated in (1Cor 2:15)– should be in harmony with this Mind, exactly as the harp is in harmony with the performer. The spiritual harp which is the human soul should submit all members and senses to the mind of Christ and hence become submissive to God’s will”

I do not think that St. Athanasius the apostolic was listening to worldly melodies on the harp, for he was used from his childhood to the spiritual atmosphere, for he was a deacon before being a Patriarch.

He also wrote commenting on a psalm of David:

“When the soul does not commit something vain and becomes free from any harmful feelings regarding its faith and life, it deserves to be called a “spiritual harp””

He also wrote as if he is aware of the details of harp performing and its musical secrets:

“Like a person that listens from a distance to a harp that have several different chords and was impressed by the harmony of its tones (i.e. its voice produced does not include low tones only, or high or medium but all chords give a balanced voice altogether) and as if the performer adjusted the harp music & with his wisdom producing the high pitched tones in harmony with the low and the medium ones and got a result of producing one melody, in the same manner Wisdom of God is holding the universe like a harp”

It is clear from the previous, that praising with musical instrument is something sacred since it is meant to glorify and thank the Lord and not to show up & amaze others with instruments.

## **2-Prohibiting the Use of Music Instruments**

If the use of musical instruments is of such great importance, what then is the reason behind prohibiting the use of these instruments in the Coptic Church during prayers? This question we shall tackle hereinafter:

Mr. Paul Makomon, in his book "Music in the Holy Scripture", discusses this issue, saying, "When Christ came and a Christian era began, persecution was greatly directed against Christians resulting in the ceasing of public worship meetings. However, small groups of believers continued to use music secretly, whereas the great performances mentioned in the Old Testament ceased. Still, there remained that natural instinct within the Christians to express their joy for salvation through chanting. The revival of music in the recent years helped satisfy the hidden desire of the people to chant praise. The worship music has been well established and forever, and has become more acceptable to people than at any previous time".

From the words of Mr. Paul Makomon we become more assured that praise songs were performed secretly since that instinct desire to express the joy of salvation was not effaced. However, the word (secretly) shows chanting praise was not accompanied by musical instruments to lower the sound level so as not to be heard outside the worship place.

"Some persons in our days", Paul Makomon continues, "insist that the use of such musical instruments is the work of devil. So they should not be used in worship gatherings. Their point of view is perhaps based on the fact that little is mentioned in the New Testament about the musical instruments. But they neglect another fact that in the new era people were not able to buy such expensive instruments as those used in the past. Moreover, most of the churches were compelled to move continually due to the persecution they faced; this left no time for promoting music or for training musicians.

The issue of prohibiting the use of musical instruments in the Coptic church has been discussed in an article published "El-Ebdaa magazine" the February 1994 issue, in which is written, "Singing in some Ancient Egyptians temples depended on the vocal cords. For example, inside the tomb of Osiris, the god of the dead, in the sacred Feyala Island, the use of the musical instruments was forbidden. It is exactly the same ritual in the Coptic Church. The Israeli people knew two musical rites: the sanctuary rite in which all types musical instruments of those days were used. The other is the synagogue rite in which a capella <sup>3</sup> was used. And when the holy apostles preached Christianity to the whole world, they chose the Jewish synagogue rite, which depended completely on the voice. Moreover, Law number (80) of (Clement of Alexandria) prohibited the use of or the entry of any kind of musical instruments in the church.

For instance, the custom in the emperor's parades from his palace unto the church was to play organ all the way, and at a distance from the church they leave the organ. This was meant to confirm the rite of church music depending on voice only for worship. This is still adopted within the rites of the Coptic, the Greek, the Syrian and the Russian Churches up till now. As for the Church of Rome, it has transformed its voice music since the year 1000A.D. into instrument music, adding to it the harmony in order to be played on the organ.

Some people are of the opinion that man's larynx is the greatest musical instrument capable of performing the difficult quarter of a tone skillfully and accurately. Therefore, there is no need to use the musical instrument, which is less efficient than the larynx which God created.

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<sup>3</sup> A capella is singing by the chorus without instruments . It is derived from church music for chanting. This way of chanting was its climax in the sixth century by "Palestrina".

Others are of the opinion that prohibiting the use of musical instruments in the Coptic church dates back to the early centuries when the catholic church in the East and the west desired to break up any relationship with other worship forms. Therefore, she prevented setting up statues, and using musical instruments, for these represented a main element in heathen performances. The church wanted to protect the believers against remembrance of idolatry evils, and to help them focus their attention on the power of the divine words .

+ Some researcher, in justification of prohibiting the use of musical instruments in church, says, "The Coptic music is derived from the Pharaoh music performed in the temples, and naturally, the architectural style of the temple is completely different from that of the churches of the early epochs. For the latter were built underground to flee from the persecutions and torments that befell the Copts throughout the different ages of martyrdom. Therefore hymns were chanted depending on human voices. It is unreasonable that musical instruments, especially percussion instruments, were used by such persecuted people who used to pray and worship while threatened to die at any moment. It is well known that the "Gregorian Chant" was the way of singing and composing melodies according to the rules and principles set by Saint Gregory (590-604 A.D.) the Pope of Roman Catholic church in Milan for the hymnology of church songs in the sixth century (AD). It was a style of praising without the use of any harmony or musical instruments. This way of chanting was so distinguished for its gravity and simplicity that it was called "plain chant". This style reached its climax in the years 800 A.D. No doubt this grave Gregorian style of chanting has been transferred to the Roman church from the Coptic mother church.

+ The savants of the French expedition, in their book "Description of Egypt" vol. VII, express their full conviction that the song of Prophet Moses was performed without any kind of musical instruments. They say, "we challenge any innovator composer to prove that there is even one instrument already known or imagined which can produce such perfect tunes that are able to melt with the voice without affecting the sublimity, the nobility and

simplicity of the tunes or the gravity, awe and greatness of the meaning implied therein. If there had been any musical instruments that could accord with such a powerful melody, Moses the Prophet would not have hesitated to use them for his song.”

Saint Clement of Alexandria, in a letter included in his famous book “The Educator”, strongly criticized the use of musical instruments, saying, “Man, by nature is a tool of peace. Whereas musical instruments you search and investigate well, are tools of war and fighting. They inflame feelings of lusts or fighting and arouse anger and resentment. The only tool for peace is the Lord, the Word. He alone we should use in our praise then we will never use the old harp, pictures, tambourine or flute, these which warriors used, not having the fear of God in their hearts, they used such tools in their gatherings and festivals, aiming at arousing their deviating minds by such tunes. Let then our refined and sublime emotions accord with the Law.”

From the above letter of St. Clement of Alexandria we discover that prohibition of the use of musical instruments dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (A.D.). Even the gentle flute with its low sound and sweet melody which comforts our tensioned nerves and provides that grave and sad touch that enwraps our Coptic church hymns, even this flute was considered at that time a tool inflaming our lusts and desire to fight and arousing anger and resentment. It was considered fit only to be used by warriors who have not the fear of God in their hearts, and who desire only to arouse their deviating minds by such tunes.

I cannot deny that the letter of St. Clement of Alexandria was very strange to my ears. I could not accept the concept contained therein, because it is opposed to Prophet David’s view of musical instruments, for he made them and used them in singing praise to God. It is also opposed to the spiritual view contained in both Old & New testaments of the Holy Scripture regarding musical instruments.

I call upon researchers to study the nature of music at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century A.D., for perhaps music in those days was of such a type that arouses anger and resentment , and those who used it in their gatherings and festivals meant to encourage the minds to deviate through such music. This may be the cause of fear that filled the heart of St. Clement lest such a type of music creep into the church and, using these musical instruments, they would deviate. Anger and resentment would then prevail instead of peace and meekness.

We can say, depending on this research, that before that period in which St. Clement of Alexandria led the trend of prohibiting the use of musical instruments, the early Apostolic Church had permitted the use of musical instruments in their meetings. This continued up to the coming of St. Clement of Alexandria in late second century. Some references say that the Copts received the way of praising with the flute in their (Aghabi) gatherings from the Jewish hermits. They continued to use the flute up to the year 190 A.D. when St. Clement of Alexandria replaced the flute by the "Cymbalon" .

It is worth note that in the year 190 A.D. St. Clement presided over the school of Alexandria. His church activities flourished in the period between 190-200 A.D. This shows that since the first day of taking his post as Head of the School of Theology and carrying out his activities, St. Clement decided to prevent the use of musical instruments in the “aghabi” gatherings away from the sacred Liturgical rites.

St. Clement of Alexandria, explaining his point of view concerning using musical instruments, while analyzing Psalm (150) in which prophet David calls upon the whole creation and all musical instruments to praise the Lord, says, "**Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet:** because the trumpet sound will call upon the dead to rise. **Praise Him with flute:** because our tongues are the Lord's flute. **Praise Him with harp:** because the harp is our mouth which the Holy Spirit moves like strings. **Praise Him with the timbrel and dance:** this refers to the church meditating on the rising of the dead through beating

on the dead skin (of which the timbrel is made). **Praise Him with stringed instruments and organ:** because the organ stands for the body, and the nerves are the strings which interact with the Holy Spirit in harmony to gain the refreshment which is translated into voices. **Praise Him with sweet cymbals:** these refer to the lips when the tones are played on them. **Let everything that has breath praise the Lord:** here he calls upon the whole humanity to praise the lord because He cares for them all. Really, man is an instrument of peace. St. Clement goes on saying, "But because each nation uses one of these instruments to declare war and there is not even one instrument for peace (which is the word by which we praise and glorify God), so we use such a word only.

We do not use the trumpet, the flute, the drum or the harp which warriors use in their wars or festivals. Is not the ten stringed harp symbol of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ?

History witnesses that the famous harp of Ireland is derived from the Egyptian harp which the Egyptian preachers brought with them. The most famous of these missionaries was the Thebian battalion which started from Italy to Switzerland then to Ireland. This, of course, proves that the preachers were keen on bringing with them some musical instruments like the harp to be part of their preaching programs; which means that chanting praise was the main element of their evangelizing.

Alexandrians, in particular, excelled all other nations in playing flute and "Genk". Amazingly, any illiterate low class person was able to pick out the slightest mistake of a player. The art of playing flute in Alexandria was so perfect that the players of Alexandria were invited everywhere to performances. It was a great joy to anyone to have one of them play in his performance! In Spite of all this, St. Clement prevented using the flute and substituted it with the cymbalon!

However, though I am very zealous about musical instruments, wishing to use them in praise, yet I agree completely with the church decision to prohibit their use during the holy



Liturgy whether in the Mass Service or in other church rituals administered in the church nave so as not to contradict tradition.

Nevertheless, we should not prohibit using such instruments beyond this. They can be used in special performances for hymns and praise songs, with some spiritual contemplations, that would draw the attention to the divine words.

### 3- Using Timbrel and Triangle

I would like here to correct a wrong concept related to the cymbals, which we use in our joyful melodies. Many people call it "timbrel" or "Toph" : a Hebrew word which refers to the type of timbrels which women used in the past. The word "Toph" is synonymous to the Coptic word "kemkem" .

The timbrel is a kind of drums, which is called "hand drum" . It's a piece of thin leather on a wooden frame stretched tightly. So, when one beats on the leather, it produces a sweet sound. Women in the past used this kind of drums when singing, and often with dancing. It was also used with other instruments to accompany praise singing choruses or music ensembles taking part in worship.

We know from the Book of Exodus that Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances and Miriam answered them, *"Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"* (Ex.15: 20) We read also in I Samuel *"After that you shall come to the hill of God where the philistine garrison is and it will happen when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man."* (1Sam 10:5,6) And in 1Chronicles it is written, *"Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals and with trumpets. "* (1 Chr. 13:8) Psalm (81) also says, *"Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute."* (Ps.81: 1-2)

In all the preceding verses, the timbrel is mentioned, not the "cymbals"(or the semantron as some call it) nor the "Hagiosidere" (a Greek word composed of two syllables: "Hagios" which means sacred, and "sideros" (which means iron), which means “the sacred iron.”

The cymbal is a circular, concave plate of brass mixed with another metal, used as a percussion instrument. It is used in pairs which are struck together to produce a ringing sound. Its center is dome shaped with a hole through which a leather cord is fixed to be carried easily. The triangle also is a percussion instrument used some times in orchestras. It is a three angled metal rod forming a triangle. It produces a sound when struck with a small metal stick.

Some church books state that the triangle was a wooden instrument used to control the group performance in certain hymns (not exceeding eight) of the Coptic Church throughout the whole year. Nowadays, it is used in its familiar metal shape described above. It is usually used in the prayers of the Holy Mass and with the joyful tunes.

Ibdaa Magazine, in its issue on "The Coptic heritage, is a heritage for all Egyptians", introduces a certain point of view which says: the use of triangle/cymbal during the Mass prayers and with church hymns makes noise and disturbs prayers, for prayers are spiritual and require an atmosphere of calmness and serenity. The author of this opinion says that he had perused all references and manuscripts of the church rituals available in Egypt, as well as those in the Paris National Library, the British Museum, the Vatican, and the German libraries, and he found them all concurrent concerning the use of triangles cymbals.

