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“We exalt you Mother of the True Light:” Coptic Hymn or Creed, and the Date of Origin

Introduction

Today in the Coptic Church a text precedes the Creed during several services of the Liturgy of the Hours. This text has become known as the “Introduction to the Creed,” [IttC] and is generally recited in the same manner as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed that follows it. Text and translation are as such,

ΤΕΝΘΙΣΙ ΜΜΟ ΘΜΑΥ ΜΠΙΟΥΩΙΝΙ ΝΤΑΦΜΥΙ: ΤΕΝΤΩΟΥ ΝΕ Ω ΘΗΘΟΥΛΒ ΟΥΟΣ ΜΜΑΣΝΟΥΤ: ΧΕ ΛΡΕΜΙΣΙ ΝΑΝ Μ`ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΠΙΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΡΑ: ΛΑΙ ΟΥΟΣ ΛΑΧΩΤ ΗΝΕΝΨΥΧΗ.	We exalt you, Mother of the true Light. We glorify you, O saint and God-bearer (<i>Theotokos</i>), for you brought forth unto us the <i>Savior</i> of the whole <i>world</i> . He came and saved our <i>souls</i> .
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ΟΥΩΟΥ ΝΑΚ ΠΕΝΝΗΒ ΠΕΝΟΥΡΟ ΠΙΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ: ΗΨΟΥΨΟΥ ΗΝΙΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ: ΠΙΧΛΟΜ ΗΤΕ ΝΙΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ: ΗΘΕΛΗΛ ΗΝΙΔΙΚΕΟΣ: ΗΤΑΧΡΟ ΗΝΙΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ: ΗΧΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΗΤΕ ΝΙΡΕΧΕΡΙΝΟΒΙ. ¹	Glory to You, our Master, our King, <i>Christ</i> , the pride of the <i>Apostles</i> , the crown of the <i>martyrs</i> , the joy of the <i>righteous</i> , the foundation of the <i>churches</i> , the forgiveness of sinners.
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¹ *Paris BnF Copt.* 11, 22, 34, 69, 75, 76 - ΗΧΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΗΤΕ ΝΙΡΕΧΕΡΙΝΟΒΙ (forgiveness of sinners); *Paris BnF Copt.* 81 – only has ΗΧΩ ΕΒΟΛ (forgiveness). The Arabic is always translated as “غفران الخطايا” (forgiveness of

ΤΕΝΣΙΩΩϞ Ν̄Ϟ-Ϟ̄ΡΙΑΣ ΕΘΟΥΑΒ: ΕΣ ΔΕΝ
 ΟΥΜΕΘΝΟΥϞ̄ ΝΟΥΩΤ: ΤΕΝΟΥΩΩΤ We proclaim the Holy Trinity in one
 ἸΜΜΟΣ: ΤΕΝϞ̄ΩΟΥ ΝΑΣ: ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΛΕΗΣΟΝ: Godhead. We worship Her. We glorify Her.⁴
 ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΛΕΗΣΟΝ:² ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΥΛΟΓΥΣΟΝ. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord bless.
 ἈΜΗΝ.³ Amen.⁵

In the minds of many Copts today, IttC is considered credal in itself. The oral tradition ties this text to the Council of Ephesus (431 AD),⁶ and the assumption is as follows: The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) produced the Nicene Creed, The Council of Constantinople (381 AD) expanded the Creed to what is today the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed, and The Council of Ephesus (431 AD) produced the Introduction to the Creed. The text itself is frequently attributed to Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376 – 444 AD), who championed the Council of Ephesus. The narrative is that Cyril authored this text in a local synod in Alexandria upon returning from the Council of Ephesus.⁷

sins) or “غافر الخطايا” (forgiver of sins). *MS-P*, Burmester, and Youssef have ἸΧΩ ΕΒΟΛ ἸΤΕ ΝΗΟΒΙ (forgiveness of sins).

² *Paris BnF Copt. 34* has three ΚΕ, and *BnF Copt. 76* has four ΚΕ. *BnF Copte 69 and 81* stops after ΤΕΝϞ̄ΩΟΥ ΝΑΣ, are missing the Lord have mercy prayers and Lord bless. Amen.

³ Text taken from *Paris BnF Copt. 11 (1537)*, f244. Critical differences highlighted.

⁴ The Word “Trinity” is feminine in Coptic, thus the phrases ΤΕΝΟΥΩΩΤ ἸΜΜΟΣ: ΤΕΝϞ̄ΩΟΥ ΝΑΣ, literally translate to “We worship Her. We glorify Her.” Burmester and Youssef have translated these phrases as “It we worship, It we glorify” to avoid assigning a gender to the Trinity. The Coptic church usually translated these phrases “We worship Him. We glorify Him,” which is an acceptable translation that follows the Medieval Arabic translation, which used the masculine pronoun endings أسجد له وتمجده. Here I kept the feminine pronouns to stay true to the Coptic text, but this is not to be understood as ascribing a specific gender to the Trinity.

⁵ Italicized words are Greek in origin.

⁶ Part of the controversy that led to the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) was the identity of the one born of Mary as reflected in her title *Theotokos*, which was allegedly opposed by Nestorius and favored by Cyril of Alexandria. After correspondence via letters, the conflict between Nestorius and Cyril escalated, eventually warranting a Council called by Emperor Theodosius II. Cyril attended the council, bringing over fifty bishops with him and was present until at least the sixth session on July 22, 431. He may have left Ephesus illegally, and Nestorius accuses him of bribery to depart to Alexandria before the Emperor’s dismissal. Cyril is reported to have returned into Alexandria on Oct 31, 431. For more details on the council, see: George A. Bevan, *The New Judas: The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics, 428-451 CE* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), pp. 107-108, p. 181, pp. 199-204.

⁷ See for example: Bishop Angaelos. *The Altar in The Midst of Egypt*. (Stevsnage, UK: Coptic Orthodox Church Centre, 2000), p. 42.

There is hardly any serious scholarship on IttC, other than the research of Youhanna Nessim Youssef.⁸ Youssef concluded that the text was composed shortly after the Council of Ephesus by a monastic community in Lower Egypt.⁹ He also questioned its credal status, pointing out that “all historical sources related to the Council of Ephesus agreed that the council did not issue any dogmatic creed”.¹⁰ The paper at hand will contribute to the scholarly discussion started by Youssef and will explore other sources that may have been overlooked in previous research. To that end, the study at hand aims to accomplish two tasks: (1) expanding on Youssef’s skepticism of the “Introduction to the Creed” as credal statement, this paper will show that the text is a hymn and not a creed at all; (2) additionally, the challenges in dating this text will be highlighted, thus expressing reservation in the confidence of the proposed date.

Hymnography and Form Criticism Definition of Hymn

Several definitions of a “hymn,” exist in the scholarship. Going back to the Medieval era, Thomas Aquinas defined hymns as such, *Hymnus est laus Dei cum cantico. Canticum autem exultatio mentis de aeternis habita, prorumpens in vocem*, “A hymn is the praise of God with song; a song is the exultation of the mind dwelling on eternal things, bursting forth in the voice”.¹¹ In modern academics, Biblical scholars began to identify hymnic elements in the New Testament,¹² and through this exercise, “hymns” began to be defined. Furley and Bremer share a broad definition of a hymn, defining it as any song of praise with or without a meter; in addition, they

⁸ Youssef’s main conclusion are found in this article: Youhanna Nessim Youssef. “The Introduction to the Creed (Revisited).” *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte* 47 (2008): 93–111. Minor remarks are also found in his later article: Youhanna Nessim Youssef. “Liturgical Texts Relating to Council of Ephesus (12 Tût).” *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 17 (2020), pp. 273-297.

⁹ Youssef concludes, “Hence this prayer was composed soon after the council of Ephesus, (as it is attested by an inscription and the martyrdom) in a monastic milieu (where it is found in the monastic prayers of vespers, matins, and the prayers of the hours). This monastic milieu was in Lower Egypt, perhaps Scetis or Kellia, (as it is not attested in Upper Egypt). The author used the common attributes of the Virgin and Christ as in circulation in the fifth and sixth centuries.” Youssef, “Introduction”, p. 102.

¹⁰ Youssef, “Introduction”, p. 101.

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas. *Psalmos Davidis Expositio*, prooemium.

¹² John A McGuckin, “Poetry and Hymnography (2): The Greek World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 641-656, esp. p. 643.

set several criteria that distinguish it from common speech.¹³ Vollenweider, defines a hymn as a song in praise of a divine figure composed in a poetic meter¹⁴ and used in cultic activities or private devotion. Matthew Gordley materializes the definition even further, assigning the meaning of “hymn” as a self-contained composition of relatively short length (most are between 4 and 35 lines, though longer hymns are attested as well), whose contents are primarily centered on praise of the divine in a descriptive or declarative style, which may be expressed in direct address (e.g. You alone are...) or third person (e.g. She shows mercy...), whether in poetry or prose, and whose primary purpose may have been liturgical or instructional.¹⁵

Although, the definitions do not concretely agree on every detail, a common point of agreement is that a hymn is centered around praise. When inspecting the text of IttC, many words of praise are clearly apparent: “We exalt you,” “We glorify you,” “Glory to You,” “We worship,” and many descriptive glorifications: “pride of the Apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the joy of the righteous, the foundation of the churches, the forgiveness of sinners.” Since this text is a short composition that is clearly centered around praise and used liturgically, it matches Gordley’s definition of a hymn.

When comparing the words of praise in this text with other well-known hymns a striking similarity appears. For example, “Glory to You” is a common praise in hymns and is present in one of the most recited hymns in the East: “Glory to you, Lord. Glory to You”¹⁶ and “Glory to the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit; Now and forever and unto the ages amen”.¹⁷ These short doxologies alone are not enough to categorize hymns, as they also end prayers, homilies, and even biblical readings; yet, in conjunction with the other hymnal elements, these short phrases signify praise. IttC begins with “We exalt you,” which is a reference to the *Magnificat* of Mary saying, “for the Almighty has exalted me”.¹⁸ These same words are found throughout

¹³ William D. Furley and J.M Bremer, *Greek Hymns: Selected Cult Songs from the Archaic to the Hellenistic Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 2.