In fact, misusing the triangle/cymbal without awareness of its role is the main cause of disturbance, not the instrument itself. The instrument is, and will always be innocent and irresponsible for the bad and ignorant player.

#### **4- Do the Coptic Hymns yield to Instrumental Music**

No doubt, according to tradition, we are confined to the use of cymbals and triangle only in the Liturgy. However, this does not mean that hymns do not yield to instrumental music!! I was astonished when I read the opinion of the world famous musician “Newland Smith” which he published in a book, for he mentioned that music cannot be composed by using instruments. He further said that the composer of the Coptic melodies did not follow any musical rules or scales, but he was bound only by the spiritual meaning of the hymn and he depicted his own emotions. Smith indicated also that the Coptic tunes are distinguished from the tunes of other churches of the world in not yielding to the instrumental music.

Being a deacon and a music scholar I found it my duty to correct this opinion. Nevertheless, I give Mr. Smith the excuse for being a foreigner who knows nothing about our Coptic modes. This certainly makes it difficult to him to produce our Coptic tunes, such as “Saba”, “Hazam”, and other Coptic modes. Whereas I hold my lute everyday and play the tunes, from my childhood, and never did this noble lute disappoint me!

The Coptic tunes were composed from the original Egyptian modes which the Arabic music used afterwards and gave Turkish, Persian, or Arabic names such as “Gaharka”, “Sika”, “Nahawand”, “Agam”, “Hazam” ... etc. All of these musical modes were played on musical instruments, and from them most composers outside the Church composed their songs and tunes.

Many cantors, some priests, and a bishop who know well the Coptic hymns and tunes heard me playing the lute in various meetings during praise, and I noticed that they enjoyed much praising accompanied by the lute. This make them enjoy more the beauty of the Coptic hymns. They all admitted the capability of the lute to assimilate the tune accurately.

I will not forget those moments when I was receiving the hymn of the “Descending of the Holy Spirit” (Pi Epnevma Emparakleton) from late Cantor Kamel Ay’ad Kelleny. This tune took three periods because of its length, and in the fourth period, which was supposed to be a test of my ability to memorize, I came with my lute in my hand. The blind cantor did not notice that of course. He asked me “Have you learnt well the tune, deacon?” then he asked me to recite it. So I began to play the lute and sing the sweet hymn tune while observing the impression and the happiness on his face. He began to rub his closed eyes unconsciously and strike one hand against the other spontaneously as if expressing his great joy. He then rose up a little from his seat, then sat down again as if wishing to jump for joy! It was the first time for him to hear a tune without a human voice. After finishing, he praised my memorizing and my playing music, saying, “This lute has a very beautiful sound, and you have memorized very well.”

The Coptic hymns and tunes are also performed accompanied with musical instruments with high accuracy and great beauty. Actually Cantor Ibrahim Ayad the Teacher of Hymns at the Seminary enjoyed much performing these hymns accompanied by the music instruments. Had he suspected for a moment the capability of these instruments to produce the tunes accurately, he would have rejected them immediately.

David Ensemble has produced a cassette tape for these tunes with the combination of some of these musical instruments to stand for a proof of this fact.

Concerning the article of Mr. Smith in which he expressed his opinion that the Coptic composer did not follow any musical rules or scales in composing the Coptic tunes, I am really so sorry to read such an opinion and would give her a refutation thereof:

1. Since olden times the tunes with which man praise his Creator has always been the most powerful, the most sublime and the most abiding by sound music rules. Those tunes have always been a model followed by those who are not of the faith in their

worldly musical works. This fact extended throughout all ages. However, regretfully, this trend got weaker in the present age, for nowadays what is offered to the creation is more accurate, more efficient and more skilful than what is offered to the Creator! This was a cause of pain and distress to me, and made me insist on joining the High Music Institute of the Arts Academy to study musicology at the hands of the world-famous composer Aziz Al Shawan. From this Institute I obtained the Bachelor degree. The only impetus was my zeal for a proper image of praise in the church. Furthermore, for the same reason, I joined the same academy for a post-graduate diploma in leading orchestra. This I obtained at the hands of the world Maestro Youssef Al Sisy.

In the famous book “Description of Egypt” the savants of the French Military Expedition recorded the great vividness and sublimity of the songs of Moses the Prophet which he sang after crossing the Red Sea and those which he sang a short time before his death. The book states, “Moses, who received all the knowledge of the Egyptians with such care that would have been given had he been Pharaoh’s son, certainly compiled his songs according to the principles he learned from his tutors, and with the same sense and taste he acquired from the beautiful Egyptian poetry and songs. This he acquired through his study of the models, the poems and the songs he had to imitate. Such poems and songs deserved –due to their beauty- to be performed in the temples where he listened to and meditated in.” The savants of the expedition continued, saying, “Would anyone wonder now if such genius that taught Moses that beautiful poetry could not inspire him also with sweet songs very expressive and sensitive, while Moses was deeply familiar with all branches of Ancient Egyptian music.” (seventh Book-P. 91, 93)

From these words of the savants we learn that what Moses composed to praise and glorify God with was based on knowledge and study of the rules of poetry and musical composition.

2. The first Theological School which St. Mark established and which –according to history books- had so great a place up to mid fifth century that the Head of that School was considered a second in rank to the Patriarch. Moreover, the popes and bishops of the See of Alexandria were for a long time elected from among the Heads of the Theological School. Furthermore the most prominent Popes of Alexandria who were famous for their knowledge and great zeal had graduated from that School. Among those were: Alexandros, Athanasius, Dionysius, Cyril, and Discorus. That Theological School taught music besides Theological subjects. Would Mr. Smith think that the fathers who joined that School studied music without basic rules, modes, or scales? Certainly, such a world-famous school taught music according to established rules and scales. I even believe that any musical rules have emanated and developed from the rules of music known all over the world. I also dare say that the “Harmony Science” (i.e. the concurrence of the different tunes vertically by playing them at one time harmoniously) and the “Counterpoint Science” (i.e. the concurrence in spite of the diverse tunes) these had their origin in that Theological School.

Again, I support my opinion with the words of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the 20<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria (326-373 A.D.) and one of the great saints who graduated at the same Theological School of Alexandria, for he said that when one hears from a distant place the sound of a harp with various strings one

admires the harmony of its tunes [i.e. its sound consists of low, high and medium tunes, and despite its different strings it gives balanced sounds] And as the musician fixes his harp and skillfully realizes the harmony between the high, the medium and the low tunes and other tunes thus producing one tune, likewise God's wisdom holds the universe like a harp. He made the creation in the air concurrent with that on the earth, and what is in heaven concurrent with what is in the air, thus uniting the part with the whole.

From the above words of St. Athanasius, i.e.:

“Concurrence of tunes; All strings give balanced sounds; producing one tune”, we can guess that His Holiness knew well the Science of Sound Harmony. We cannot forget also his unique musical character apparent in the famous melody he composed for the hymn “Omonogenis”.

3. I have analyzed a lot of Coptic tunes and found that they are conform with musical rules, modes and scales. Their melody is divided in to sound musical stanzas, and each consists of eight bars. Each stanza is divided into two musical phrases: the first ending with interrupted cadence; and the second with perfect cadence<sup>4</sup> to form a sound ending of a musical stanza depending

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<sup>4</sup> The “Cadence” is as important method for composing melodies. It does not apply to the ending of the whole melody, but also the ending of each stanza separately. There are many kinds of “Cadence”, each giving a certain impression concerning the preceding stanza. These kinds include:

- + “Half close” which gives the impression of indecisive close.
- + “Transitive close” which is used for transition from one mode to another.
- + “Imperfect cadence” which is used to give the impression that the tune has not ended, being small part within the tune.
- + “Religious cadence” which is usually used at the end of the worship music stanzas in hymns or liturgy.
- + “Interrupted cadence” which gives the impression of expected perfect cadence, however it transfers the listener to another imperfect cadence.
- + “Vigorous cadence” which contains tune ornaments.
- + “Perfect cadence” used at the end of the main stanza and at the end of the melody as a whole giving the impression of a sure close.



on the tonic<sup>5</sup> to start another formal stanza. This is the correct scientific shape followed afterwards in various musical works introduced by great world musicians copying from the Coptic music.

4. While analyzing some hymn tunes, I found that some musical stanzas end with prolonged end tone “Korona” consisting of a number of musical bars less than the real length of the correct stanza with the same length. From the musical phase this realizes a kind of musical balancing which many world musicians adopted in their works. They did this by adding “Korona” (the sign of prolongation) to the musical stanza.
5. Scale transpositions are often found in many Coptic tunes. It is the change of mode during the tune movement. The whole world copied these scale transpositions from the Coptic music which enriched their music. The existence of such transpositions in any melody is a proof of the superiority, the sublimity and the richness of the melody.
6. these transpositions in the tunes are an indication that the rhythm of the “tempo”<sup>6</sup> is not fixed throughout the tune, but it changes

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<sup>5</sup>“Tonic”, or the first, or the basic music tone. The music scale is usually called by this first tone due to its importance for music composition and comfortable listening whenever the tune settled there. The traditional melody usually starts with this tone.

<sup>6</sup>The tempos are the roots or the scales of the eastern music. They consist of a number of varied successive strokes or beats that are repeated throughout the hymn. They also differ with regard to strength and weakness: the strong one is called “Dom”, and the weak “Tek”. Some determined moments of silence that may occur within these strokes. They bear Persian or Trukish names, like “Major Masmody”; “Heavy Samaai”; “Dareg”. Usually the percussion instrument controls these stokes. In the Coptic Church the metal cymbal performs this function, besides giving a joyful ringing sound to the hymns. These tempos are also called “Polyrhthm”.

whenever necessary. The change in rhythms or “tempos” is a style that gives color to the music.

There is also the change of the speed during the hymn, a thing that became a characteristic of the world classic music which actually copied this style from the Coptic music. The composer of such symphonies, sonates, and concerts began to set the first step with a speed different from the second step which is usually slow, and from the third, which is usually rapid.

How then could the Coptic music be without roots, rules or scales, while the Coptic church is the real origin of all this to the whole world? How could it be while she taught it to all scholars in the Theological School of Alexandria? Perhaps after the preceding explanation my dear reader would give me excuse for criticizing Mr. Smith’s wrong views.

A team consisting of some great professional researchers in the field of music and computerled by Prof. Robert Gribbs, Sacramento University - California State; Prof. Fathy Saleh, Faculty of Engineering- Cairo University; Mr. Mahmoud Effat, Arabic Music Institute- Arts Academy in Cairo, this team conducted extensive research on the blowing instruments kept in the Egyptian Museum. In 1991, they could proved that the Ancient Egyptian were the first to discover the “Pentatonic Scale” which was used in the old dynasty, then they developed it with the beginning of the modern dynasty “the Seven Note Scale of Amino”. According to this report the Ancient Egyptians were the first to know the music scale. Thereupon, ascribing the discovery of the music scale to the famous Greek mathematician Phythagoras is nothing except mere mingling of history clear facts!!!

This is confirmed by the fact that Phythagoras had lived in Egypt for twenty one years, during which he learnt much of the sciences, arts, and literature of Egypt. The Greeks also wrote about the quality and perfection of old Egyptian music. according to that report the

Coptic music which is the natural extension of the Pharaoh music, the origin of the rules and scales of the music of other nations. If we would like to commend them, we can only ascribe to them the credit of developing these rules and scales to their present form.

## 5- Praising on Earth and in Heaven

The Coptic hymns which we chant now on the earth will not be strange in heaven or different from those which we will chant there when we stand on the glass sea holding God's harps. I imagine these harps with their sound box made of glass mixed with fire and its strings made of light. John the Visionary heard those in heaven singing the song of Moses the Prophet and the children of Israel: *"I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him ... Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises,"* (Ex 15: 1- 11).

It is the same song which God had heard thousands of years before, yet He wants to hear it always from the mouths of those who overcome the beast. If this is the case, how could God forget the hymns He inspired His saints to compose and perhaps composed some Himself when He taught His holy disciples when they praised and went out to the Olive Mount? Truly, I feel that the Lord God will desire to hear them from our mouths in heaven if we will have such an honor as to be among those who learnt to chant that song there, and if we attained such a blessing as to stand around the throne.

What shall we do if He ask us to chant these hymns while we do not know them, nor meditate in them, not live them? Therefore I say: O my God, may You give me the grace that I may be able to delve into the depths of these hymns and bring out new and old! May You inspire me with Your Holy Spirit that I may come out with hidden treasured from them! Make me know how to live each tune so that with the low tune I learn to worship You, to humble myself, to descend with You and bury myself and my pleasures in Your life-giving tomb; and with high tune I rise up from my despair and hopelessness unto the heaven of Your glory. Let me with the quick melody run towards You and be not tied to my feeble knees and with the slow melody be slow to anger and my feet slack to do evil. O my God, do grant me to be a live melody!