¹⁴ cf. Benjamin Edsall and Jennifer R. Strawbridge, “The Songs We Used to Sing? Hymn ‘Traditions’ and Reception in Pauline Letters,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37, 3 (2015), p. 296.

¹⁵ Matthew E. Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context: An Exegesis in Light of Jewish and Greco-Roman Hymnic and Epistolary Conventions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 32-33.

¹⁶ “Δόξα Σοι Κύριε, δόξα Σοι!” Is found in the Coptic Liturgy in various places, especially around the Gospel and before Communion. This short glorification is also found in the Byzantine Tradition in various places in liturgical services.

¹⁷ “Δόξα Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι. Καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν” is a short glorification that is said before the prayer of thanksgiving in the Divine Liturgy, at the end of the Trisagion in the Liturgy of the word, and between the litanies of the liturgy of the hours. This hymn is also found in the Byzantine Tradition in various liturgical services.

¹⁸ Luke 1:49.

Coptic hymnography. The Gospel Response in the month of *Kboiak* starts with these same words of praise, “We exalt you in worthiness with Elizabeth your kinswoman saying, blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb”.¹⁹ Also, hymns of the midnight praise and the annual communion hymn have, “Therefore we exalt you worthily, with prophetic hymnology”.²⁰ Overall, IttC exhibits hymnic praise language and fits the definitions of a hymn proposed by scholars of form criticism.

Characteristics of Hymns

In evaluating ancient hymns, Edsall and Strawbridge (building upon earlier criteria of Furley and Bremer) identified a few different features that are common in hymns of antiquity and late antiquity. These are summarized below:

- 1.2.1 Melody, meter, or rhythm
- 1.2.2 Strophic structure
- 1.2.3 Included invocation or prayer
- 1.2.4 Parallelism
- 1.2.5 Linked to encomia
- 1.2.6 Repetition (tied to an occasion)
- 1.2.7 Uttered by a group in unison
- 1.2.8 Musical accompaniment or dance

Criterion 1.2.7 does not seem helpful since creeds are also uttered by groups in unison. Moreover, there are many hymns that are sung by a single chanter whether in an assembly or in personal devotion. With this in mind, criterion 1.2.7 will not be evaluated in depth, although it worth noting that the text is recited in unison, much like the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed, in Coptic Churches today.²¹ With respect to musical accompaniment, it is impossible to

¹⁹ See Melody section below for the Coptic text and meter.

²⁰ “ΘΕΕ ΦΛΙ ΤΕΝΣΙΣΙ ΜΜΟ ΑΣΙΩΣ ΔΕΝ ΖΑΝΥΜΝΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΜΠΡΟΦΗΤΙΚΟΝ,” is a sung refrain of the Midnight Sunday Theotokia.

²¹ The recitation of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in a liturgical setting seems to be mentioned first as a practice in Antioch. Theodore the Reader traces the practice to Antioch under the patriarchy of Peter the Fuller in 471 AD and to have been adopted into Constantinople by the Patriarch Timotheus in 511 AD. Both Peter and Timotheus used the liturgical recitation of the creed to protest, as non-Chalcedonians, against Chalcedonian additions. If this is true, the Miaphysite-heavy Egypt would certainly be alongside this same group and likely adopted the practice around the same time. On the other hand, James of Edessa believes the

know if this text was ever accompanied by musical instruments or dance, especially since musical instruments are not typically used in Coptic Orthodox Churches today, except for simple percussions (cymbals and triangle). The musicality of the text and its ability to be chanted will be evaluated in other criteria. Thus, criterion 1.2.8 will also not be evaluated.

It is important to note that the outlined criteria are not completely authoritative, and many well-known hymns that are chanted in various liturgical traditions may lack one or a few of these characteristics. However, a text that fits most of the criteria would clearly be written with the intention to be used liturgically as a hymn.

Melody, meter, or rhythm

One distinctive feature of hymns is their relationship to music. This might be the biggest distinction of hymns from normal speech. Musicality is the feature that sets apart hymns from prayers. Of course, liturgically everything could be considered “prayer,” but this section will use that word in its form critical understanding. Pulleyn suggests that “hymns were of their essence musical and prayers were not”.²² Joseph Kroll, who struggled to differentiate hymns and prayers finally admits that prayer is “familiar speech of man with God,” which differs in form and context from hymns.²³ Kroll, however, admits that prayers and hymns overlap. Hymns can also be constructed from words of prayers, for example “Lord have mercy” is a short prayer found in many hymns.

Since hymns are tied to music and are not bound by “normal speech,” they tend have poetical elements. Such elements may vary depending on style and language. Hebrew poetry, for instance, utilizes stylistic parallelism, whereas Greek poetry exhibits a consistent meter that is carried through in every line or strophe.²⁴ Coptic poetry is still understudied, but available scholarship highlights some elements of both parallelism and meter. Ilona Borsai²⁵ in her study

creed was adopted into a liturgical setting soon after it was composed, but not much detail is given. For a fuller discussion, see: Henry Jenner “Liturgical Use of Creeds,” in *Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4, ed. Charles Herbermann, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

²² Simon Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 54.

²³ Kroll, *Die christliche Hymnodik* referenced and translated in Gordley, *Colossian*, p. 35.

²⁴ Gordley, *Colossian*, pp. 36-37.

²⁵ Ilona Borsai was a musicologist who was educated in Hungary and used her training in the study of archaic European folk music as an informative tool in her transcriptions of Coptic chant. The cooperation between the Coptic Church and this Hungarian musicologist is undoubtedly of great importance as it allows one to become acquainted for the first time with Coptic chant on an intimate and detailed scale. Borsai’s research led to studies of Egyptian music: speculative studies on ancient Pharaonic music, transcriptions of Egyptian folk music, and vast studies of Coptic music. Borsai used quartertone key signatures tailored for the transcribed

of the Coptic *Theotokias* (praises sung to the *Theotokos* during the Midnight praise), concluded that all *Theotokias* shared a common meter.²⁶ This is not surprising, since the groups of *Theotokias* are chanted and share unified annual tunes.

Coptic music is entirely vocal, monodic and sung acapella by men with occasional use of hand-held percussion instruments.²⁷ It is in this musical environment that Coptic hymns thrive. Coptic hymns are generally intended to be sung, from complex prolonged hymns of special occasions down to the simple diaconal commands such as *Estatheete* “Stand up” recorded musically by Ernest Newlandsmith.²⁸ Some sung hymns in the Coptic church do not have a meter or rhyme, but many of the monastic compositions, especially of the Midnight Psalmody, have both.²⁹

Similar to Greek verse, there is a basic unit of time *mora* (plural *morae*), with a short or unstressed syllable constituting a single *mora* and a long or stressed syllable constituting two *morae*.³⁰ IttC exhibits clear musical rhythm; it has both a meter and rhyming scheme. The meter of the text is 3 *morae* per foot and the feet are iambic, made of iambs (unstressed followed by a stressed syllable) or tribrachs (three unstressed syllables). The first strophe is consistently iambic heptameter of seven tri-*morae* feet per line. The second strophe is similar but varies from iambic tetrameter to hexameter, having four to six tri-*morae* feet.

U U U/U -/U - /U -/U U U/U -/U - ||
ΤΕΝΙΣΙ ΝΜΟ ΘΜΑΥ ΝΠΙΟΥΩΝΙ ΝΤΑΦΜΥ:
U -/U U U/U -/U -/U U U/U -/U -/U - ||
ΤΕΝΤΩΟΥ ΝΕ Ω ΘΗΘΟΥΑΒ ΟΥΟΣ ΝΜΑΣΝΟΥΤ:
U -/U -/U - / U -/U - /U U U/U - ||
ΧΕ ΔΡΕΝΙΣΙ ΝΑΝ ΝΠΣΩΤΗΡ ΝΠΙΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΡΦ:
U -/U -/U U U/U - /U - ||
ΑΦΙ ΟΥΟΣ ΔΦΩΤ ΝΝΕΝΤΥΧΗ.

U -/U - /U - /U U U/U -/U - ||
ΟΥΩΟΥ ΝΑΚ ΠΕΝΝΗΒ ΠΕΝΟΥΡΟ ΠΙΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ:
U U U / U -/U - / U - || U U U / U - / U - || U -/U - /U -/U - ||
ΠΩΟΥΩΟΥ ΝΝΙΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ: ΠΙΧΛΟΜ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ: ΠΘΕΛΗΛ ΝΝΙΔΙΚΕΟΣ:
U U U/U -/U - /U - || U -/U - /U - /U U U ||
ΠΤΑΧΡΟ ΝΝΙΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ: ΠΧΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΝΟΒΙ.

Coptic chant, iterating the pitches with consistent microtonal inflections. cf Mina Mark Hanna, “How Early Can You Go? Coptic Chant in Western Transcription,” *Journal of the International Society for Orthodox Church Music* 3 (2018): pp. 138-150, pp. 142-143.

²⁶ Borsai, “Metrique”, p. 40.

²⁷ Hanna, “How Early”, p. 140.

²⁸ Hanna, “How Early”, pp. 140-141.

²⁹ cf Borsai, “Metrique,” 20, 40. See also: Magdi Rashidi Beshay Awad, *Untersuchungen Zur Koptischen Psalmodie: Christologische Und Liturgische Aspekte*, vol. 41, of *Studien Zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin: LIT, 2007), pp. 17-18.

³⁰ William S Annis, “Introduction to Greek Meter”, *Aoidoi*, (2006), pp. 1-15, esp. p. 3.

There is also a rhyming scheme with each line ending in a stressed e-vowel in the first strophe and a stressed -os syllable in the second strophe. This rhyming scheme is carried throughout the two strophes until the end of the second strophe where the meter continues but the rhyme drops. Rhyming syllables are bolded in the text.

The third strophe centers around worshipping the Trinity, and is not unique to this hymn. This is clearly a liturgical epilogue that is used in the conclusions of other hymns in the Coptic Church and does not follow the meter and rhyming scheme of one single hymn. This epilogue use is very common, even in Coptic hymnography today, since the speed and tune typically change for these concluding epilogues when compared to the rest of the hymn. For example, *Hiten nīpresvia*,³¹ *Shere ne Maria*,³² and even the Trisagion itself (ending with *Doxa Patri...*)³³ have Trinitarian epilogues that are not unique to the hymn and change musically from the rest of the hymn.

It is worth noting that by the first century AD, praising a god in prose became more common, and by the second century such praise was more widely referred to as a ‘hymn.’³⁴ Thus meter, rhyme, and rhythm are not a sole definitive indication of a hymn, but their presence advances the argument towards the hymn status of IttC. The presence of monastic hymns exhibiting similar metered rhythm, coupled with Youssef’s conclusion of the monastic origin, begin to orchestrate a fuller picture surrounding IttC.

Strophic structure

One aspect of hymns is that they can be broken down into chantable sections, named *strophes*.

³¹ This hymn, which in modern times precedes the dialogue of the Anaphora, has two strophes; the first is translated “Through the intercessions of the Theotokos St Mary, O Lord grant us the forgiveness of our sins.” The second strophe has a different rhythm and tune, and it is found in other hymns as well; it is translated “We worship You O Christ, with Your Good Father, and the Holy Spirit, For You have come and saved us.”

³² This hymn, which in modern times precedes the reading of Acts, has two parts. One part is a salutary part that typically starts with a salutation to St Mary, “Hail to You Mary, the fair dove, who has given birth to God the Word.” The chanters can add more salutations to other saints and angels in this part. The second part again is an epilogue that is found in many hymns. This second part has a different rhythm and tune than the first, and it reads “Blessed are You indeed, with Your Good Father, and the Holy Spirit, for You have come and saved us have mercy on us”.

³³ The Trisagion in the Coptic church is also made up of two parts: one part is made of the Thrice “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal” with the Christological sentences between them. The second part is the ending epilogue of “Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...”

³⁴ B. Edsall and J.R. Strawbridge, “The Songs We Used to Sing?...”, pp. 290-311, esp. p. 299.

Often, a single strophe will be centered around one thought, figure, or idea set in a poetic tone. It is not difficult to see the strophic structure of IttC. The text can easily be sectioned to three strophes, both by the central topic and by the musical poetic features discussed earlier.

The first strophe exalts the *Theotokos* Mary, centering her role in the incarnation as the reason of her exaltation. This strophe is the most consistent musically, following an iambic heptameter rhythm throughout. This strophe is calling on the believers to do an action, “We exalt you...We glorify you.” The strophe is clearly addressed to the *Theotokos* Mary and statements about Christ are in the third person.

The subject quickly changes in the second strophe, with the direct address to Christ. The second strophe is centered around Christ and exclusively contains words of praise. There is no “action” or request being offered; the believers are not performing an action or asking for anything. This strophe is simply a declaration of Christ’s glory, followed by attributing descriptive praise to Him (pride of the Apostle, crown of martyrs, etc.).

The final strophe reverts to the style of the first strophe with another feminine subject—The Trinity. This strophe is entirely in the third person; it does not address the Trinity in the vocative, instead, it offers praise and worship using third-person pronouns. In Coptic, the pronouns of the Trinity are all feminine, but in Arabic *الثالوث* (the Trinity) is a masculine noun, making translation into English challenging. Burmester and Youssef both use the preposition “It” when talking about the Trinity to avoid this gender discrepancy; however, this translation creates a perception problem in English, since this pronoun is typically used with non-rational creatures, impersonal ideas, or inanimate objects—none of which categorize the Trinity. The Coptic church typically assigns the pronoun “Him,” which agrees with the Arabic translation of the text, but the shift from feminine (first strophe) to masculine (second strophe) to feminine again (third strophe)—clear in the Coptic—becomes lost in translation. In this strophe, the believers carry out actions, “We proclaim...We worship...We glorify,” again mirroring the first strophe.

Margaret Alexiou notes that a three-strophic structure in hymns are ancient and can even trace back to the time of Homer. She gives the following examples from the *Iliad*:

Andromache (24.725-45)

A 725-30: Direct address and reproach to Hector for having died so young, *ἄνερ, ἀπ’ αἰῶνος νέος ὤλεο ...*

B 731-9: Narrative, in which her own and her son’s future is imagined.

A 740-5: Renewed address and reproach to Hector for having left her such grief, *ἄρρητον ... γόον καὶ πένθος ἔθηκας, | Ἐκτορ.*

Hekabe (748-59)

A 748-50: Direct address to Hector as the dearest of all her sons, "Ἐκτορ, ἐμῷ θυμῷ πάντων πολὺ φίλτατε παίδων.

B 751-6: Narrative, how Hector and her other sons were killed.

A 757-9: Renewed address and lament for Hector, now lying dead, νῦν δέ μοι...κεῖσαι.

Helen (762-75)

A 762-4: Direct address to Hector as the dearest of her husband's brothers, "Ἐκτορ, ἐμῷ θυμῷ δαέρων πολὺ φίλτατε πάντων.

B 765-70: Narrative, her own past and Hector's kindness to her.

A 771—5: Renewed address for Hector and for herself, τῷ σέ θ' ἅμα κλαίω καὶ ἔμ' ἄμμορον ἀχθυμένη κῆρ.³⁵

Alexiou further notes the presence of this three-strophic structure in early Christian hymns, especially those of lament.³⁶ Alexiou admits that tripartite structure does not necessarily form the basic structure of most Christian hymns, but a few still retain this feature. An example is Romanos' *kontákion*, *Mary at the Cross*, which has the following tripartite *ABA* structure:

A Proem: Invocation to all to join Mary in praising Christ

1-3 *Mary*: **A** Address and reproach, Ποῦ πορεύῃ, τέκνον; (Where are you going, child?)

B Frustration of past hopes, injustice of Christ's death and failure of his disciples to help, Οὐκ ἤλπιζον, τέκνον (I did not expect, my child ...)

A Renewed address and lament, θνήσκεις, τέκνον, μόνος ... (You are dying, child, alone ...)

4-6 *Christ*: **A** Address, Τί δακρύεις, μήτηρ; (Why do you weep, mother?)

B Crucifixion is fulfillment of past prophecies

A Renewed address, μὴ οὖν κλαῖης, μήτηρ (Do not weep, mother)³⁷

Admittedly the structure of IttC is not a perfect match of this tripartite structure since the third strophe is not an identical renewed address of the first strophe. However, there is close

³⁵ Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, ed. Dimitrios Yatromanolakis and Panagiotis Roilos, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), p. 133.

³⁶ Alexiou, *Ritual*, p. 154.

³⁷ Alexiou, *Ritual*, p. 143.

resemblance of this structure that is worth mentioning. Also, it is undeniable that there are similarities between the first and third strophe that are completely missing from the second, such as the *We*-statements, the feminine subject, and the use of *τῆν-ἡμῶν* (*We glorify*). The strophic structure of the text could be characterized as AB \mathcal{A} , where \mathcal{A} is similar to A but not an exact replica.

A We exalt...We glorify...

B Glory to You...

\mathcal{A} We proclaim...We worship...We glorify

Included invocation or prayer

Edsall and Strawbridge point to another tripartite construction that is nearly consistent in cultic hymns throughout Greek and Roman antiquity—invocation, praise and prayer.³⁸ When comparing the text at hand to this tripartite structure, the latter two become very clear. The second strophe is simple praise to Christ with descriptive glorification. The third strophe has three short prayers, “Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord bless”.

As previously mentioned, prayers and hymns overlap but hymns are thought to be musical in nature and exhibit unconventional language. Prayers, on the other hand, tend to be simple and utilize more natural or conversational terms.³⁹ Asking for mercy is found in many conversations in the Bible, both in narrative and in parables.⁴⁰ Also, asking someone to bless appears in conversations throughout the Bible as well.⁴¹ However, a collection of descriptive adjectives in meter in praise of a deity are clearly hymnal elements, as Pulleyn articulates:

“A prayer can in principle be very simple. When one starts rehearsing a catalogue of the attributes of the deity, one is getting into different territory. When one puts the whole thing into verse and sets it to music, it has moved a long way from being a prayer”.⁴²

Pulley and Gordley both make this distinction between prayers and hymns: the request is a primary feature of prayer and fulsome language that enumerates the attributes of a deity is a primary feature of hymns.⁴³ Asking for mercy and blessing is a request in natural language and

³⁸ Furley and Bremer, *Greek Hymns*, pp. 50-51. Edsall and Strawbridge also reference that this tripartite division was noted by Norden 1913, and the general structure is also found among the Psalms (e.g., Ps. 3) as well as in Indo-Iranian hymns identified by Tichy 1994. Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs”, p. 299

³⁹ Gordley, *Colossian*, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁰ cf. Mt 9:27, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30-31; Mk 10:47-48; Lk 16:24, 17:13, 18:38-39; Jud 22-23.

⁴¹ cf. Gen 27:34-38; Deut 26:15, 33:11, Psa 28:9; Lk 6:28; Acts 3:26; Rom 12:14; 1 Cor 4:12

⁴² Pulleyn, *Prayer*, p. 51.

⁴³ Pulleyn, *Prayer*, p. 51.

would be prayer.

It is important to note, however, that identifying the concluding prayers is not in itself essential to identifying the overall text as a hymn. The short prayers are very common, and they may not be original to earlier developments of the hymn. This could be deduced by the inconsistencies between manuscripts surrounding the varied number of “Lord have mercy” prayers,⁴⁴ and the absence of these concluding prayers from the earliest manuscript with full text—*BnF 69* (15th c.). Even without the prayers, the text still exhibits the core characteristics of a hymn. Also, the fact that short petitions and Trinitarian epilogues can be added naturally to the text, further supports its hymnal nature; creeds do not exhibit such fluidity.