**Chapter VI**  
**Musical Explication and Spiritual Contemplation**  
**on Some Coptic Hymns**

1. πογρο "Ebooro" Hymn
2. ζολζοθα "Golgotha" Hymn
3. ? et? ??p?? ?? ?a "Hitenne Presvia" Hymn
4. ?? ????da cq "Arihoo Chasf" Hymn
5. "Onem nai Simphonia" Hymn
6. "Amen Ton Thanaton" Hymn
7. "Apipsaline" Hymn
8. "Agios" Hymn

**This Chapter includes musical explanation, accurate and simplified, for eight Coptic hymns covering fully the Orthodox meanings, concepts and dogmas implied in these Hymns. These, when read, accompanied by listening to the hymns chanted, I think would be sufficient to engrave them in the reader and listener's hearts.**

## 1- The πογρο Hymn 'Ebooro' in Arabic

It is chanted with three melodies:

- One melody for the Morning Service of the Feasts: Christmas, Epiphany, Resurrection, and Holy Nuptials.
- A second melody is used at the conclusion of the Adam Theotokies (i.e. glorifications for the Theotokos) in the Midnight Praise.
- A third melody is used in the Passion Week, at the conclusion of each Hour, responding after every part (stychon) with the words "κγριε ελεσο?" (Keri elisoon).

The text of this hymn is included in the Service Book of Deacons on P.777, as well as in the Book of the Annual Holy Psalmody P.144 (the Arabic texts of both books).

### **The language of the Hymn:**

All the words of this hymn are written in Coptic language.

### **The Occasion on which the Hymn is chanted:**

Some of the deep spiritual words are distinguished for their fitness for every occasion along the whole year round, especially when these words do not convey a specific event or occasion such as certain days or feasts like Christmas, Epiphany, Resurrection, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Apostles feast, Transfiguration Day; or fasts like the lent or the Passion week or Kiahk...etc.

Examples of such spiritual words as 'Ebooro' which mean "O King of peace ...grant us Your peace ...Disperse the enemies of the church, and fortify her, that she may not be shaken. ...Emmanuel Our God, is now in our midst, ...May He bless us, and heal the sicknesses of our souls and bodies"...

They are words that stir up the emotions, and we need to repeat them every day: in passion, in sadness as well as in pleasure and joy, even when we sing praise every day.

These words fill our hearts with the peace of God, which surpasses every mind. For Saint Paul said: *"For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us. Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace"* (Eph.2: 14)

Therefore, 'Ebooro' is chanted on various occasions with more than one melody, for its words are given the color that fits the occasion.

On feasts and nuptials this hymn is chanted with the joyful tune of praise. At the conclusion of the Adam Theotokies, it is chanted with its distinguished active tune, whereas in the Passion Week with the sad tune.

#### **The method of performance:**

'Ebooro' with the joyful tune is performed by using the cymbals and the triangle: the two instruments which, when used, reveal the state of joy the church lives.

'Ebooro' with the sad tune is performed without using the cymbals and the triangle.

'Ebooro' consists of four "verses" and a conclusion; therefore its performance is more beautiful with the "antiphon" method by responding between the choruses on both sides or between the chorus and a soloist.

#### **The Musical scale and tempo:**

We will present here three melodies for "Ebooro": the joyful tune, the yearly praise tune, and the sad tune.

The joyful tune, a marvelous melody full of life, cheerfulness and depth. It is the melody that changes the state of any person, from excessive sadness to spiritual delight, from frustrating despair to hope, and from slackness and laziness to active struggling. Therefore, the church has chosen this melody to be chanted by the faithful in the feasts and the nuptials, with the use of the cymbals and the triangle.

‘Ebooro’ with the joyful tune begins with "Byati mode"<sup>1</sup> and from "fourfold scale"<sup>2</sup>

The musical ancient deep-rooted stanza begins bearing the redolence of years and manifesting the spiritual dimension enwrapping every tune. Then it changes with extreme smoothness to "Agam Mode" at the word ( ? εμ ? ? ? a ? ) (cemni Nan) to hover round the zone of sharp refrains, then out of it to go back to "Byati mode " with a stanza similar to the first one.

As to ‘Ebooro’ with the yearly praise tune, which is also of "Byati mode" and of twofold scale and higher tempo, it is a tune by which those who are awake for Midnight prayer praise the Lord.

The third tune of ‘Ebooro’ is the sad tune with which the congregation chants along the whole Passion Week. It is of ‘Agam mode’<sup>3</sup>, which is of exceeding power. Probably the wise church has chosen this strong mode for this sad week to assure the Copts and all the world as well that we do not mourn as those who have no hope, but our mourning is filled with the power of hope, for we are confident that our Lord Jesus Christ died to grant us life.

As for the tempo of the three tunes it is almost steady, about 100 pulses per minute.

### **Explanation and Contemplation**

‘O king of peace, grant us Your peace, render unto us Your peace, and forgive us our sins.’ How deep these words are indeed and strong! They fill the soul with peace, that

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<sup>1</sup> Al Byati, is an Egyptian musical scale distinguished for the step of sika within its seven tones and it is usually based in the beginning and the end on the "Re" tone.

<sup>2</sup> The musical scale, is the one which defines the equal division of the musical stanza through a certain bar (mesura), which would be simple or compound, twofold or threefold or fourfold according to what it includes of the number of signs which define the time of tunes and pauses in each bar.

<sup>3</sup> "Agam Mode" is equal to the big musical scale with regard to the distance between its tunes.



peace which we ask from Him, the King of peace, to "lay down in peace, and sleep" (Psalm 4:8)

So the joyful "Ebooro" starts quiet and slow to express this peace pervading us. And with its smooth, joyful and delightful stanzas it begins to express the state of one singing joyfully, being filled with peace, with peace blessing, for "*the Lord will bless His people with peace*" (Psalm 29:11)

After a while the hymn goes up gradually in active rhythms up to the phrase 'Semni Nan Ntek Herini' which means 'render unto us Your peace'.... Here the tone changes in genius fluency to "Agam tone" with the same scale of the base "tonic" (i.e. the stability) of "Al-Byati tone" with which the hymn began.

And in the new scale the tunes rise to hover round the zone of the sharp refrains<sup>1</sup>, then the hymn becomes strong bright expressing the demand of the people who joyfully feel peace, but demand from the king of peace to render unto them His peace together with forgiveness of their sins.

In this strong and sharp zone, the tune depicts the feelings of a man who by his peace of heart could pass safely through the water and the fire, to overcome tribulations, and to come prevailing, victorious and joyful. As the Lord has promised us, saying, "*these things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33)

Then the tune goes back to "Byati tone", and to the mid-zone of the musical scale, to conclude the first stanza. This musical mode is repeated

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<sup>1</sup> The higher the tunes go, the sharper they become. The zone of playing or chanting in which contain these sharp tunes is called the zone of refrains, and the voice is bright and glittering.

four times. Then the hymn of joy ends with a final stanza "Coda"<sup>1</sup> that is "ten oo osht" which means "we worship You".

N.B.: When David Ensemble performed "Ebooro" with its three melodies, this final appendix "ten oo osht" has been put after the sad tune only as a conclusion for the three melodies altogether in order to create a connection among the three. However, in the Holy Liturgy, the three melodies are not chanted together, for the purpose of performing them together is merely to reveal the musical genius and depth of spirituality of the Church fathers, who composed three melodies for the same words, each to express a specific occasion.

It is noteworthy that most of the other hymns, which we tackle in this book, did not use the seven tones of the whole musical scale "Octave"<sup>2</sup>. But this compound melody made use of nine tones (more than one octave) as well as various rhythms, and moved between two basic modes: Byati and Agam.

As for "Ebooro", the yearly praise tune, it is active like all the hymns of praise songs. It is of "Byati mode" also. Though the words are the same, the tune is different, depicting the joy of one feeling himself distinguished among others for the peace he has. So he chants "*There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked*" (Isaiah 57:21).

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<sup>1</sup> Coda is a type of final stanzas for the musical pieces and is put to give the impression of a determined and more effective final. But the "Codita" is a very small final appendix.

<sup>2</sup> The Octave consists of eight tones: seven of which are the tones of the musical scale, in addition to first tone repeated.

For all the wicked are deprived of this peace, “*even if they speak peace to their neighbors, mischief is in their hearts*” (Psalms 28:3). Therefore, there is no resemblance between this tune and the former one, neither in smoothness nor in cheerfulness, but the only resemblance is in its power.

And if we consider the musical note of this hymn, we will find it exceedingly simple in composition. The rhythmic form is simple with only two rhythms, and a fluent melody that utilizes only five tunes of the musical scale. It is only one musical stanza in one mode, consisting of twelve bars (mesura)<sup>1</sup> repeated four times.

As for "Ebooro" in the sad tune, it is one of the strongest and simple tunes in the Coptic Church. How wonderful and how marvelous this tune is when the whole congregation chants it during the Passion Week, being overwhelmed by a marvelous and completely true spirituality!

In spite of the sad feelings reflected in the hymns, and in the image of the cross printed on the black wrappers that decorate the church, and imprinted in the memory of the congregation and fixed on the Crucifixion panel, in spite of all this, the sad tune of “Ebooro” is mostly powerful. It is the power of hope in the expected Resurrection. When all the congregation chant it in one voice, I feel as if the church is shaking. I myself shake within, feeling that all the mountains of evil hovering over my breast is dissolving like wax, and the powerful peace of God that surpasses every mind fills me, overflows the church and the congregation. It seems as if the church has gone high up and became a sky, or the sky has condescended and the glory of the Lord came down upon the earth!

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<sup>1</sup> In the past and till the sixteenth century music was written without vertical "Bars" And from the seventeenth century there began the use of a horizontal line to cut the musical scale, separating the bars from each other.

Here I recall the image depicted in the Book of Chronicles when *"the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph, and Heman and Jeduthun...stood at the east end of the altar having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them the priests sounding with trumpets. Indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord...that the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord. So that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God."* (2Chr.5: 12-14)

- (1) It is not a miracle; it is a reality we should live. As we sing praise in one voice, the earth becomes heaven and the glory of the Lord fills the place, the cloud being one of the features of this glory. But the Lord's glory has other features besides the cloud, which if we feel, we will become sure that the glory of the Lord has filled the house, the church or the heart. And the peace; the peace of God is another feature of this glory. For if the mountains of hatred and spite melted, if the hills of envy and slander trembled, if the bounds of lust within this congregation broke down when they shouted with one voice "Ebooro" (O king of peace), then we should be sure that the glory of the Lord has filled the church and His peace had come unto the believers' hearts.

In this sad tune, full of the power of hope, expressed by "Agam mode", each of its verses or "Coplets"<sup>1</sup> is preceded by (kyria elyson) three times i.e. "Have mercy, O lord, upon us" for the congregation is well aware of their urgent need of the ample mercy of God, especially in an era in which peace is absent, that peace which we all need, the peace which, when filling the believers, they will shout with David: *"God is our refuge and strength, ... therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ...God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved ..."* (Psalms 46)

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<sup>1</sup> "Coplet" is a chanted or a poetic verse.

So, when the mercy of God comes down upon them they shout “Emmanuel our God, is now in our midst...” It is the faith in God being in the midst of His people who sing praise to Him in one voice that He may purify their hearts and heal the ailment of their souls and bodies.

And when the people becomes sure that God is truly in their midst they shout with the same hymn “Ten ow osht emmoko pi khristos” i.e. "we worship you, O Christ". With this worship they conclude this hymn.

"Ebooro", with its three tunes represents a musical spiritual genius, which has power to draw the attention of any musician whatever be the musical school he belongs to.

I remember that I met with some famous musician who leads a modern musical school, and I was sure that if he listens to this hymn he will not like it, being a leader of the modern style of songs which differs in quality, form and taste. But, amazingly, he was impressed greatly by the hymn and seemed distracted, so I thought that he got wearied of the hymn. I tried secretly to stop the cassette recorder, but he rebuked me in order to let it up to the end. When the hymn came to its close he said to me: “this hymn kindled within me amazing emotions. Images and icons moved in my mind as if they were a video tape recorded in a monastery.

O, my God ...I wish I would receive your peace within me, so as not to be frightened by the tumult of the world around me, or when the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea.

O, my God, let my hymn be as that of Paul and Silas when they were in prison praying and praising You...and a great earthquake happened; for behold the jail’s foundations shook ...the doors opened ...and the chains loosened.

I wish my praise song loosen the chains of my sins so that I may be released by You, and no other than You may reign over my heart. When I praise You, make me feel that You are God Present among and in midst of us, so I can see You in Your glory, and with your light I view the light. Then I will see well and know you as a crowned king reigning over my heart. So I shout "Ebooro" 'O King of peace ...grant me your peace'.

**Ebooro Hymn**

**- O King of peace, give us Your peace;**

**Establish for us Your peace;**

**And forgive us our sins.**

**- Scatter the enemies of the Church;**

**And fortify her that she may not shake forever.**

**- Emmanuel our God in our midst;**

**Now with the glory of His Father**

**and the Holy Spirit.**

**- May He bless all of us**

**and cleanse our hearts;**

**Heal our souls and bodies.**

**- We worship You, O Christ,**

**with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit;**

**For You have been crucified and saved us.**

## **- The Golgotha Hymn**

This hymn is sung at the end of the Twelfth Hour Prayer of the Good Friday. The text of this hymn is included in the Deacons' Service Book (Page      in the Arabic Text).