Coincidentally, Youssef refers to the entire IttC as “prayer” throughout his work. This is not totally inaccurate since any liturgical text can be considered “prayer” in the wider sense of the word, and the third strophe clearly exhibits prayers in the narrow sense of the word. However, viewing IttC as just a prayer seems to ignore the hymnal elements found throughout the text. Moreover, it is very possible that some liturgical texts become recited rather than sung whenever their musical context is lost.

Beside the prayer and praise, the tripartite structure typically starts with an “invocation”. Invocation is a slightly misleading term, but Furley and Bremer define it broadly as simply “addressing” the subject of the hymn. Because the subject is often a deity, special respect had to be given. The invocation, as is termed, simply establishes the relationship with the one who is praised and identifies the one to whom the hymn is sung. The invocation can have one or many of the following elements: name(s), attributes (epithets, titles), genealogy, place (abode, places of worship), companion deities.⁴⁵ For IttC, the invocation is found at the beginning of the strophes, in which titles are used to identify the subject before going forth to utter praise. The vocative address in the first and second strophes initiates the connection with the recipients of praise which is the basis of the invocation as understood by early cultures. Thus, the tripartite structure can be seen throughout the text.

Parallelism

While Greek poetry features consistent meter as its distinctive feature, Hebrew poetry typically “rhymes” ideas through parallel phrases. This parallelism, thus, is a very common feature of psalms, which have been turned into a notable portion of Jewish and Christian Hymns. The main structures of parallelism in the psalms are couplets, which are themed pairs of lines, in

⁴⁴ cf. note 2.

⁴⁵ Furley and Bremer, *Greek Hymns*, p. 56.

which key components are recognizably parallel to each other within the coupled lines.⁴⁶ Parallelism in these coupled lines is done through semantics, syntactical phrases, grammatical constructions, gender matching, and the use of sound patterns such as alliteration.⁴⁷

Similar to Hebrew poetry, several scholars have noted that overwhelming presence of couplets in Egyptian poetry.⁴⁸ Although Egyptian poems and hymns have couplets as the main form of parallelism, there still exists large poetic structures that include triplets and multi-line parallelism.⁴⁹ Likewise, the text of IttC exhibits clear parallel structures. The first two lines form a couplet with alliteration of the first letter of the introductory word (ΤΕΝΘΙCΙ... ΤΕΝϠΩΟΥ), a feminine second-person particles as the second words (ΜΜΟ... ΝΕ), and motherly depictions (Mother of true Light... Mother of God or God-bearer). The next two lines also have some faint parallelism in the verb (brought forth...came), as well as a salvation motif (Savior of the whole world...saved our souls).

The Second strophe can be viewed as a collection of parallel statements. There is some intra-linear parallelism between “Our Master,” “Our King,” and “Christ,” all referring to one person. Seeing that the title “Christ” originally meant “anointed,” it was used synonymously with the title of the Hebrew kings.⁵⁰ Thus, Master, King and Christ, all carry parallel meanings. Moreover, the three words carry noticeable alliteration (ΠΕΝΝΗΒ ΠΕΝΟΥΡΟ ΠΙΧΡΙCΤΟC). Next in the strophe, come a multi-line list of parallel phrases that all signify the titles of Christ.

Finally, the third strophe has a triplet centered around the worship of the Trinity (We proclaim...We worship...We glorify). The three lines begin with the same first letters, much

⁴⁶ Richard Abbott, “Forked Parallelism in Egyptian, Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetry,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 62/1 (2011), pp. 42 and 43. cf Stanley Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, JSOT Sup. 26 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984) and *Traditional Techniques in Hebrew Verse*, JSOT Sup 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Luis Alonzo Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), esp. chapter 5; Jan P Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) or Andreas Wagner, ed., *Parallelismus membrorum* OBO 224 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2007) for a range of differing views on the subject. Nomenclature differs between authors—for example bicolon or distich may be used instead of couplet.

⁴⁷ Abbott, “Forked Parallelism”, p. 42.

⁴⁸ Abbott, “Forked Parallelism”, pp. 42 and 43. Abbott cites examples including L. Foster, ‘Thought Couplets in Khety’s “Hymn to the Inundation”’, *JNES* 34 (1975), p. 1; ‘Sinuhe: The Ancient Egyptian Genre of Narrative Verse’, *JNES* 39 (1980), p. 89, *Thought Couplets in The Tale of Sinuhe* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993); Miriam Lichtheim, ‘Have the Principles of Ancient Egyptian Metrics Been Discovered?’, *JARCE* 9 (1971), p. 103, Günter Burkard, ‘Metrik, Prosodie und formaler Aufbau Ägyptischer literarischer Texte’ in *Ancient Egyptian Literature - History and Forms*, ed. A. Loprieno (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996) or Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Poetry of Ancient Egypt* (Jonsered: Paul Åströms förlag, 1999).

⁴⁹ Abbott, “Forked Parallelism”, p. 42.

⁵⁰ cf 1 Sam 2:10, 12:3, 12:5, 16:6; Psa 2:2, 20:6, 28:8.

like the first strophe. The prayer at the end of the strophe can also be seen as exhibiting some element of parallelism with “Lord have mercy” paralleled with “Lord bless”. The last strophe itself, in some ways, parallels the first strophe. The beginning of the first two lines of the first strophe, and the first three lines of the third strophe share paralleled “We” grammatical phrases. Feminine pronouns also advance the parallelism, since both strophes focus on feminine subjects.

Parallel structures have been highlighted below to show the extent of its use in the text:

<p>ΤΕΝΘΙCΙ^A ΜΜΟ^B [ΘΜΑΥ ΜΠΙΟΥΩΙΝΙ ΝΤΑΦΜΥΛ:^C ΤΕΝΤΩΟΥ^A ΠΕ^B Ω ΘΕΘΟΥΛΒ ΟΥΟZ ΜΜΑΣΝΟΥΤ:^C ΧΕ ΛΡΕΜΙCΙ^D ΝΑΝ [ΜΠΩΤΗΡ ΜΠΙΚΟΣΜΟC]^E ΤΗΡΦ: ΛΦ^D ΟΥΟZ ΛΧΩΤ^E ΝΝΕΝΨΥΧΗ. ΟΥΩΟΥ ΝΑΚ ΠΕΝΝΗΒ^F ΠΕΝΟΥΡΟ^F ΠΙΧΡΙCΤΟC:^F ΠΩΟΥΦΟΥ ΝΝΙΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC:^G ΠΙΧΛΟΜ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC:^G ΠΘΕΛΗ ΝΝΙΑΙΚΕΟC:^G ΠΤΑΧΡΟ ΝΝΙΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ:^G ΠΧΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΡΕΦΕΡΙΝΟΒΙ.^G</p>	<p>We exalt you, Mother of the true Light. We glorify you, O saint and God-bearer (Theotokos), for you brought forth unto us the [Savior of the whole world]. He came and [saved our souls].</p> <p>Glory to You, our Master, our King, Christ, the pride of the Apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the joy of the righteous, the foundation of the churches, the forgiveness of sinners.</p>
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<p>ΤΕΝΘΙΩΩ^H ΝΤ·ΤΡΙΑC ΕΘΟΥΛΒ: ΕC ΒΕΝ ΟΥΜΕΘΝΟΥΤ ΝΟΥΦΤ: ΤΕΝΟΥΦΩΤ^H ΜΜΟC: ΤΕΝΤΩΟΥ^H ΝΑC: ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΛΕΗΣΟΝ: ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΛΕΗΣΟΝ:^K ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΥΛΟΓΥCΟΝ:^K ΔΜΗΝ.</p>	<p>We proclaim the Holy Trinity in one Godhead. We worship Her. We glorify Her. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord bless. Amen.</p>
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It is worth noting that parallelism alone does not identify a hymn. For instance, the wisdom literature of the Bible has considerable parallelism and is considered poetic, but not considered to be hymnography.⁵¹ For IttC, the parallelism in conjunction with the other hymnal features identified help position this text as a poetic hymn.

⁵¹ Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs”, p. 298.

Linked to encomia

Besides hymns, *encomia* are works that are also centered around praise. It is not always an easy task to define an *encomium*, let alone differentiate it from a hymn. The Alexandrian poet Callimachus (c. 310–240 BC) seems to refer to any poem written in celebration of a god as “hymn”,⁵² but the encomium on the other hand, whether poetry or prose, appeared to be “praise of a patron”.⁵³ The patron of *encomia* was typically non-divine; however, complexities arise when divinity was praised in either a part or as the patron of an encomium. For example, *Idyll 17* by Theocritus (c. 300–260 BC) is a direct address of praise and manages to be both a hymn and an encomium.⁵⁴ *Encomia* offered to deities seem to date back even to the time of Plato (c. 5th – 4th century BC), as Vollenweider identifies the praise dedicated to Eros in Plato’s famous *Symposium* as an encomium.⁵⁵

Hence, a link between hymns and *encomia* was in place at least from the time of Plato, although it is not certain if Plato allowed for non-sung or non-metrical hymns at all.⁵⁶ From a genre perspective, hymns were related to *encomia* in the ancient world. Sometimes the relationship between the two was strong, that the line between hymns and encomium became very blurred, with one taking from another freely. Edsall and Strawbridge even comment that “one person’s hymn may well have been another’s encomium.”⁵⁷

The IttC has clear corresponding parallels in an encomium. At the time of the Council of Ephesus, Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444 AD) is said to have stayed four months in the city and delivered eight sermons with strong Marian devotion.⁵⁸ Six of those are preserved in complete form and are included in JP Migne’s collection of *Homiliae Diversae* in his monumental work *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*.⁵⁹ The homily numbered eleven is of special interest here.

Homily eleven is titled Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Μαρίαν τὴν Θεοτόκον (Encomium on Saint Mary the *Theotokos*). No English translation has been found for this Encomium, but in reading the Greek text one finds similar language and ideas to the ones in IttC. The Encomium can be divided into two halves. The first reads like a song of praise, with many salutations (*Χαίροις*) to

⁵² Anthony W Bulloch, “Hymns and Encomia,” in *A Companion to Hellenistic Literature*, ed. James Joseph Clauss and Martine Cuypers (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), pp. 166-180 and esp. p. 167.