### **Language of the Golgotha Hymn:**

The words of this Hymn are a mixture of Coptic and Greek languages, but mostly Coptic except for the phrases that start with "Glory to the Father ... Both now and forever ... Holy" which are in Greek (zoxa patri ... Ke nein ... Agios).

### **The Occasion on which the Hymn is Chanted:**

It is chanted on the memory of the burial of the Lord Christ, at the end of the Twelfth Hour Ritual Prayer of the Good Friday, and is called "the Burial Canon". While chanting it, the deacons go around the altar. The eldest priest takes the Burial Icon or the Crucifixion Icon, wraps it with a strip of white linen and places the cross over it, then he buries it in flowers and fragrant oils and puts five seeds of carnation or incense. These refer to the nails, thorn crown and the spear. Then he covers it with the Prosparine and puts two candlesticks with lighted candles on both sides as a symbol of the two angels who were inside the holy tomb, one at the head and the other at the feet.

- Golgotha in Hebrew - Ikranione in Greek is the place where the Lord of Glory was crucified, with His hands stretched between the two



- thieves who were crucified with Him, one on His right, and the other on His left.
- The place of Golgotha was near Jerusalem, but outside its walls, for St. Paul says, *“Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate therefore, let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”* (Heb 13:12)
  - ) It seems that it was a spot visible from some distance, because the Scripture says, *“there were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene.”* (Mk 16:7).
  - The word is taken from the Greek word “Ikarniune”. Some think that this name was given to this place because of the many bare and unburied skulls. Others say that the place was an open space for execution. However it is commonly thought as being a hill in the form of a skull. In the evening, after the Lord Jesus Christ had breathed His last, Joseph, from the city of Arimathea, who was a rich man and a disciple to Jesus, came to take the body of the Lord. Joseph was a good and righteous person who was also rich. He was a councilor: a member of the Synhedrin. It was said that he refused to attend the trial of the Lord Christ, and abstained from voting because he was against their decision and action.
  - The rule in the Jewish law was that no dead body remains on the execution tool. Moreover, the Roman law allowed the household of the person sentenced to death to ask for the body and take it. So, Joseph of Arimathea was encouraged and asked Pilate for the body of Christ to be able to bury it before the Sabbath. He had a garden near Golgotha where he had engraved a new tomb, so he took the body of Jesus to bury it, and Nicodemus shared him that honor.

- Nicodemus also was a member of the Synhedrin Council, a Pharisee and one of the Jews rulers. He is the one who once came to the Lord Christ by night so as not to be seen by anyone to discuss and learn from Him about the second spiritual birth. Being convinced by the Lord's words, he defended Him at the Synhedrin when the Pharisees attacked Him. He said to them, "*Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?*" (Jn )
- Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus and they wrapped it in strips of pure linen with spices and fragrant oils, laid it in that new tomb that was hewn out of a rock. While doing this, they were praising Him with tearful eyes. This same Praise became the Burial Canon sung by the church up till now.

### **The Method of Performance:**

This Hymn is performed by all the deacons standing around the altar at the Twelfth Hour of the Good Friday without using the bell or the triangle.

### **Mode and Speed of the Hymn (Tempo):**

This hymn dates back to thousands of years. If we listen carefully to it, we will find it very simple in its musical structure to the extent that the first stanza seems like an elegy of those common at that time.

Philo of Alexandria, a Philosopher from the first century asserts that early Christians have taken Ancient Egyptian tunes and added to it the Christian texts. One of these is the Golgotha Hymn that was chanted by Pharaohs during the embalming process and at funeral ceremonies.

Therefore, I think that part of this hymn is the same which Joseph and Nicodemus chanted, for they were in such a mood at the burial moments as not to be able to compose melodies, but were rather in deep grief, astonishment and wonder: how could the Life-Giver die? Thus they probably praised Him with melodies stored in the subconscious, themes which the conscious mind recalls in similar situations. Afterwards, the early fathers composed the final form in words and stanzas.

I think therefore that Glogotha is divided into two main musical stanzas:

- The first main stanza conforms to the philosopher's view that it is a Pharaoh theme quoted from Ancient Egypt by early Christians who provided it with Christian texts. Its simple construction and few tunes: only four, support the opinion that it is one of the elegies common at that time. Being of simple lyric tenor, anyone can perform it smoothly even if weeping, for the level goes up or down gradually. It is not like the low refrains which require accuracy and caution on its performance, nor like the sharp responses which require some effort to perform and where the voice is soft.

- The second main stanza does not conform with Philo's view for the following reasons:

\* The musical creation and motif forms here differ from those of the first stanza.

\* Its performance requires excessive care because of the perfect fifth leaps and swift tunes.

\* The word expression in this second stanza and the tune are congruent; that is to say, when the tone of the words of the hymn "Avoash Evol Engi

Bi Soni”- which mean “the thief cried out” rises, voice leaps occur and tones become swift expressing the meaning of the words. This can only be realized through live musical composition which was impassable at the time when Joseph and Nicodemus were burying the body of the Lord Christ.

\* The Greek words in the hymn indicate that it was translated from the Ancient Egyptian language into the Greek, then into Coptic.

\* The mode of the Hymn is the “Agam Mode”, known as the “Great Tenor”, which is the simplest of the Eastern and Western Modes altogether.

\* The simple rhythm of the stanza is dual ( / ), only two strokes: the first strong, and the second weak.

\* The speed of the hymn: about      beats/minute, is suitable. Had it exceeded this limit, the tune would have turned into a march and would have lost the touch of grief which spread throughout its tunes.

### **Further Explanation and Contemplation:**

The music of this Hymn can be summed up in two small stanzas: the first basic one is composed of eight meters only and four tunes. This is to show that Joseph and Nicodemus were weeping while putting the spices over the body of the Beloved, so they could not express their grief except with these four tunes. Their vocal chords were trembling, they could not chant with fifth tune. They were looking at the Holy face in astonishment and wondering how could the Life-Giver die! How could it be that He dies whom the angels praise continually without languor, saying “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal”! Hearing this praise by the angels, they found themselves praising with a harsh voice “Fioco” crushed by

weeping. Their vocal chords were unable to utter anything except these four tunes. Thus they kept repeating them ten times.

While wrapping the body and putting spices and fragrant oils on it, they remembered the cry of the thief on the right side of the Lord on the cross, saying, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom”. Realizing that such a cry has rescued the thief from Hades and eternal perdition and brought him to comfort and eternal kingdom, they tried to cry out like him in spite of the trembling “Fioco” voice. Therefore a new fifth tune is introduced that was not before in the first stanza which was repeated ten times. This fifth tune is the fruit of their struggle and labor, and of their desire to attain that elevation which the thief had attained!

Here the Praise Song takes another form by a second stanza introduced actually stronger than the first, yet softer. It begins with a flow “Glissando” that passes over the five tunes to express the meaning of the words “Avoash Evol Engi Bi Soni”, i.e. “then the thief cried out”. This rapid move to a “perfect fifth” layer is not strange because the image depicted at that moment in the mind of Joseph and Nicodemus was that of the thief who had attained the kingdom of heaven and Paradise with those words. Why then would they not lay hold of it by a leaping melody? Therefore the tune rises to attain to the heavenly orders’ tunes spreading ringing around the Golgotha.

This image of the thief made them repeat this second stanza four times, then bow in awe before the dead body full of life to entreat Him, saying, “Do we not deserve to be like that thief who was on Your right?”

We know that our sins are like crimson, but this Your holy body and the precious blood pouring from Your stabbed side are capable of making them as white as snow. Here they return again to the first gentle and soft but sad stanza of the four tunes, to implore Him, saying, “Eripa Mevei O Pa Shois”, which words mean: “O Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom”. They kept repeating them four times also till they receive the voice of the meek Lord saying to that thief, “Today you will be with Me in Paradise”

Indeed, they will not forget that marvelous voice. Meek, it is true, but it destroys cedar and extinguishes fire! Meek it is, but it convulses Kadish wilderness and makes barren the woods! It is the same voice which cried loudly, “Lazarus, come forth!” the voice of the Lord who raised Lazarus from among the dead by a cry and is capable of raising us from the death of sin. Yea, Joseph of Arimathea remembered his sin; how he dared to come to the Lord secretly in fear of the Jews! He should have cast fear away, and now he did. He was bold enough to stand before Pilate and ask him to take the body of the Lord Christ. Fear had no more a place in his heart. Here the tune can be higher again, and the second stanza with its five tones and Glissando can return and be repeated seven times the same way.

The tune continues the same: a mixture of quiet grief one time and strong grief another time, till the tune ends with the first stanza with its four tones when they have completed the burial of the dead body of the Living Christ. Then they bow down before the tomb with tears flowing heavily until the huge stone conceals the holy body from their sight.

Ye, who have done away with death by Your death after having suffered, let me cherish Your suffering as my treasure; Your crown of thorns as my glory; Your pains as my joy; Your myrrh as sweetness in my mouth and Your love as my honor and gratitude.

O Lord, do not allow blood and flesh to prevail over me, nor Satan strike me down! Rather, let me taste the joy and beauty with Joseph and Nicodemus of this solemn tune “Golgotha”.

### **The “Golgotha” Hymn**

**Golgotha in Hebrew;**

**Ikranione in Greek;**

**The place where they crucified You, O Lord**

**You stretched Your hands;**

**They crucified two thieves with You,**

**One on Your right, and one on the left;**

**And You in the middle, O Good Savior.**

**Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

**The thief on the right cried out:**

**Remember me, O my Lord;**

**Remember me, O my Savior;**

**Remember me, O my King**

**When You come to Your Kingdom.**

**The Lord answered him gently:  
Today you will be with Me in My Kingdom.**

**Now and forever and ever. Amen.**

**The two righteous Joseph and Nicodemus  
Took the body of Christ,  
They anointed Him, prepared Him for burial  
And put Him in the tomb  
While praising Him:**

**Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal  
Who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us.**

**=====+=====**



## **“The Hittenne Presvia Hymn”**

- It is chanted after the Reconciliation Prayer in the Divine Liturgy of St. Gregory.
- The text is included in the Deacon’s Service Book page (in the Arabic Text).

### **The Language of the Hymn:**

All words of the hymn are in Coptic, except the last sentence “Eleos Erines Thisea Eni Theos” which means “the mercy of peace, the sacrifice of praise”. This sentence is in Greek. In old Eucologions this sentence came separate from the words “Through the Intercession of the mother of God”, and after the deacon says “come forward according to the order”.

### **The occasion on which the hymn is chanted:**

The congregation chants it after the “Reconciliation Prayer” in which the Lord Christ made reconciliation between the heavenly and the earthly through offering Himself a live sacrifice as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

The deacon inside the sanctuary says first “Spazist” i.e. “kiss each other”. For the kiss here is an expression of reconciliation and forgiveness, and a sign of unity of the members of the church in one body and one spirit.

During this kiss, the priest, with the help of the deacon, lifts the “Prospharine”, (i.e. the white cloth made of silk or linen and having bells fixed to it). This rite refers to removing the stone from the mouth of the

tomb where the Lord was buried. The shaking of the bells refers to the great shaking which happened at the tomb of the glorious Resurrection.

This is followed by the hymn “Hittenni Presvia” which means “with the intercession of the mother God the Holy Mary, O Lord, grant us the forgiveness of our sins.”

### **The Method of Performance:**

The whole congregation chants it with one spirit, having felt the reconciliation following the Reconciliation Prayer and the holy kiss. Neither the cymbals nor the triangle are used.

### **The Mode and the Speed of the Hymn:**

The hymn is of “Hegaz Agami” mode, and near the end it turns into “Hegaz Oigi” mode. It starts with active speed – approximately pulse/moment – then turns into Ad-libitum<sup>1</sup> mode which is not restricted by a limited fixed time. This occurs in the last sentence in Greek, which is translated: “ the mercy of peace, the sacrifice of praise”.

### **Explanation and Contemplation:**

“With the intercession of the mother of God the holy Mary, O Lord, grant us forgiveness of our sins”. Intercession is mediation between two parties, and it is a pledge of love. It is based on the fact that God is dealing with people and are not on the personal level only but on the level of the congregation also.

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<sup>1</sup> Ad-libitum is free performance unrestricted with regular beats. The singer as player is given the chance to perform freely.

The intercession prayer is as old as Noah, for we read, *“Then Noah built an altar. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake .... Nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.’”* (Gen )

It is as old also as Abraham, for he interceded for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying, *“Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked ... Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Gen )

And it is as old as Samuel, who said, *“Gather all Israel to Mizpah. And I will pray to the Lord for You.”* (1 Sam )

The Holy Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. The church distinguishes between those who have the right to intercede such as the holy Virgin Mary, the angels, and John the Baptist and other saints who may only ask and implore for us.