⁵³ Bulloch, “Hymns and Encomia”, p. 176.

⁵⁴ Bulloch, “Hymns and Encomia”, p. 175.

⁵⁵ Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs”, p. 298.

⁵⁶ Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs”, pp. 298-299.

⁵⁷ Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs”, p. 298.

⁵⁸ Antonia Atanassova, “Container of the Uncontainable God: Mary the *Theotokos* in the Nestorian Controversy” (dissertation, 2003), p. 200.

⁵⁹ J.-P. Migne, *PG* 77.

the fathers of Ephesus, to the city of Ephesus, to the Virgin Mary, and John the evangelist. The second half reads more like a treatise, with direct quotations of the creed included.⁶⁰ The language between the first half and the second half are considerably different. Beside glorifying the Trinity at the conclusion of the encomium, similarities to IttC are very slim in the second half, but in the first half many similarities are apparent. A few excerpts are highlighted below:

<u>“Introduction to the Creed”</u>	<u>Encomium</u>
We glorify you, O saint and God-bearer (<i>Theotokos</i>)	(a) Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Μαρίαν τὴν Θεοτόκον (PG 77:1029.29-30) Encomium on Saint Mary the <i>Theotokos</i>
We exalt you, Mother of the true Light . We glorify you, O saint and God-bearer	(b) Χαίροις δὲ καὶ αὐτῇ, Μαρία Θεοτόκε , Παρθενομήτωρ, Φωτοφόρε , σκεῦος ἁμίαντον. (1029.38-39) And rejoice also O Theotokos Mary, the Virgin Mother, Light bearer , and undefiled vessel.
(<i>Theotokos</i>), for you brought forth unto us the Savior of the whole world. He came and saved our souls.	(c) Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι’ ἧς προῆλθε τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, ὁ λέγων ἐν τοῖς Εὐαγγελίοις· «Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου.» Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε , δι’ ἧς ἐπέλαμψε φῶς τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις. «Ὁ λαὸς γὰρ, φησὶν, ὁ καθημένος ἐν σκότει, ἴδε φῶς μέγα.» Ποῖον ἄρα φῶς, εἰ μὴ τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν , τὸ φωτίζον πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον; (1033.15-24) Rejoice, Mary the <i>Theotokos</i> , though whom came our Lord Jesus Christ, the true light , who says in the gospel, “I am the light of the world.” Rejoice, Mary the Theotokos , because of whom the light shined to those dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death, saying “the people dwelling in darkness, saw a great light” (Mt 4:16). What is light, except for our Lord Jesus Christ, the true light who enlightens everyone coming into the world?

⁶⁰ For example, “πίστιν ὠδήγησεν, ὃς τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐστήριξεν πιστεύειν εἰς ὁμοούσιον Τριάδα, εἰς ἓνα Κύριον, μίαν πίστιν, ἐν βάπτισμα, ἓνα Πατέρα, ἓνα Υἱόν, ἐν Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἀδιάστατον οὐσίαν, ἀπεριέργαστον ἀκατάληπτον θεότητα, **Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ** τὸν Κύριον, **φῶς ἐκ φωτός**, ἀπαύγασμα δόξης, **ἐκ Παρθένου Μαρίας γεννηθέντα**” (PG 77:1037.8-14).

We exalt you, Mother of the true Light. We glorify you, O saint and God-bearer (*Theotokos*), for you brought forth unto us the **Savior of the whole world. He came and saved our souls.**

Glory to You, our Master, our King, Christ

Glory to You, our Master, our King, Christ

Glory to You, our Master, our King, Christ, **the pride of the Apostles**, the crown of the martyrs, the joy of the righteous, **the foundation of the churches**, the forgiveness of sins.

(d) Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἧς προήλθεν ἡ χάρις ἡ ἀνεκλάλητος, περὶ ἧς ὁ Ἀπόστολος βοῶν ἔλεγεν· «Ἐπεφάνη ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις» (1033.12-15).

Rejoice, Mary the *Theotokos*, because of whom the ineffable grace came, about which the Apostle spoke saying, “**the saving grace of God has appeared to all people**” (Titus 2:11).

(e) Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἧς πᾶσα πνοὴ πιστεύουσα σώζεται (1033.37-38).

Rejoice, Mary the *Theotokos*, through whom **every believing soul (or breathing one) was saved.**

(f) Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν προφήται κελαδοῦσιν, δι' ἣν ποιμένες δοξολογοῦσιν, λέγοντες σὺν ἀγγέλοις τὸν φοβερόν ἐκεῖνον ὕμνον· «Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία» (1033.1-3).

Rejoice, Mary the *Theotokos*, because of whom the prophets sang, and the shepherds **glorified, saying with the angels that fearful hymn, “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill towards people”.**

(g) Χαίροις, Παρθένε Μαρία, μήτηρ καὶ δούλη ...Εἰσήλθε γὰρ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει σου, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ σου, καὶ πάλιν ἐξῆλθεν ὡς αὐτὸς ἠθέλησεν, καὶ ἡ πύλη σου ἐκέλειστο. Συνέλαβες γὰρ ἀσπόρως, (1032.38-45).

Rejoice O Virgin Mary, the mother and maidservant... **For the king came in your dwelling, but even more in your womb,** and again came out as he willed, and your gate had remained shut.

(h) Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν ἐν Εὐαγγελίοις κηρύσσεται· «Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου.» δι' ἣν καὶ ἐν πόλεσιν καὶ ἐν κώμαις καὶ ἐν νήσοις Ἐκκλησίαι ὀρθοδόξων τεθεμελιώνται (1033.23-26).

Rejoice, Mary the *Theotokos*, because of whom the gospels were preached, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”. Also, because of whom **churches of the Orthodox have been built** in the city, the villages, and the islands.

(i) Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν μάγοι προσκυνοῦσιν, ὑπὸ ἀστέρος

λαμπαδούχου ὀδηγούμενοι. Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν τὸ δεκάκτινον κάλλος τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐκλέλεκται (1033.6-12).

Rejoice, Mary the Theotokos, because of whom the magi worship, led by the radiant star. Rejoice, Mary the Theotokos, because of whom **the twelve-fold beauty of the apostles was chosen.**

We proclaim the Holy *Trinity* in one Godhead.

(j) δοξάζοντες Θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, καὶ τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ τὸν ἐκ Μαρίας γεννηθέντα, καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ ζωοποιὸν καὶ ζωὴν παρέχον πᾶσιν, (1040.45-48).⁶¹

Glorified is God the Father the *Pantocrator*, and His Only-begotten Son was born of Mary, and the Holy Spirit the creator and giver of all life.

The first two strophes of IttC share many phrases with the first half of the encomium. Thus, the text of interest overlaps significantly with the praise portion of the encomium, not with the dogmatic portion. Coincidentally, phrases with reference to Mary as the bearer of light or mother of light are not found anywhere else in the known works of Cyril, except in this encomium.⁶² Hence, there is some unique language of praise that is shared between the two texts. Since encomia and hymns are very close in genre and there is ancient relationship between the two forms of texts, finding similar phrases of praise in an encomium helps further situate IttC in the same genre as hymns and encomia. It is worth noting that the attribution of this encomium to Cyril of Alexandria is contested by some scholars and will be addressed in a later section.

⁶¹ All Greek text is taken from *PG* 77:1029-1040. Line numbers appear next to each section.

⁶² The *Lemma* φῶς, -ωτός, ὁ and ἀληθινός, -ή, -όν and μήτηρ, μητρός, ἡ within a 50-word proximity (the maximum allowed on TLG) can only be found in this Encomium; specifically in this passage, “Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν Ἰωάννης ἔτι ὢν ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ ἐσοκρίτησεν, καὶ προσεκύνησεν ὁ λύχνος τῷ φωτὶ τῷ ἀκοιμήτῳ. Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣς προήλθεν ἡ χάρις ἡ ἀνεκκλάητος, περὶ ἣς ὁ Ἀπόστολος βοῶν ἔλεγεν· «Ἐπεφάνη ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις.» Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣς προήλθε τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ λέγων ἐν τοῖς Εὐαγγελίοις”. Also, in searching for the *lemma* φῶς, -ωτός, ὁ and ἀληθινός, -ή, -όν, the only reference to “True Light” that is at all connected to St Mary again occurs in the Encomium. Finally, searching for the lemma φωτοφόρος, -α, -ον (Light-bearer) only occurs once in the corpus of work of St Cyril as well, and that only time is in this Encomium. Thesaurus Linguae Graecae© Digital Library. Ed. Maria C. Pantelia. University of California, Irvine. <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.library.nd.edu> [accessed Apr. 28, 2022].

Repetition: Frequency and Occasion

Edsall and Strawbridge further see a hymn as “a song of praise to a god, to be repeated and used for common worship.”⁶³ Furley and Bremer also see “repetition from occasion to occasion” as a criterion of a hymn.⁶⁴ This particular criterion is not too helpful here since Creeds are also repeated and used in worship; however, the mode of repetition in certain sources sheds more light on the use of this text.

There is a group of services in the Coptic Church that are historically related to the Liturgy of the Hours, taking place in the form of the horologion, raising of incense, and Psalmody.⁶⁵ The horologion, commonly known as the *Agpeya*⁶⁶ is divided into hourly prayers—prime (first hour), terce (third hour), sext (sixth hour), none (ninth hour), sunset (eleventh hour), veil (a monastic nightly prayer), compline (twelfth hour), and midnight prayer. The rite of raising of incense is carried out in two services—vespers and matins—which are mostly identical, with a few prayers differing between the two. There are two versions of the Psalmody, an annual one and a *Khoiak*,⁶⁷ one. The Psalmody has three services—Midnight praise (different than the midnight prayer of the horologion), the Vespers praise, and the Morning praise. Often, the books of Psalmody will also have a section containing doxologies and verses of cymbals that are usually chanted during the services of raising of incense.⁶⁸

It is exclusively in the services of the liturgy of hours that IttC is recited; this text does not occur in any other service of the Coptic church. Since the service of Matins raising of incense and hourly prayer of the horologion precede the Eucharistic Liturgy, IttC is recited twice, appearing to be a part of the Eucharistic preparatory prayers. However, there are some historical challenges of praying the horologion at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy,⁶⁹ and

⁶³ Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs”, p. 306.

⁶⁴ Furley and Bremer, *Greek Hymns*, p. 2.

⁶⁵ Mihálykó Ágnes T, *The Christian Liturgical Papyri: An Introduction* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), p. 66.

⁶⁶ Ugo Zanetti, “Bohairic Liturgical Manuscripts,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61 (1995), pp. 65-94, esp. p. 85.

⁶⁷ Zanetti, “Bohairic”, p. 87.

⁶⁸ For a greater discussion of the Coptic Psalmody, see: Awad, *Untersuchungen Zur Koptischen Psalmodie*.

⁶⁹ Fr. Arsenius Mikhail (Previously: Ramez Mikhail) explains, “It is therefore not the praying of the hours per se that is in any way problematic or untraditional as has been portrayed, but the exact *manner* in which they are prayed. This manner as it has developed into the modern era causes unnecessary confusion and overlapping of two ancient and highly traditional elements of Christian worship, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the selection of the oblation, the offering of the Church.” Ramez Mikhail, *The Presentation of the Lamb: The Prothesis and Preparatory Rites of the Coptic Liturgy* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2020), p. 204.

reciting IttC is one such challenge. IttC is really part of the horologion and not a proper part of any Eucharistic liturgy as attested by even the Euchologion compiled in 1902.⁷⁰

In modern day, IttC is repeated daily in the prime, compline, veil, and midnight prayers of the horologion. The text is also repeated after the doxologies in both Vespers and Matins raising of incense. Finally, the text is also read at the end of the Midnight praise of the Psalmodia. In all these services, IttC is always followed by the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed.

In Medieval sources that contain IttC, this text is repeated daily but is mentioned in slightly different points within the rites. The consulted Horologions placed this text in prime, veil, or both.⁷¹ The first printed horologion in Egypt (1750 AD) only mentions the text in the Veil prayer, which is explicitly exclusive to the monastic orders.⁷² This especially emphasizes the daily repetition of the text within the monastic communities and supports Youssef's conclusion that the hymn originated in a monastic milieu.

The earliest mention of this text occurs in the writings of Ibn Kabar (c. 1324 AD),⁷³ where he places the text between the doxologies and the creed in raising of incense in vespers and matins.⁷⁴ Various manuscripts of Medieval Bohairic Psalmody also place it in that location,⁷⁵ which is consistent with modern practice. Other Psalmody place the text at the end of the

⁷⁰ The Euchologion of 1902 compiled and annotated by Fr. 'Abd al-Masīḥ Ṣalīb is considered to be the most comprehensive Euchologion that serves as a link between the late Middle Ages and the modern era. Surprisingly, this Euchologion does not mention the "Introduction to the Creed" at all. In Vespers and Matins raising of incense, where this text is usually recited, he only mentions the Creed, although he could be implying the presence of the introduction. Later in the presentation of the Lamb, he only mentions the psalms (probably in reference to the Horologion) but not the Creed or the introduction at all. 'Abd al-Masīḥ Ṣalīb. ΠΙΧΩΜ ἸΤΤΕ ΠΙΕΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ ΕΘΟΥΑΒ (Cairo: 'Ayn shams, 1902), pp. 84 and 203.

⁷¹ Burmester's Horologion has it in both prime and veil. MS-P, cited by Burmester, only has it in prime. The Horologion by al-Ṭūḥī only has it in the prayer of the veil.

⁷² Raphael al-Ṭūḥī, ΟΥΧΩΜ ἸΤΤΕ ΠΙΕΥΧΗ ΜΠΙΕΖΟΥ ΝΕΜ ΠΙΕΧΩΡΞ ἸΖ [The book of the seven prayers of the day and night]. (Rome, 1750), p. 309.

⁷³ Shams al-Ri'āsah Abū al-Barakāt ibn al-Akmal al-As'ad ibn Kabar was an educated wealthy aristocrat, who was eventually ordained priest in 1300 AD overseeing the influential Hanging Church of Old Cairo near the patriarchate. Ibn Kabar died in 1324 leaving behind a few influential works. The work of interest here is *The Lamp of Darkness (Miṣbāḥ al-zulmah)*, in which he details the rite and theology of the Coptic Church from his viewpoint. Unfortunately, no English translation exist of the text, although a few chapters have been translated into French and recently in English. cf Arsenius Mikhail. *Guides to the Eucharist in Medieval Egypt: Three Arabic Commentaries on the Coptic Liturgy: Yūḥannā Ibn Sabbā', Abū Al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar, and Pope Gabriel V.* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022), pp. 2-6.

⁷⁴ Paris BnF Ar. 203 (14th c.), f199v.

⁷⁵ Paris BnF Copt. 11; 22; 35; and 76.

Midnight Praise,⁷⁶ which is another place that is consistent with modern practices. Of the manuscripts consulted,⁷⁷ two manuscripts (17th and 18th c. AD) refer to it specifically as “The Introduction to the Creed”,⁷⁸ and the 18th c. manuscript even goes as far as labeling the creed that follows, “The Continuation of the Creed”.⁷⁹ This does not necessarily negate the possibility of the previous hymns status of the text, however, it does suggest that certain medieval communities strongly linked this text to the creed as an extension of it. The first printed text occurs in the Psalmodia of al-Ṭūḥī (1764), which does not include the “Lord Have Mercy” petitions at the end.⁸⁰ The full text with the concluding petitions is printed in later Psalmodias and Horologions, being titled “Beginning of the Creed” or “Introduction to the Creed,” and followed by the Creed.⁸¹

On the other end of the spectrum, one Psalmodia manuscript⁸² places IttC after the doxologies of the Midnight praise, which is not where modern practice recites this text. Moreover, the text is not followed by the creed at all in this manuscript. The text is used mainly as a conclusion to the doxologies, not an introduction to anything. IttC is the last page in the doxologies section, and the very next page is a completely new section housing the daily *Theotokias*. In the minds of this community, IttC was a hymn that concluded the doxologies, even in the Midnight praise, regardless of what follows.

Overall, the repetition criterion is not helpful in positioning this text as a hymn since creeds can also be repeated liturgically, but by examining the mode of repetition mentioned in the sources several factors emerge. First, the repetition in monastic prayers, like the veil, helps orient this text in a monastic sphere. Second, it seems that there were two perceptions of this text in the late Middle Ages, where one group used it hymnally as an extension of the chanted doxologies, and another group used it as a credal extension of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed. From the analysis of the text and comparison to form criticism criteria, it is apparent

⁷⁶ Paris BnF Copt. 34; 69.

⁷⁷ See list of manuscripts in the Appendix. All manuscripts were consulted digitally, a copy of the relevant folia is found in the appendix of this paper.

⁷⁸ Paris BnF Copt. 35 (1669); 76 (1702).

⁷⁹ Paris BnF Copt. 76 (1702), f328-329.

⁸⁰ Raphael al-Ṭūḥī, ΠΑΧΩΜ ΝΤΕ ΠΙΘΕΟΤΟΚΙΑ ΝΕΜ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΑΣΙΣ ΝΤΕ ΠΑΒΟΤ ΧΟΙΑΚ [The book of the Theotokias and according to the rite of the month of Khoiak] (Rome, 1764), p. 158.

⁸¹ For Horologion example, see: O.H.E. Burmester, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church: Coptic and Arabic Text from a Mediaeval Manuscript. Cairo* (Edizioni del Centro Francese di Studi Orientali Cristiani, 1973), p. 133. For Psalmodia example, see: Claudius Yūḥannā Labib, ΠΑΧΩΜ ΝΤΕ ΨΑΛΜΟΔΙΑ ΕΘΟΛΒ ΝΤΕΜΡΟΠΠΙ ΜΦΡΗΪ ΕΤΑΥΘΑΩΣ ΝΧΕ ΠΕΝΙΟΪ ΝΤΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΠΡΕΜΠΧΗΜΙ [The Book of the Annual Holy Psalmodia as Ordered by Fathers of the Egyptian Church], (Cairo: 1908), p. 449.

⁸² Paris BnF Copt. 81 (17th or 18th c.), f109.

that the former group used the text closer to its original intention as a hymn, while the latter group contributed to its credal perception today.

Comparison with Other Texts

In comparing with other chanted hymns in the Coptic church, one finds striking similarities with the text at hand. For example, the beginning of the Marian section of the Morning praise (also known as Morning doxology) has similar language and meter to IttC.

ἮΘΟ ΘΗΛΥ ἩΠΙΟΥΩΙΝΙ ΕΤΓΓΑΙΝΟΥΤ ἩΜΑΣΝΟΥΤ:
 ἌΡΕΦΑΙ ἩΑ ΠΙΛΟΓΟΣ ΠΙΔΧΩΡΙΤΟΣ.

You are the Mother of Light, the honored God-bearer (*Theotokos*): You carried the *uncontained Logos*.

ΜΕΝΕΝΣΑ ΘΡΕΜΑΣϸ ἈΡΕΘΖΙ ΕΡΕΟΙ ΜΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ:
 ΞΕΝ ΖΑΝΖΩΣ ΝΕΜ ΖΑΝΣΜΟΥ ΤΕΝΣΙΣΙ ἩΜΟ.

After you gave birth to Him you remained *virgin*:
 With praises and blessings we exalt you.

ΧΕ ἩΘΟΥ ΞΕΝ ΠΕΦΟΥΩΩ ΝΕΜ ΠΤΗΜΑΤ ἩΠΕΦΙΩΤ:
 ΝΕΜ ΠΙΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΘΕΟΥΑΒ ΑΪΙ ΔΑΦΩΤ ἩΜΟΝ.