The early fathers, inspired by the Holy Spirit wanted to express their persistence in entreating for forgiveness, so they repeated the basic tune “Tonic: with an active speed along eight bars, in “Hegaz Agami” mode.

If ever there were one melody in the whole world in which one tune is repeated for eight successive bars, it would be rejected altogether by all, because the listener and singer also might get bored. However, in this hymn

we are discussing the repetition of the tune expressing persistence in imploring for forgiveness. For this is our holy faith, as the Gospel says, “*And Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily*” (Lk ) and also, “*I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, he will rise and give him as many as he needs.*” (Lk )

The Lord Christ himself taught us to be persistent, for He, “*being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*” (Lk )

The Church knows well the importance of persistence, for when King Herod arrested St. Peter, as the Book of the Apostles says, “*constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church*” (Acts )

Yet, amidst the repetition of the tune expressing persistence, there comes moments of awe and worship before the Lord. Worship is not performed merely by bowing of the body downwards, but by bowing the melody down a third short distance (lowering it) at the word “Epschois” (i.e. O Lord) because “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve”.

This lowering of the tune is repeated once more for the same distance at the word “Ten Oo Osht” (i.e. We worship). It seems as if the church wants by these tunes to move our heavy bodies to bow before Christ.

The meditative pause occurs within the melody at the word “Bi-Khristos” (i.e. Christ) as if the melody calls you to pause a little to recognize who Christ is! He is the Son of Man who *“we will see coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and He will send His angels and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”*.

So the tune rises and lifts our sight up towards the cloud to see Him who we see “Coming in glory”.

The rapid music stanza lingers to give the impression of reverence and majesty to the Lord Christ, and to give a chance for meditation:

Am I, O Lord, among Your elect who You will gather from the four winds and from one end of heaven to the other? ... Here I am entreating You for forgiveness with the intercession of Your mother the holy Mary ... Here I am wishing to taste the sweetness of Your true promise *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”* (Isa        )

But soon the moments of meditation cease when the rhythm of the melody takes us again to the first active speed (tempo) introducing to us the Orthodox creed: “We believe in One God”, “One essence and Three persons”, “We worship You, O Christ, with Your Good Father and the holy Spirit.”

Therefore at the words “Afkoti Emmon”, which mean “You have saved us”, one stage of the melody comes to an end, forming almost a close with

an extended ending (Crona). A new important stage begins, without any beats; for all this part is performed without being restricted by beats. It takes the form of Ad-Libitum i.e. extemporaneously.

It is the sacrifice ... the sacrifice that occupies God's heart from the very beginning of the creation. Even the first man felt that the sacrifice pleases the heart of God. That is why Abel the Righteous offered of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And God respected Abel and his offering. Thus began the offering of sacrifices in the Old Testament, and continued until the blameless sacrifice came. That sacrifice for our salvation ... The Lord Christ who came as a Lamb.

He was the prototype that abolished the symbolic sacrifice, for Michah the Prophet said, *“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”* (Mic )

So David – who deserved to be called father and savior – was the first to introduce to the Jews a new way of praise. He set a new order of worship through praise songs, and other means that surpassed the Law of Moses, which David created throughout his service. This is the reason behind the superiority of the psalms in holiness and benefit. And this is why the Jews

called the Book of Psalms “Cedra Tahllim” which means “the Book of Joyful praise”.

Chanting praise is the heavenly prayer garment which endows praise with serenity and sublimity. Chanting dresses the words of praise with the most valuable poetic rhyming. Hence the human voice comes out bearing the sacrifice of the tune in its most sublime degree. The meaning rises up high and gradually in its gentleness and deep emotions to attain utmost inspiration. With them man’s heart rises up readily even unto God’s presence, and the whole congregation with the same readiness and high familiarity surpassing any human measure to attain the utmost level of worship. And after a short time of harmonious chanting the Church attains a state of communion with the invisible heavenly host and everyone in the Church can feel it inside and outside.

The prayers of David the Prophet, therefore, were all continual praise and singing, for he said, “*Seven times a day I praise You.*” (Ps )

Actually, when the heart overflows with the action of the spirit, the tongue is loosened and utters tunes expressing the deep emotions of the heart far more than words can do.

St. Justin in his “First Defense” says that he considers prayers and praise – when offered by important persons– are alone complete sacrifices acceptable to God.

The Church often offers praise songs and hymns accompanied with incense, as if confirming that these are a true sacrifice, because the Holy Spirit descends and works in this invaluable sacrifice as David said, “*Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*” (Ps.        )

From now on, there will be none but only this sacrifice which God has loved since eternity: “the sacrifice of praise”. For it He created the angels, so that they may offer it to Him continually, that is “*the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*” (Heb        )

St. Justine says also in the same reference “First Defense” that the only honor that is suitable for God is not burnt offerings of animals which God gave us for food, but rather offering Him praise with songs and hymns for He created us.

And David the Prophet considered praise a true sacrifice, so he was keen on offering his praise honestly and incessantly. So many times we read words like, “*I will go about Your altar, O Lord, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works*”; “*Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle.*” (Ps        ) And after being freed of his sins, David says, “*You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving*” (Ps        ). It is natural then that man, having obtained the forgiveness of his sins, offers a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, “*For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.*” (Hos        )



The melody of this hymn thus came expressing the steps by which we prepare such a sacrifice in a way to be acceptable. These preparations are the wood, the ropes, the knife and the fire. So the melody came slow to represent the time these preparations take. Then it rises gradually the nearer we come to offering the sacrifice. As soon as it is offered to the heavenly Father it carries us from the earth unto heaven through changing the musical mode to “Hegaz Oigi”.

O our God, who accepted the sacrifice of Abel the Righteous, may You accept our sacrifice of praise! Ye who gave those on the earth to chant the songs of praise of the Seraphim, do accept also from us our voices with those who are invisible. Do count us among the heavenly host that we may sing with them with unceasing voices and mouths that never slacken and bless Your Majesty.

O my God, if you hear me crying, *“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;”* (Isa     ), do not leave me alone, but through the intercession of Your mother the holy Virgin Mary send a seraph to take a live coal with the tongs from the altar and touch my mouth with it so that my iniquity be taken away and my sin be purged.

### **The “Hittenne Presvia” Hymn**

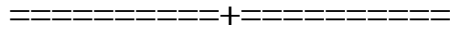
**Through the Intercession of the mother of God**

**The Holy Mary**

**O Lord Grant us the forgiveness of our sins.**

**We worship You, O Christ,  
With Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit  
Because You came and saved us.**

**The mercy of peace;  
The sacrifice of praise!**



## **The “Arihoo Chasf” Hymn “Exalt Him High”**

This hymn is included in the Midnight Psalmody and chanted at the end of the Third Hos (Canticle) after the long delightful hymn of “Hos Erof” and before the Batos Song of the Three Saintly Young Men.

The text of this hymn is included in the Annual Holy Psalmody (Page - the Arabic text).

### **The Language of the Hymn:**

The few words of the hymn are written in Coptic language. The words and the meaning are as follows:

Hos Erof : Praise Him

Arihoo Chasf : Exalt Him high

Sha Ni Eneh : Forever

### **The Occasion on which the Hymn is Chanted:**

This hymn is included in the Midnight Psalmody and chanted at the conclusion of the Third Hos (Canticle), and before the Batos Song for the Three Saintly Young Men.

The hymn of the Midnight Psalmody, especially this hymn, are distinguished by the lengthiness of the tunes (Melisma) which gives the impression that the singers love praising so much that they fear lest it come to an end. That is why the tunes extend, rise up and go down on their mouths endlessly.

For two words only: Hos Erof, there is a lengthy hymn that takes about a quarter of an hour! And before it immediately comes the hymn “Ezmoo Epshois”, which is another lengthy one. This is followed by this hymn “Arihoo Chasf”.

### **The Method of Performance:**

This hymn is chanted by all performers with the cymbals and the triangle. They perform it in a joyful way, revealing on their mouths the infinite love of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and exalting Him forever. This hymn is distinguished for the lengthiness of its tunes (Melisma).

### **The Mode and the Speed of the hymn:**

The mode of the hymn varies intensively. It begins with “Agam Mode” which is based on the “Fa Tone” with a famous musical stanza, which is so beautiful that it is repeated in other hymns, especially in the Liturgy of St. Gregory.

Then in great fluency it changes into the “Rast Mode” that is based on the “Do Tone”. After that, in a wonderful, yet complicated facility, it changes into the “Agam Mode” based on the “Do Tone” and again to “Rast Mode”. Then, yearning for the famous stanza which distinguishes the hymn, and with which it began, it returns once more to “Agam Mode”. All these extensive tunes imply no words, but only the letter “Yota” of the word “Arihoo Chasf”.

At this point, it is time for uttering the rest of the word “Hoo Chasf Sha” all at one time in a musical stanza which does not exceed seven measures.

The hymn tunes rely on the letter “Alfa” from “Sha” in order to repeat the complete hymn from the beginning with all the changes in the mode, all the lengthiness of its tunes, and all its beautiful musical stanzas once more. It seems as if the saint who composed its music by the Spirit does not want these few words to quit his lips, his ears or his heart; or as if this hymn is an endless Praise Song.

Finally, the hymn ends with the word “Ni Eneh” at which the tunes go high, the preceding modes change into a new mode called “Arak”. Then come new musical stanzas not heard of before. This is the proper express word “forever”.

For this is eternal life: when the Lord will dwell with men, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall be any more pain, for the former things are passed away .....And He that sat upon the throne makes all things new (Rev        ).

### **Explanation and Contemplation:**

Praise is a heavenly language. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels of God in heaven (Mt        ). Thus if we want to be like the angels of God, we must praise God continually, without tepidity or weariness.

Hence, the early fathers, inspired by the Holy Spirit, composed melodies for few words, so that each letter takes lengthy tunes, rising or descending, extended or shortened, separated and linked before the following letter is uttered. It is the desire to praise forever, to be like the angels of God. Thus

we should not be surprised when we listen to lengthy tunes for few words taking about six minutes if we knew the meaning intended by these tunes. The meaning of the word “Exalt Him High” justifies the lengthiness of the tunes over the hymn. And the meaning which the word “High” bears explains the clear ascending tune. On the other hand, the meaning behind the word “forever” requires more continuity of these tunes.

The spiritual concept implied in the Melisma, with which the early fathers were inspired while composing this hymn, became afterwards a method followed by some music composers from outside the church. They composed melodies for their songs distinguished by that Melisma.

Perhaps the Egyptian musical chanting form, known as “Al Doar”, which appeared at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, is a clear image affirming that this Melisma – the lengthening of tunes – which the early Apostolic Church created in the first three centuries won satisfaction and acceptance in the ears of the great hymnists of that time on. So they began to imitate this method i.e. by stuffing the second part of “Al Doar” with moans. They called this part “Al Hunk”, a technical term referring to the method of singing “the principal part of Al Doar” when both the singer and chanters exchange moans.

Certainly the early fathers while composing these hymns were motivated by the words of David the Prophet “*Alleluia ... Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints*” (Ps 150:1). They wanted by every tune to create a new praise song to the Lord.

Even in their beds, they are in a state of love that appears in praise singing, “*Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds*” (Ps       ), that is why they are awake at Midnight ... while everyone is asleep ... to praise Him and exalt Him high forever with this new song “Arihoo Chasf”.

And if we contemplate this hymn “Arihoo Chasf”, analyzing it, we will find that it begins with a musical stanza which draws in my mind the image of the monk who leaves his warm bed, at midnight in a chilly winter, to put his head under the cold water to be refreshed and energetic. Then he goes joyfully to the Monastery’s Church, stands among his brethren chanting with them the first musical stanza of this hymn, which is composed of ten measures and distinguished for its musical beauty and spiritual warmth mixed with celerity and activity derived from the verse in (Ps       ) “*Awake, psaltery and harp. I myself will awake early.*” And these ten measures are repeated once more to assert the former image.

In wonderful fluency the melody then transfers to the zone of low refrains when the mode changed from “Agam” to “Rast”. And in spite of the great difference between these two modes and between the two base levels “Fa & Do”, the change of modes is performed so skillfully and professionally revealing the perfect musical awareness.

Then the melody returns once more to the big Mode “Agam”, then begins to leave little by little the zone of low refrains and rises gradually until it goes back to the start point ... to the vivid stanza which depicts the image of the hymnist shaking off his laziness to sing praise at midnight.

He says with the Bride of the Song *“By night on my bed I sought him who my soul loves ... I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loves.”* He, likewise, rises and goes about amidst the tunes and the modes, seeking Him who his soul loves. So he goes with the tunes a step up towards Him who he loves, and not finding Him, he rises another step.

And when the words “Arihoo Chasf” which mean “Exalt Him High” are uttered, the attempt is repeated again by repeating the whole hymn from the beginning, as if this repetition explains also the meaning of “Exalt Him”.

When the word “Ni Eneh” – which means: forever – comes, the melody changes into “Arak Mode” flowing in the zone of sharp refrains as if he had found at last whom his soul loves, seized Him, not letting Him go. Therefore the change of modes and the use of the sharp refrains are the most truthful expression of the joyful meeting which no one can ever take away.