For of His own will, and the pleasure of His Father: and the Holy Spirit, He came and saved us.⁸³

Not only are the descriptions of Mary the same (Mother of Light, God-bearer), the word of praise is also identical—ΤΕΝΣΙΣΙ ἩΜΟ (we exalt you). Like IttC, the hymn is strophic, and the meter is iambic with multiple lines exhibiting iambic heptameter.

Another text that is similar to IttC is the following:

ΤΕΝΣΙΣΙ ἩΜΟ ΞΕΝ ΟΥΕΜΠΩΑ ΝΕΜ ΕΛΙΣΑΒΕΤ ΤΕΣΥΓΓΕΝΗΣ:
 ΧΕ ΤΕΣΜΑΡΩΟΥΤ ἩΘΟ ΞΕΝ ΝΙΖΙΟΜΙ:
 ΦΣΜΑΡΩΟΥΤ ἩΧΕ ΠΟΥΤΑΖ ἩΤΕ ΤΕΝΕΧΙ

We exalt you in worthiness with Elizabeth your *relative* (saying):
 blessed are you among women:
 and blessed is the fruit of your womb.⁸⁴

This chanted strophe is used in the midnight praise, in different doxologies, and in a short hymn responding to the Gospel during the month of *Khoiak*. Because of the versatility of this

⁸³ For Coptic text see: Labib, Π.Χ.ΩΜ ἩΤΕ ΦΥΛΛΟΔΙΑ, p. 292. English Translation is mine

⁸⁴ For Coptic text, see: al-Tūhī, Π.Χ.ΩΜ ἩΤΕ ΝΗΘΕΟΤΟΚΙΑ, p. 138. English Translation is mine.

strophe, it is adapted to different tunes, but it is always chanted. The beginning words along with the iambic meter are extremely similar to the IttC.

Finally, there is striking similarity with the doxologies themselves that are sung in Matins raising of incense, Vespers raising of incense, and Midnight praise. For example,

υ υ υ/υ -/υ υ υ /υυ υ /υ -/υ -/υυυ
Χερε νε ω̄ †Παρθενος †ουρω̄ η̄μηι η̄λληθ̄ινη:

υ -/υ υ υ /υ -/υ υυ υ -/υυ υ /υυ υ /υ -/
χερε παρογω̄οῡ η̄τε πενγενος̄ λρε̄χφο̄ παν̄ η̄εμμανουηλ.

Hail to you o *Virgin*, the right and *true* queen: *Hail* to the pride of our *race*, you bore for us Emmanuel.⁸⁵

This is perhaps the most repeated strophe in the doxologies, carrying a similar iambic meter and rhyme. The tune of the doxology strophe could be easily carried over to IttC. In the Matin and Vesper raising of incense, the creed follows the doxologies, and IttC is inserted between them. In the Midnight praise, however, the doxologies and creed are separated. As *BnF Copt. 81* may suggest, some communities understandably grouped this text with the doxologies even in the Midnight praise, in which the creed does not follow.

When compared to known creeds, the similarities with IttC are not present. Creeds typically have the formula “I (or We) believe in.... and in.... and in.... Amen.” This is the general structure of the Nicene creed of 325 AD, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed of 381 AD, the Apostle creed, among others.⁸⁶ Sometimes the phrase “I believe” repeats for emphasis. Credal text is not typically metered or musical, instead it reads as a list of beliefs with the word “and” connecting them. This structure is completely absent from IttC. The word “believe” is not even mentioned once. Moreover, the word “and” is mentioned only twice in the first strophe, being absent completely from the other two. There is no list of beliefs in the text, instead the lists are of descriptive praises and adjectives. Overall, IttC is very different and highly unrelated to the Creed that follows.

Moreover, Youssef sees some similarities between IttC and the hymns of Ephrem the Syrian, which are themselves incorporated in the hymnody of several church traditions.⁸⁷ Coincidentally, the text is also similar to a praise introduction in contemporary Byzantine rite. Before the ninth ode of the Byzantine Orthros the deacon or presbyter announces: Την

⁸⁵ Labib, ΠΧΩΜ Η̄ΤΕ †ΨΑΛΜΟΔΙΑ, p. 330. English Translation is mine.

⁸⁶ This includes the Baptismal Creed presented by Eusebius of Caesaria and the Latin Baptismal creed recovered by Isaac Vossius and James Ussher. For more details see: Mark J Edwards, “The Creed,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*, ed. Young Richard Kim (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 135-157.

⁸⁷ Youssef, “Introduction”, p. 100.

Θεοτόκον και Μητέρα του Φωτός εν ύμνοις τιμώντες μεγαλύνομεν (The Theotokos and the Mother of light, with hymns we honor [and] exalt her). This is then followed by the *Magnificat* and exaltation of the *Theotokos* (More honored than the Cherubim...).

Overall, after applying the criteria of form criticism related to hymns and comparing with Coptic hymnal text, the text of IttC appears to be a hymn and not a creed. Moreover, it seems consistent with the conclusion of Youssef that it likely originated in a Bohairic Monastic community due to its exclusive occurrence in the Liturgy of the Hours, which if not monastic in its origin, was heavily influenced by the monastic movement of Scetis.⁸⁸

Challenges in Dating the Text

Oral traditions of the Coptic Church usually tie the origins of IttC to Cyril of Alexandria and the time of the Council of Ephesus. Similarly, Youssef dates it to shortly after the council. This dating, however, appears to be an overconfident assertion that ignores a few challenges. As noted by Mihálykó, there are no manuscripts related to the Coptic liturgy of the hours in the first millennium, except for the Sahidic *MLM M574*, originally from a monastery near Fayoum and dated to the end of the ninth century.⁸⁹ Since the Sahidic tradition did not have IttC at all, unsurprisingly this Sahidic manuscript does not have the text. However, there is a hymn before the Creed that has some elements in common with both IttC and the mentioned encomium. The Greek text of the hymn is written in Coptic script, then it is translated to Sahidic Coptic after. The first strophe reads:

⁸⁸ See, for example, Ugo Zanetti. "Liturgy in Wadi Al-Natroun", Essay. In *Christianity and Monasticism in Wadi Al-Natrun: Essays from the 2002 International Symposium of the Saint Mark Foundation and the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society*, edited by Mikhail Maged S A. and Mark Moussa (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), pp. 122-141, esp. pp. 137-139.

⁸⁹ Mihálykó, *Papyri* 71. cf. Hans Quecke, *Untersuchungen zum koptischen Stundengebet*, (Louvain: Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1970), p. 95.

M574 Greco-Sahidic (f73 p146 PMZ)

CH THN ΘΩ̄ ΜΗΤΗΡΑ
ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΝ ΑΓΗΝ ΚΕ
ΤΟΝ ΧΕΡΟΥΒΙΜ
ΑΓΙΑΤΕΡΑ ΕΝ ΦΩΝΗ
ΑΣΜΑ ΤΟΝ
ΜΕΓΑΛΗΝΩΜΕΝ ΩΤΙ
ΨΥΧΗ ΚΕ ΣΩΜΑΤΙ
ΘΕΩΔΩΚΕ
ΟΜΟΛΟΓΟΥΜΕΝ ΣΕ ΩΣ
ΚΙΡΙΟΣ ΓΕΝΗΣΑΣΑ ΘΕΟΝ
ΣΕΣΑΡΚΩΜΕΝΟΝ
ΠΡΕΒΕΥΕ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ
ΥΠΕΡ ΤΟΝ ΨΥΧΟΝ
ΗΜΩΝ.⁹⁰

σοί τήν θεοῦ μητέρα
παρθένον ἀγνήν καὶ τῶν
Χερουβείμ ἀγίατερα ἐν
φωνῇ ἄσμα τὸν
μεγαλύνωμεν ὅτι ψυχὴ
καὶ
σώματι Θεοτόκε
ὁμολογοῦμεν σε ὡς
κύριος γεννήσασα θεόν
σεσαρκωμένον
Πρέσβευε Παναγία
ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν:

M574 Sahidic (f74 p147 PMZ)

Ἰ̄ΤΟ ΠΕ ΤΜΑΛΥ
Ἰ̄ΠΕΝΟΥΤΕ Ἰ̄ΠΑΡ
ΕΤΣΟΠΤ ΤΕ ΤΑΙ
ΗΥΕΖΟΥ Ε̄ΝΕ
ΧΕΡΟΥΒΙΝ Ζ̄ΠΟΥΝΟΣ
Ἰ̄ΣΜΗ
Τ̄ΙΝΝΑΧΙΣΕ Ἰ̄ΜΜΟ:
Τ̄ΕΝΨΥΧΗ ΜΗ
ΠΕΝΣΩΜΑ ΘΕΩΔΩΚΟΣ
Τ̄ΕΝΣΟΜΟΛΟΓ Ἰ̄ΜΜΟ Χ̄Ε
ΑΡΜΙΣΙ ΝΑΝ Ἰ̄ΠΟΣ
Π̄ΝΟΥΤΕ Ἰ̄ΤΑϠ Χ̄ΙΣΑΡ̄Ξ
Ἰ̄ΛΗ Ε̄ΣΡΑΙ Ε̄ΡΟϠ ΤΕ
ΤΟΥΛΑΒ ΩΑΝ
Τ̄ΕϠΝΟ̄ΥΣ̄Ἰ̄
Ἰ̄ΝΕΝΨΥΧΗ: __ΔΩΞΑ⁹¹

(to) You the
Mother of God,
the [chosen] (holy)
Virgin, more holy
than the
Cherubim, with a
loud voice we exalt
you, to your spirit
and body O
Theotokos we
confess, you
brought forth the
incarnate Lord
God. O (Most-
Holy) saint
(intercede) [pray]
for the [salvation]
of our
souls__Glory...⁹²

When comparing this first strophe with the first strophe of IttC, many phrases are found in common. The overall meaning is also very similar, with the notion of praise strong in both texts.