The various changes in modes with which this hymn is overcrowded, the wonderful celerity of moving among them all, and the perfect usage of the zone of low refrains and sharp refrains to express the few words “praise Him and exalt Him high for ever”, this proves that the early fathers who composed this hymn by the Spirit were not only saints but they were also skilful musicians. They knew the different types of musical scales and could move among them in a professional way with musical awareness and scientific knowledge. This made such changes to the ear but rather a cause of enjoyment and fascination. They knew also the musical measures of each scale, which zone to be selected to express the intended meaning, how and



when the musical stanza is to be repeated, and which one ought not be repeated. It is a mixture of spirituality and scientific musical knowledge.

O my God, who granted Your saints Your Holy Spirit in order to compose hymns ... who sanctified their gift, so their hymns lived within us all the time through ... may You sanctify also my gift so that I may present to You a new praise song. For whatever musicology I studied to praise You with are but empty vessels unless You pour Your Holy Spirit to fill them.

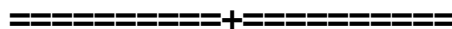
I wish to be like the owner of the ten talents who traded and gained another ten, not like the owner of one talent who went and hid it.

O my God, do grant me the power to overcome the devil of laziness, that I may leave my bed and join the singers and praise with David, "*At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto You because of Your righteous judgments.*" (Ps )!

I wish I would join all these persevering singers who at midnight stand around You every day praising "Hos Erof Arihoo Chasf".

### **The "Hos Erof" Hymn**

**Praise ye Him;  
Exalt Him high,  
For ever and ever.**



## **O Nim Nai Symphonia<sup>1</sup>**

This hymn is chanted before the Resurrection Cycle on the Easter Eve and up to thirty-ninth day of the holy Eastertide. This hymn is included in Service Book of Deacons and Hymns.

### **The Language of the Hymn:**

The words of this Hymn are few, and they are in Coptic (O Nim Nai Symphonia). Their meaning is (Oh, these symphonies coming to my ears).

### **The Occasion on which the Hymn is Chanted:**

This Hymn is chanted from Easter Eve up to the thirty-ninth day of the holy Eastertide after the Praxis (part of the Book of the Apostles). During chanting this hymn, the resurrection icon is prepared. Then the priests with the Crosses in hand and the deacons with candles and flags of the resurrection turn around the altar. The door of the sanctuary is then shut. At

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<sup>1</sup> “Symphony” is a word of Greek origin, meaning a group of sounds heard at the same time. It was first known in early 17<sup>th</sup> century in Italy to describe the musical introduction preceding the lifting up of the curtains in the Operas, or between the scenes.

In mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the Symphony became a complete work performed by the major Orchestra.

The Symphony is considered the most perfect and sublime musical work. Hayden was the first to be called “the father of Symphony”, followed by Mozart. Then Beethoven improved it to perfection, and in the ninth Symphony (called Choral) he introduced singing to accompany it. It therefore became expressive of personal thoughts and human emotions in the Romantic era

this moment the priests begin to remove the roses and the spices away from the burial.

The altar closed door represents the gate of Paradise which was closed because of Adam's sin. When it is opened, this refers to its being opened by the Lord of Glory who was crucified for our justification, and rose to give us life and the inheritance of the kingdom.

Some claim closing the doors of the Sanctuary and switching the lights off is a new arrangement introduced to us from the Greek church. We knew it only from the days of Hegumen Philothaos Ibrahim the Head of St. Mark Cathedral in Cairo ( ).

### **The Method of Performance:**

The deacons perform it outside the Sanctuary. They sing it without using the cymbals and the triangle. I have a personal point of view that if the hymn is performed in the form of a dialogue between a sole singer and the chorus of deacons, this will be a true representation of the dialogue that took place between Mary and the two angels when she saw the two with white clothes, sitting one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of the Lord was laid.

But she went on asking, "*they have taken away my lord and I don't know where they have placed Him.*" (John ) It will represent also the dialogue between Mary and Jesus when she thought Him the gardener.

### **The Music Mode and Tempo:**

The tune begins calm with a sad stanza in “Gahar Kah” Mode, repeated twice to emphasize the state which is inside and outside the tomb. The low tunes move within the medium refrains zone. Then the tune changes all of a sudden to “Soznak Mode” which inclines to brightness. So, the church made use of it to reach gradually the word “Symphonia”. At this word the listener feels the brightness of the melody as if it were the brightness of the light proceeding from the tomb when the stone is rolled.

Concerning the tune speed (tempo), it begins slow about        beats per minute. And from the moment the tune changed into “Soznak Mode”; the percussion changes to “Ad-Libitum”, i.e. extemporaneous.

### **Explanation and Contemplation:**

“Oh! These symphonies coming into my ears”. They are the prophetic symphonies which made all prophecies – which seemed contradictory – harmonious.

*“Behold! The Virgin will be with child and shall bear a Son and they will name Him Immanuel”*. How could it be that the Virgin be with a babe?

And how could it be that God who dwells in heaven comes to dwell with us on the earth? Who is He who like a lamb is led and like a silent sheep before His shearers, He does not open His mouth?

Who is He who gave Himself to death and was counted among transgressors and laid on Him many sins and handed over for the sinners?

Who is He who was laid in the lowest pit, in darkness and shades of death? Certainly it is not David; for we know his history. No one put nails in his body, nor his legs and feet were pierced, nor his garments were divided, nor a lot cast over His cloak and none of the passers by spoke against Him or shook their heads saying, “*He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him*”, and no one offered Him sour wine to drink in His thirst. It is none but the Lord Christ in whom all the prophecies are fulfilled.

Therefore, this melody was composed to express this harmony, this symphony which combined together all those prophecies though different in place and time to unite in one time only which is the fullness time and one place only which is the body of Christ laid in that wonderful tomb, with the big stone rolled over it, whilst the ranks of angels around singing praise who to Him: (O Nim Nai Symphonia).

A lot of people think that the holy hours that followed the burial of the Lord Christ were silent dead hours. Nay. They were powerful hours full of struggling and fighting with the spiritual host of wickedness. For many people after laying the stone over the tomb thought that by the death of Christ events had stopped until the very moment of the glorious Resurrection Sunday Dawn. But this actually did not happen, but the Lord Christ descended unto Hades from over the Cross to save and bring out the souls of the dead who were waiting in hope for the resurrection, to take their souls out of Satan’s mouth and set free the captive.

What a long war that began at the twelfth hour of Good Friday and ended with the rolling of the stone over the tomb and Christ's ascent from Hades carrying in His hands the souls of the righteous.

This hymn "O Nim Nai Symphonia" is indeed a marvelous hymn that declares the happenings of those hours, whether those that happened in Hades where the conflict took place, or around the tomb where the Marys and the disciples stood with their doubts.

Therefore, the tune begins calm in "Gaharkah Mode" with a stanza almost and consisting of ten bars repeated twice to emphasize the sad impression which prevails over and around the tomb. All the tunes of this stanza are low and move within the medium refrains zone. Then, suddenly, the tune changes into "Soznak Mode" which is inclined to brightness which the church fathers – inspired by the Holy Spirit and musicologists, and those who are familiar with music Modes, and making use of them to represent the abundant deep spiritual meanings implied in the few words of the hymn.

The transfer to the "Soznak Mode" with the gradual elevation of tunes to reach the word "Symphonia" gives a marvelous sense of brightness like that of the light coming out of the tomb after rolling the stone over it.

From the moment at which the tune is changed into the "Soznak Mode", the tone also changes to "Ad-Libitum", i.e. extemporaneous free from percussion restrictions. It seems as if the church wants to refer to the setting free of the captives who awaited the Lord Christ to set them free and save them from Hades.

Gradually, the tune ascends higher and higher in the sharp refrains zone unto the climax, as if wants to refer to the bringing out of the souls of the righteous who were waiting in hope for the resurrection. It seems as if we hear in this hymn their voices rejoicing in their salvation.

The joy continues moving the silent rhythm again expressing victory with a simple tune in forms repeated in rhythmic and musical sequence as if it were the joy of victory and conquering.

The “Ad-Libitum” (extemporaneous) rhythm returns back again and the Mode changes once more to a new mode “sozdlar”, then to the sad calm tune, as if expressing the concerns of those suspecting the glorious resurrection. Actually, they need to put their fingers in the place of nails and the place of the spear – like Thomas – so that they might not be unbelievers but believers.

O My Lord and God, grant me when I chant this hymn to live the joy of Your resurrection; to enjoy the victory ... victory over myself and my lusts. Let Your resurrection touch my mortal body that it may move towards You.

Lift me up with You out of Hades of my sins. Grant me to declare Your resurrection through my life to all them who have not yet got attached with You.

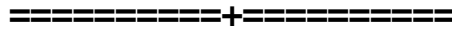
Remove from my heart any suspicion. Do show compassion towards me as You have done towards Thomas and made him cry out announcing his faith.

O My Lord and God, grant me that my voice accord with the voices of Your angels who sing “O Nim Nai Symphonia” that I might not be the only incongruent voice due to the accumulation of sins over the strings of my heart.

Do let my voice dissolve in their voices, and my tones be steps moving towards You, who arose from the dead.

**The Hymn “O Nim Nai”**

**O Ye, all the choruses I am listening to:  
O for the symphonies coming to my ears.**





**Amen Ton Thanaton Hymn**  
**(Your death, O Lord)**

The congregation sings this hymn in the Liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory and St. Cyril after the signs of the cross are made.

It is contained in page      of the book of the “The Deacon’s Service” (the Arabic text).

**The Hymn Language:**

The words of the hymn are all in Greek language.

**The occasion in which the hymn is said:**

This hymn is sung by all the congregation in the Divine Liturgy during the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ known as the mystery of “Eulogia”, “Eucharist”, or “Communion”. It is the Sacrament instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ when He said: *“I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you ... For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink ... Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”* (John      )

As the congregation confess and assert that what is broken on the altar is not mere bread and wine but the true Body and the true Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of our God who died, arose and ascended into heaven, they shout with this hymn, saying: “Amen, Your death, O Lord, we proclaim, Your holy resurrection and ascension, we confess”.

For that reason the hymn is said with full power, as by it the whole congregation declare their readiness to proclaim Christ's death ... that death by which the dead were risen to the newness of life.

The reason for all the congregation signing this hymn goes back to the verse said by St. Mark the Evangelist, the owner of the Upper Room – the first place where the Eucharist was administered – “*When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*” (Mark )

It is known from tradition that the Lord Excelled in memorizing psalms, and it is believed that He recited the psalms, and the disciples responded with Alleluia. This was after He had instituted the Eucharist or Thanksgiving Mystery and handed it down to His holy disciples.

### **Method of Performing the Hymn:**

This hymn is performed by all the congregation with one spirit and one faith, as the church had received since the beginning that she should praise and pray fervently at the end of every liturgy, for the coming of the Lord. This is very clear in the Eucharist prayers recorded in the Didascalia.

In fact the coming of the Lord is fulfilled in every Liturgy, therefore, the Eucharist in the first Church was for the believers who were fervent in spirit, a time for indescribable praise and joy which extended to their houses, as the Book of Acts says: “*They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad hand sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.*” (Acts )

And the early communities were unified in Christ's Body by that mystery which is contained in practicing the Lord's command: "*Do this in remembrance of Me*", by continually celebrating the mystery of the Lord's Supper and remembering the Lord. Therefore, they were declaring their faith with indescribable fervor singing "Amen, Amen, Amen, Your death, O Lord we proclaim"; and the Lord was fulfilling His promise "*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*" (Acts )

The cymbals and triangle are not used in performing the hymn because all the congregation are in a state of supplication to God, raising their hands unto heaven and declaring their full readiness to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, and because the vigor of the hymn coming out from the depth of the congregation's heart would sweep away the sound of any musical instrument, however powerful the sound may be.

### **Musical Scale and Performance Speed:**

This hymn is in the musical scale of "hazzam" which has changed on the mouths of all the congregation, who perform it with great spiritual warmth from the depths of their hearts, into delightful power, which perhaps the greatest musical composer cannot make from the "Major Scale".

The speed of the hymn however is fast, and it is estimated to be around " beats/minute". If this speed is closed down considerably, the hymn will lose the sense of vigor and enthusiasm, which escapes the sincerity of the first fathers. Their chanting of this hymn was a kindling of the fire in their hearts, encouraging the whole congregation to proclaim the death of Him who died on their behalf.

### **Explanation and Contemplation:**

When the priest during the Mass holds the bread in his hands, the congregation remember our Lord Jesus sitting in the Upper Room and holding bread in His hands, surrounded by His disciples who represent the whole humankind. Among them were the rash and remonstrative, like Peter, and the skeptical like Thomas. And suddenly Christ breaks the bread and gives them all saying: *“Take it; this is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me ...”* (Luke ).

Oh Lord!! Couldn't the remonstrative Peter protest saying: “This is bread!! How could it be Your body, Lord?” And why did Thomas keep quiet although he suspected everything including the declared resurrection and asked to put his finger in the signs of the nails in order to believe?

They must have definitely seen the bread transforming into the body, and the wine into the Blood, so all skeptical words petrified in their mouths and instead of that they praised and went out to the mount of olives (Mark ).

For that, the whole congregation shout like the disciples saying: Amen. Amen. Your death, O Lord, we proclaim; and their chanting is of the sad ‘hazzam’ scale. But couldn't He who turned the bread into body change sadness into power! That power which makes all the congregation shout praise and go out proclaiming the death of Christ and confessing His holy resurrection and ascension unto heaven!

Some churches believe that the transformation of bread into the Body, and of wine into the Blood takes place when the priest says: “And this is My Body” and “And this is My Blood”. But the Coptic Church believes that the transformation takes place when the Holy Spirit descends as the priest inaudibly prays, while kneeling down saying:

[And we ask You, O Lord, our God, we Your sinful and unworthy servants, that Your Holy Spirit descend upon us and upon these gifts set forth, and purify them change them, and manifest them as a sanctification to Your saints.] This transformation is not strange, because Elijah the prophet shouted saying:

*“Answer me, O Lord, are God and that You are turning their hearts back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the word, the stones, and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench” ( Kings ).*

Therefore, St. Ambrose in his book on the sacraments says:

[If the word of man was sufficient for fire to fall from heaven, why couldn't the word of Christ transform the elements; for I read that He ordered the creatures to come into being and they did ... therefore, could the Lord's word, which were able to create from nonbeing that which was nonexistent, not change the existing things?]

Also St. Chrysostom said:

[He who had made these sacraments in that Supper will make them now again. We are nothing but servants, and He is the One who sanctifies and transforms them in reality.] He also said,

[Now Christ attends to adorn this table, for He who adorned that table, will adorn this one also; as it is not man who transforms the subject matters into Christ's Body and Blood but Christ Himself who was crucified for our sake. The priest stands fulfilling the form and prays with those words, but grace and power belong to God who does everything.]

St. Titus, the disciple of St. Chrysostom says in one of his letters:

[A sheet of paper made of papyrus is considered simple paper, but when it accepts the king's signature, it becomes a significant and great order. As such we comprehend the Godly Sacraments, for before the priest's supplication and before the descent of the Holy Spirit, we say that the subjects are simple bread and common wine, but after that awesome call and the descent of the righteous, life giving and worshipped Spirit, we believe and we confess that the subjects placed on the holy table are not common bread or wine but the Body of Christ and His Blood which purifies from all blemish those who partake of them in fear and eagerness.]

In ancient times the altar's curtain was usually closed during the descent of the Holy Spirit, during the citation of the Orthodox Creed, and during the confession and communion. This custom is still practiced in many Eastern churches, but our Coptic Church has cancelled it.

It is known that after the Holy Spirit's descent it is not allowed to make the sign of the cross by the priest's hand or cross on the Body or the Blood.

Coming back to this hymn, I feel that the whole congregation has composed it in the spirit when they comprehended for a moment this great

mystery which transformed the bread to Body and the wine to precious Blood, and they shouted together with one soul and one spirit: “Amen, Ton Thanaton.”

For the greatest melodist cannot compose a hymn with this power from a sad scale with five notes.

The musical analysis of this hymn is summarized as follows:

- The simplest musical scale
- The simplest rhythmical forms.
- The least number of tones (five), that is, the musical scale is not in its complete form of seven tones.
- There is no utilization of the vocal areas, in that there are no tones in the area of low keynotes or the area of high-pitched responses.
- There are no scale changes

Therefore, the question is: Where did the power of this hymn come from? And wherefrom the musical notes come, those notes that are rich in meaning despite the lack of tones and rhythm?

I cannot say anything but the following:

O, my Lord ... You who have inspired Your people by the Spirit to comprehend that this broken bread which is placed in the tray is Your Holy Body, and this wine which is poured in the Chalice is Your Blood which was shed in the cross ...

O, my Lord ... who have put live coal on the mouths of Your people, so they shouted with this hymn, saying: “Amen Ton Thanaton” do move my hard emotions so that I can compose a new hymn for You; for I often hold my chords and the tones glitter in my mind beyond measure, and the rhythms move within my soul with their numerous forms ... but the chords do not yield to me ... they are stubborn, they always wait for your Holy Spirit to come and bring out of the eater something to eat and out of the strong, something sweet ... I pray that your Holy Spirit move my voiceless chords so that they chant as the whole congregation chanted saying: “Amen Ton Thanaton” when they comprehended the Holy mystery.

**The Hymn “Amen Ton Thanaton”**

**Amen; Amen; Amen.**

**Your death, o Lord we proclaim;**

**Your holy Resurrection,**

**and ascension unto heaven, we confess**

**We praise You;**

**We bless You;**

**We thank You, O Lord;**

**And we entreat You, O our God.**

=====+=====



## The “Aripsalin” Hymn

- + It is a “ Batis Psali”<sup>1</sup>, i.e. Praise Song, for the three young men.
- + It is chanted in the Midnight Praise, after the Third Hos (Praise Song from the Holy Scriptures)
- + It is included in the Yearly Holy Psalmody (Page     – Arabic text)

### **A Hint on the Commencement of Hymns and Modes in the Early Church:**

So many everlasting poetic works have enriched the church so far. Among these are the works of St. Gregory Nazianz who compiled over four hundred rhymed poems. Some of them are fit for singing, but most of them have not yet been used in the church due to their deep wording and difficult scales.

Someone else preceded St. Gregory, namely “Sinosis of Cyrene” in Lybia (the town where St. Mark the apostle was born). Sinosis was appointed as Bishop for the five towns, and succeeded in taking care of his country. He was also gifted in compiling poems and hymns. It is noteworthy that he was the first to compile a hymn on Christ to be chanted accompanied by the harp.

Then by the appearance of St. Ephraim the Syrian who was called “The Harp of the Holy Spirit”, the church hymns in the East commenced a new epoch of spiritual fruitfulness.

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<sup>1</sup> It is called “Psali” from the Greek verb “psalo” which means: sing praise or play on a stringed instrument. It is mainly Coptic rhyming poems and has rhythm like poetry. It is chanted in glorification of the Lord and often arranged according to the order of the alphabet.

St. Augustine, in his “Confessions”, states that the churches of Milan were the first to use hymns according to the way of the eastern church. That was in the days of Queen Justina who persecuted St. Ambrose ( 384 A.D.)

St. Hilary of Poitiers (+ 367 A.D.) was the first to compose the Latin melodies and their rules for the Latin Church.

St. Ambrose succeeded him and enriched the Latin melodies. He was considered “Ephraim of the West”, the prince of the Latin melodies.

Praise Songs in the Syrian Church are affected by the Jewish way of singing. This same influence is apparent in some Coptic hymns included in the Yearly Holy Psalmody. However, those of Ephraim are inclined more to grief, regret, and remembrance of the coming suffering than to the joy of salvation, comfort and hope in the coming glory.

St. Ephraim was succeeded in compiling poetic hymns by Isaac of Antioch in mid fifth century, and by Jacob the Serougi in Metoposamia ( 521 A.D.)

Scholars have proved that the music scale of the Ancient Egyptian Praise Songs are similar to those of the Hebrew Praise Songs, especially the popular ones.

Those were followed by the Jewish scholar Samuel Nawmbourg ( 1656 - 1720 ) who compiled a book on “the Hymns of Israel”. In this book he

pointed out the great similarity between the church hymns and the Israeli hymns.

### **The Language and History of the Hymn:**

Actually, we notice in most cases where God bestows His Holy Spirit on prophets or ordinary people, they spoke God's words in the form of rhymed poetry. They uttered them like Praise Songs or anthems inspired and filled by the Holy Spirit. The Song of Moses and the people of Israel while crossing the Red Sea is an example. It is rich in mystic meanings referring to the salvation of the church from this world. Another example is the Song of Moses in his last farewell to the children of Israel, which is indeed invaluable. It says, *"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain; My speech distill as the dew, as rain drops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass. For I proclaim the name of the Lord: ascribe greatness to our God."* (Deut )

There is also the Song of Deborah the judge of Israel, which she chanted as a Praise Song accompanied by a music instrument. The words of its prelude are: *"I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will sing Praise to the Lord God of Israel ... awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song!"* (Judg )

From the wording of this Song we notice that Deborah was speaking by the Holy Spirit, as if the body was asleep and the spirit was conscious and awake!

Other poetic poems, specially the Book of Psalms, the Song of Songs, and some important prophecies of Isaiah the Prophet, these reveal the poetic rhyming subject to direct inspiration. They reveal also how the prophecy conform with the anthem, and how singing and praising rise high unto a state of inspiration and utterance by the Holy Spirit.

Psali, in general, is a rhymed and rhythmic song like poetry. It differs from Hos, since the latter is a psalm with its original words without any poetic or rhyming modification. Usually the beginnings of the stanzas (the four lines) are arranged in an alphabetical order.

Psali differs also in the way of chanting. For the Hos has its fixed yearly way of chanting, whereas the tune of the Psali differs twice a week. On Sundays, Mondays, and Tuesdays it has a short tune, called “Adam”, while on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, it has a long tune called “Batis”.

Furthermore the “Psali” has a yearly tune, a Kiahk tune, and a joyful tune for feasts.

Aripsalin, the hymn we are discussing here, is “Batis”, and it is quoted by Cantor “Sarkis” from the story of the three holy young men “Shadrach”, “Meshach” and “Abed-Nego” who refused to worship the image of gold which King Nebuchadnezzar had set. For that King had set a big image of gold, sixty cubits in height and six in width, and he sent a word that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and symphony with all kinds of music shall fall down and worship the gold image; and

whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Those three holy young men refused to comply to the command knowing the Lord's Commandment: "*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.*" This filled Nebuchadnezzar with rage and fury, and he gave the command that mighty men in his army bind them in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their garments and cast them into the midst of the burning fiery furnace after heating it seven times more than it was usually heated. The furnace, being exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

Having been cast in the furnace of fire, the king stood astonished because he saw four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they were not hurt, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. So they came out from the midst of the fire, and blessed their God who sent His Angel and delivered them from the fire (Da )

The composer of this Psali excelled in both Coptic and Greek languages. He arranged it in the Greek alphabetic order, having felt comfort, power, and blessing in the story. He thus wrote the Psali and composed its melody:

[ Sing to Him who was crucified for us, buried and arose, who did away with death and disdained it .. Praise Him and exalt Him ..

Come forth, O ye three young men, ye who Christ our God has raised and saved from Satan. Praise ye Him ...

Here is Emmanuel in our midst, ye Mishael, Meshach, speak with a voice of gladness. Praise ye Him. ]

Then he calls upon all to praise the Lord and bless His name, for there is no God other than Him who can save like that.

Amazing indeed also, that he did not call to praise only the angels and the heavenly host of the Lord, but he called also the sun, the moon and the stars; the rain and the dew; the clouds and the air; the souls and the spirits; the cold, the fire and the heat; the nights and the days; the light, the darkness and the lightening; the trees and every plant on the earth; every creature in the waters, on the mountains and in the thickets; the seas, the rivers, and the birds; the snow and the ice; the animals and the beasts. These all also should praise and bless and give glory to the Lord.

It is not strange to call upon the silent nature to praise, for David the Prophet also had called upon them to sing with him his Psalm ( ).

It is true that King Nebuchadnezzar changed the use of the music instruments that were made to praise God with and which David the Prophet used to praise God all the time. Instead he used the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltry to call people to worship gods made by human hands. It is not therefore strange that the saints quoted the story of the three young men in this regard. It is not strange that the fire which knows its Creator, and obey Him praise Him also. When the Lord commanded the fire that was heated seven times more than it was usually heated not to have any power on their bodies. The hair of their head was not singed, nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

Truly, fire knows its Creator, whereas God's people do not, as Isaiah the Prophet said, *"The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider."* (Isa )

### **The Occasion on which the Hymn is Chanted:**

This "Psali" is chanted in the Midnight Prayer after the third "Hos" with its long extended tunes and numerous stanzas and changeable modes. Aripsalin then comes with its rapid, short and concise tunes, fixed stanzas and sole mode repeated every stanza. This shows the complete musical awareness of the Coptic Church revealed in the order and succession of the hymns. She is keen that the long numerous stanza melodies be followed by one fixed repeated stanza melody to achieve audio balance. It is the method which great world musicians adopt preparing the "Repertoire".

### **Mode and Speed of Performance (Tempo):**

"Aripsalin" Hymn is one musical stanza only of "Agam Mode", with quadruple scale. Each stanza consists of eight bars; each of two phrases, and each phrase containing four bars.

The first phrase is in the form of a question, and the second the answer. The answer is accompanied by a fixed refrain: Hos Eroph Arihoo Chasf, which means "Praise and exalt Him"

The stanza starts usually with the preceding "Up Beat" called "Anacruse" or "Livari" which is fit as a beginning. It gives the impression of the image of the King's men taking up "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego" to cast them into the furnace.

The musical stanza in this hymn is a vivid example of the proper musical stanza with regard to the number of bars, the equality between the question (the first phrase) and the answer (the second phrase), and the sweetness and simplicity of the music, for it sticks to the ear so that the person repeats it continually without getting bored.

In the hymn “Aripsalin” this musical stanza is repeated twenty four times, and each time it ends with the fixed refrain Hos Eroph ...

The church used to sing this hymn in reciprocation between the chorus to the right of the altar “South” and those on the left “North”. They reciprocate every two quarters, whereas the common part between them is the refrain, besides the cymbals and the triangle.

### **Explanation and Contemplation:**

The hymn of the three young men is the hymn of all creation led by the church unto eternity where every thing ends. When the church chants this hymn, she is combining in one scene her existence in the present world of suffering and her existence in the eternity with its happiness.

In spite of her existence in the midst of the furnace of the world consuming fire, she is protected by the Son of God. Fire has no power on her. In spite of flames extending cubits high, the church crossed it as if it were gentle dew. The church lives the symbols of the hymn declaring the mystery of her ability to surpass any suffering and the mystery of the kingdom she lives on the earth.



In her belief that the world is subjected under her feet with the power of the cross as the fire had been subjected under the feet of the three young men through the mystery of the power of the fourth, she starts praising as if she was given the glory of the first Adam and his power over the whole creation in the Person of Jesus Christ who was given every dominion over everything in heaven and on earth. Thus the whole creation on by one raises their voices and all take part with them:

“Praise ye Him; Glorify ye Him; Exalt ye Him forever”

as if they were predicting the new creation with its new heaven and new earth.

The melody of “Aripsalin” accompanied by the cymbals and triangle which increase its joyfulness, is a rapid melody that does not depend on Melisma. It rather depends on one fixed combined stanza based on its beauty and sweetness. Though repeated twenty four successive times, no one falls in distraction or feels bored. But its repetition rather makes it stick more and more to the ear, then to the heart. And through meditation in its meaning one gets attached to God.

I always get overwhelmed by a beautiful feeling whenever I chant this hymn with its repetitions and refrains with the deacons. Each time I repeat a stanza I rise up a step a step higher until I attain such height as described by David the Prophet in the Psalm, *“I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God; with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.”* (Ps )

The early fathers of the church, having realized the importance of repetition for lifting up the emotions gradually even unto heaven, introduced in all the church prayers and hymns such repetition, both in musical tunes and in wording.

Besides lifting up the emotions gradually unto heaven, repetition establishes the meaning in the heart and carves God's words in the subconscious. Then the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart. The word "Kerie Elisoon" for instance is repeated dozens of times with varied tunes throughout prayers.

Actually, Aripsalin, with its twenty four stanzas, is a wonderful model of a simple melody by which repetition the emotions rise high and the heart gets purified.

O our God, the God of Schadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who delivered them from the furnace of fire and let not the fire have any power over their bodies, do deliver us also from the consuming fire of trial which had burnt the Virgin of the Song so she cried out "*Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me.*" (Song )

If You will ever permit the sun of trials to burn us, do come to us as You came to the three holy young men and delivered them from the burning fire of the furnace. Let Your voice within us extinguish the flames of fire.

O You the God of those three young men, who bent down the heavens and came down into the furnace to raise them up, who saved them from

Satan, do come down unto our humbleness and raise us up to praise You with them incessantly, saying “Aripsalin”...

### **The “Aripsalin” Hymn**

**Sing to Him who was crucified for us;  
Who was buried and arose;  
Who has done away with death and disdained it;  
Praise ye Him and exalt Him high.**

**Put off the old man,  
And put on the new distinguished one;  
Draw near to the great mercy;  
Praise ye Him and exalt Him high.**

**O Christians, priests and deacons;  
Give glory to the Lord for His is deserving;  
Praise .....**

**Come to us, ye three young men,  
Who Christ our God has rescued and saved them;  
Praise .....**

**For the sake of your God Messiah the Benevolent;  
Come to us, O Hananiah;  
Praise .....**

**O Azariah the Zealous,  
evening, morning and noon  
give glory to the power of the Trinity;  
praise .....**

**Behold, Emmanuel in our midst,  
O Mishael. Speak with a joyful voice;  
Praise .....**

**Come together and persist all of you;  
Speak with the priests.  
Praise the Lord, ye all of His works;  
Praise .....**

**Behold the heavens utter God's glory unto this day;  
O ye the angels who He has created;  
Praise .....**

**Now, ye the Lord's host, bless His holy name;  
Ye the sun, the moon, and the stars;  
Praise .....**

**And ye the rains, and the dew;  
Praise our Savior,  
For He is the God of our fathers;  
Praise .....**

**Give glory, ye clouds and wind;  
Ye spirits and cold; Ye fire and heat;  
Praise .....**

**Ye nights and days; Light and darkness and lightening;  
Say Glory to You, O Lover of mankind;  
Praise .....**

**Ye trees and every plant on the earth;  
Every creature in waters, on mountains and plains;  
Praise .....**

**And ye the seas and rivers,  
Praise without slackness the Lord King of Kings;  
Praise .....**

**We also, looking at them,  
Let us say with all of these: Bless the Lord, ye birds;  
Praise .....**

**Ye snow and ice; Bests and animals;  
Bless the Lord of lords;  
Praise .....**

**Praise the Lord as proper for Him,  
Not as the transgressors, ye mankind;  
Praise .....**

**Glory and honor, O Israel; Offer before Him,  
with joyful voices, O priests of Emmanuel;  
Praise .....**

**O ye the ministers of the True God,  
And the souls of the righteous, The humble and loving;  
Praise .....**

**God my God is He who saved you from danger,  
O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego;  
Praise .....**

**Make haste with all caution,  
Ye the godly of the Lord and all creation He has made;  
Praise .....**

**Coolness and repose give us all;  
Without failure, that we may enjoy singing;  
Praise .....**

**Also Your poor servant Sarkis,  
Let him be without condemnation,  
That he may say with those,  
Praise .....**



## **The “Agios” Hymn**

### **The TRISAGION**

+ It is chanted before the Prayer of the Gospel in the Holy Mass.

#### **The Language of the Hymn:**

All the text is in Greek.

#### **The Occasions on which the Hymn is Chanted:**

It is chanted with a joyful melody before reading the Bible on the following occasions:

- In the Holy Masses of the Lord’s Feasts (Grand and Minor)
- In the Masses that take place in the <sup>th</sup> of each Coptic month (in remembrance of the Annunciation, Nativity and Resurrection )
- In the rite of Matrimony Service.

It was said that this chant was declared as a song used by angels in heaven, through a divine revelation in Constantinople at the time of Heracles the Patriarch ( - ).

The Oriental Churches believe that its origin dates back to the time of our Lord Jesus burial, when Joseph and Nicodemus were enshrouding the body, they got astonished how was it possible for the Giver of life to die!! So they praised Him saying: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal”

There are several hymns for those Holy words: During the grand festivals and matrimonies, the hymn is chanted with the joyful tune. Through normal

days (of the liturgical year) it is chanted with the joyful tune without the Melisma toning that is in the beginning. During the Good Friday and funerals it is chanted using an exceeding mournful tune in its grief and length.

### **The Method of its Performance:**

All the congregation with the chorus of deacons chant it accompanied with the cymbals and triangle. Sometimes a pleasant dialogue takes place between a solo singer and the congregation with the chorus, especially in the Melisma toning of the first letter of the word “Agios”, which usually is started by the solo singer and then iterated by the chorus of deacons, and the dialogue continues.

### **Mode and Speed of Performance (Tempo):**

The joyful hymn we are speaking about starts with Sika mode with a melisma toning of the first letter of the word “Agios” which means “Holy”, in a quadruple scale.

This hymn is featured by having all its musical sentences iterated twice, as if it is really the hymn that is chanted by the Seraphim and Cherubim that have the six wings: *“They cry out one to the other sending up the hymn of victory and a salvation that is ours, with a voice full of glory. Praising, singing and crying out, saying: Holy Lord of Sabaoth ....”*

Many churches care to divide this iteration into two groups of deacons or a solo singer and a group of deacons, to express the meaning of “crying out one to the other”



Nice to note that the first musical sentences of this Trisagion hymn, contain three measures only, this is not common in traditional form of the musical stanzas, for usually the musical stanzas are composed of two phrases, each one composed of four measures, as if the Holy Spirit set three measures to advert to the three Sanctus.

The hymn is featured also by its lively tone, its speed is approximately beats per minute, the musical stanza is fluent, velvet and lilt, inspiring people to happiness and rapture, this may confirm that this song is chanted by the angels in front of the Divine throne, for near the throne there are absolute happiness that is reflected by joyful melodies.

The musical stanzas also are animated, with high technique and cleverness; its performance requires a skillful and a trained voice, may be this also is another evidence that it is one of the hymns that are chanted by the angels - the specialized and trained choruses of praise.

### **Explanation and Contemplation:**

This old praise that was first uttered by Joseph and Nicodemus, was passed to the Syrian church through St. Peter who directed them to chant it before reading the Gospel in the Holy mass.

Some of the old manuscripts in the church support this opinion: [When Nicodemus saw the Master Christ died, he was amazed that the chief of life dies, He who raised Lazarus from death after four days in the tomb, so he hailed Him saying: "Where is Your might, O Lord!" Immediately he heard angels chanting from heaven : "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal",

consequently he acclaimed saying : “Who was crucified for us have mercy on us”] The church arranged that this praise be chanted in the Holy Mass and all other church services, to be iterated three times confessing the Divinity of the Son. She also arranged a long beautiful hymn but mourning one for the Good Friday, in which the phrase “Who was crucified for us have mercy on us” is iterated three times, in an answer to the Jews that took council together against the Lord and against His Anointed, despising His Divinity and saying : “Crucify Him, crucify Him” three times.

This praise continued to be used in all churches until the fourth century, and when the heresy of Arius the heretic was spread, the three locutions of nativity, crucifixion and resurrection were omitted, but our Orthodox Church continued to use it, in its complete form to the present time.

Some western Christians refused this praise assuming that it gestures to a crucifixion of the three Hypostasis. The church intent in iterating the word “AgiOS” or “Holy” in each sentence, is to glorify the Word incarnate in His three acts in the plan of salvation (Nativity, crucifixion, & resurrection). If each word “AgiOS” is meant to indicate a Hypostasis then the result will be nine Hypostasis since it is iterated nine times.

In this hymn the dialogue is graduated between the solo singer and the group in a musical sentence, around the letter “Alpha”, the first letter of the word “AgiOS”.

This hymn is featured by a musical sentence so beautiful, spiritual, warm and mighty. In my personal opinion it is one of the most beautiful hymns

that touched my heart, I usually care to finalize the praising ceremonies with it, making it the last hymn that enters to the ears and hearts of the chanters as well as the listeners.

I can not forget the Swedish audience insisting on the repetition of this hymn in the “Orient” ceremonies in Stockholm, as if it were also revealed to them with a Divine revelation that it is a praise used by the angels in heaven.

The hymn ascends gradually by iterating each sentence twice between the singer and the chorus, to the appropriate time for uttering the word “AgiOS”, as if all the previous singing was just a musical and spiritual prelude for uttering the divine word “AgiOS”, at which all the congregation bow in devoutness.

Then the hymn continues in the normal way (as used through the liturgical year) in another new mode (Agam), another new dual measure, and different rhythmic forms less in motion compared to the melisma toning used in the letter alpha, in a lesser speed than the beginning, this slowdown proceed from the Congregation’s feelings of the Sanctifying word, as they bow at the word “AgiOS” which is iterated nine times.

Agam Mode is a strong musical mode, melodies are covered with dignity, rhythmic forms started to move lively, the early joint delightful hymns “Legato” became sporadic “Stacatto”, expressing the reverence in front of the Divine presence, glorifying the power of the Holy Immortal.

I also cry out to You the Holy Immortal, asking You to make me die for Your sake all day long.

O You, who abolished death by Your death, and broken its thorn;

O You, who killed sin by the tree of the cross, and by Your death You made alive the dead man, whom You created with Your own hands, and had died in sin; put to death our pains by Your healing and life-giving passions.

Grant me, O Holy Mighty, who manifested resurrection by Your resurrection, that I may know You and the power of Your resurrection, and that my weakness and faults may be perfected by Your strength.

Grant me, O Holy Immortal, a life with you: *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the Only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent”* (John )

Put in my mouth, the Cherubim chant to shout with them continually.

Grant me, O Holy, to be worthy to stand on the sea of glass, and to hold Your harp singing with the victorious gathering: “Agios O Theos” “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal”

**The “AgiOS” Hymn**

**Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal;  
Who was born from the Virgin,  
Have mercy upon us.**

**Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal;  
Who was crucified for us,  
Have mercy upon us.**

**Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal;  
Who arose from the dead and ascended unto heaven,  
Have mercy upon us.**

**Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;  
Now and for ever and ever,  
And for the age of ages. Amen.**

**O You Holy Trinity,  
Have mercy upon us.**



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