M574 text

(to) You the **Mother of God**, the [chosen] (**holy**) Virgin, more holy than the Cherubim, with a loud voice **we exalt you**, to your spirit and body O **Theotokos** we confess,

“Introduction to the Creed” text

We exalt you, Mother of the true Light. We glorify you, **O saint** and **God-bearer (Theotokos)**, for **you brought forth** unto us the Savior of

⁹⁰ New York MLM M574 (897-898), f73.

⁹¹ New York MLM M574 (897-898), f74.

⁹² Parenthetical () words are true to the Greek meaning, while bracketed [] words are true to the Coptic meaning when there is a discrepancy between the two languages. Greek transcription and English translation are both mine.

you **brought forth** the incarnate Lord God.
O (Most-Holy) **saint** (intercede) [pray] for
 the [salvation] of our souls ___ **Glory...**

the whole world. **He came and
 saved our souls.**

Glory to You...

This first strophe of the hymn is followed by a strophe that is addressed to Christ. Then a series of salutations (*Χαῖρε*) addressed to the *Theotokos* follow. This set of salutations matches, in many ways, to the set of salutations in the first half of the mentioned Encomium.

M574 Greco-
Sahidic⁹³

Χαῖρε
 ΚΕΧΑΡΙΤΩΜΕΝΗ
 ΑΓΑΛΛΙΑΜΑ ΤΟΝ
 ΑΓΓΕΛΟΝ
 Χαῖρε Θεοδωκε
 τῶν προφητῶν
 τῶν κυρικῶν
 Χαῖρε ἡ
 εὐλογημένη ὁ
 κύριος μετὰ σοῦ
 Χαῖρε ἡ
 διαγγέλου τὴν
 χάρα τὸν
 κόσμον
 δεξαμένη
 ...
 Χαῖρε ἡ δια
 μαγον δεξαμένη
 τὰ δῶρα
 Χαῖρε ἡ μετὰ
 δῶκον
 παρθένος
 μῆναςα ἡ
 αναστράφησα
 εἰς τὰ ἁγία τὸν
 ἁγίω
 ἡ τε κοῦσα τῶ

Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη
 ἀγαλλίαμα τὸν
 ἄγγελον

**Χαῖρε Θεοτόκε, τῶν
 προφητῶν τῶν
 κήρυγμα**

Χαῖρε ἡ εὐλογημένη
 ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ

Χαῖρεν διάγγελος τὴν
 χάρα τὸν κόσμον
 δεξαμένη

...
 Χαῖρε ἡ διὰ Μάγων
 δεξαμένη τὰ δῶρα

Χαῖρε ἡ μετὰ δοκῶν
 παρθένος μείναςα ἡ
 αναστράφησα εἰς τὰ
 ἁγία τῶν ἁγίων ἡ
 τεκούσα τὸ φῶς τῆς
 οἰκουμένης

Encomium (Homily 11)

ἐκ Παρθένου Μαρίας γεννηθέντα, κατὰ τὴν τοῦ
 ἀρχαγγέλου φωνὴν λέγοντος· «**Χαῖρε
 κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ**» (1037.13-
 16).

**Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν προφήται
 κελαδοῦσιν** (1033.1).

Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε...βλασφημήσας
 Νεστόριος οὐ παρεδέξατο λέγων, ὅτι Οὐκ...
 ἐτέχθη ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ τοῦ
 Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Λόγος ἐκ τῆς Παρθένου Μαρίας, **μήτε
 ἄτρωτον τὸν τῆς παρθενίας τόκον ἐπιστάμενος,
 μήτε τῇ ἀρχαγγελικῇ φωνῇ πιστεύων τῇ
 λεγούσῃ· «Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ
 σοῦ»** (1033.49-54).

Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν **Μάγοι
 προσκυνοῦσιν**, ὑπὸ ἀστέρος λαμπαδούχου
 ὀδηγούμενοι (1033.6-10).

Χαίροις, Μαρία, τὸ **κειμήλιον τῆς οἰκουμένης**.
 (1032.49)

⁹³ New York MLM M574 (897-898), f73. Greek transcription is mine.

ΦΩΣ ΤΗΣ
ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΗΣ
ΛΙΡΕΚΕ
ΧΑΡΙΤΩΜΕΝΗ
ΜΗΤΗΤ ΥΜΝΗΣ
ΤΟΝ ΔΟΚΟΝ ΣΟΥ
ΜΕΓΑΛΥΝΩΜΕΝ⁹⁴

Χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη
μήτηρ ὕμνοις τὸν
δοκὸν σοῦ
μεγαλύνομεν

Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἣν
ἄγγελοι χορεύουσιν, ἀρχάγγελοι σκιρτῶσι
φρικωδεστάτους ὕμνους ἀναπέμποντες (1033.3-
5)

Χαίροις, Μαρία, ὁ κατάλυτος ναός, μᾶλλον δὲ
ἅγιος, καθὼς βοᾷ ὁ προφήτης Δαβὶδ λέγων·
«Ἅγιος ναός σου, θαυμαστός ἐν δικαιοσύνη»
(1029.46-48)

Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἧς προήλθε τὸ φῶς
τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ
λέγων ἐν τοῖς Εὐαγγελίοις· «Ἐγὼ εἶμι τὸ φῶς
τοῦ κόσμου.» Χαίροις, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι' ἧς
ἐπέλαμψε φῶς τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου
καθημένοις. «Ὁ λαὸς γὰρ, φησὶν, ὁ καθημένος ἐν
σκότει, ἴδε φῶς μέγα.» Ποῖον ἄρα φῶς, εἰ μὴ
τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸ φῶς τὸ
ἀληθινὸν, τὸ φωτίζον πάντα ἄνθρωπον
ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον; (1033.15-24).⁹⁵

Right after this hymn, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed is written in the manuscript. Although more research needs to be done to uncover the relationship between the IttC and the text of *M574*, the similarities are enough to question if the two came from related traditions or if a hymn to the *Theotokos* was a customary conclusion to the section before reciting the Creed. Also, because the *M574* text is a Greek Hymn, the Greek text could have been chanted, while the Coptic read for explanation.⁹⁶ This is especially probable because after

⁹⁴ It is worth noting that similar text appears on *Brussels Musées Royaux E 370 (7th / 8th c)*, which is an Ostrakon (pottery) having Greek text on the outside. It begins with a hymn to Christ, followed by an expanded Trisagion and finally a Theotokion, the second half of which (starting from line 21) parallels this text of *M574*. For available text see: W. E. Crum, *Coptic Ostraca* (London: The Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902), Ad 39 p4. cf. Quecke, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 516-518.

⁹⁵ All Greek text is taken from *PG 77:1029-1040*. Line numbers appear next to each section.

⁹⁶ This is a common practice in Coptic churches where the prayer language is different than the vernacular. One will find explicit directions in later Arabic manuscripts asking the reader to chant the Coptic and interpret it into Arabic or read the Arabic interpretation after, because Coptic was no longer in use outside the church.

the Greek text, the title above the Sahidic text reads **ΟΜΕΟΣ ΠΕΥΒΩΛ**, “The same, explained”.⁹⁷ If a relationship were to be established, perhaps it could help explain the puzzling reading of a hymn as a creed in the Bohairic tradition.

Quecke has identified pages 127-149 (f65-75) and 176-178 (f83-84) as the Liturgy of the Hours portion of the manuscript.⁹⁸ This pre-Creed text occurs within this section, yet it is not the only text that matches the IttC. The text after the Trisagion, within the Liturgy of the Hours, combines invocations and glorifications to the Trinity, Mary, and Christ, concluding with a doxology. The text of the Trisagion prayer itself matches that of the contemporary Bohairic Horologion, but immediately after in *M574* the following verses are present:

M574 f71 (p141 ρμα)⁹⁹

ΕΝΔΩΞΑ
 ΕΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΥ ΘΕΟΔΟΚΕ
 ΜΥΤΗΡ ΧΥ
 ΠΡΟΣΑΓΑΓΕ ΤΗΝ ΥΜΕΤΕΡΑΝ
 ΠΡΟΣΕΥΧΗ ΤΩ ΥΙΩΝ ΣΟΥ
 ΚΕ ΘΥ ΗΜΩΝ. ΔΩΞΑ ΠΑΤΡΙ
 ΚΕ ΥΙΩ ΚΕ ΑΓΙΩ ΠΝΙ:

ΘΕΟΔΩΚΟΥ ΕΝΔΟΞΕ ΤΩ
 ΣΕΝΠΛΑΣΑΝΤΑ Ω
 ΝΕΓΕΝΝΗΣΑΣ ΕΥΔΩΚΗΣΑΝΤΑ
 ΕΝΣΗΣΑΡΚΩΘΕΝΤΑ ΘΝ ΛΟΓΟΝ.
 ΕΙΚΕΔΕΥΕ ΣΥΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ
 ΣΟΣΕ ΤΑΣ ΨΥΧΑΣ ΗΜΩΝ.
 ΚΥ ΠΝΙ:ΚΕ ΔΕΙ ΚΕ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΥΣ
 ΕΩΝΑΣ ΤΟΝ ΕΝΟΝ ΑΜΗΝ.

ἐνδῶξα Ἀειπαρθένου
 Θεοτόκου μήτηρ Χριστοῦ:
 προσάγαγε τὴν ἡμετέραν
 προσευχὴν τῷ Υἱῷ σου καὶ
 Θεῷ ἡμῶν. Δόξα Πατρὶ καὶ
 Υἱῷ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι.

Θεοτόκου ἐνδοξε τῷ σε
 ἐνπλάσαντα: ὦν ἐγέννησας:
 εὐδωκήσαντα
 ἐνσησαρκώθεντα Θεόν
 λόγον: ἰκετεύε σὺν τῆς
 ἁγίας, σώσε τὰς ψυχὰς
 ἡμῶν. καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς
 τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.
 Ἀμήν.

Glory of the ever-virgin,
Theotokos, Mother of Christ.
 Bring our prayer to your Son
 and our God. Glory to the
 Father, and to the Son, and
 to the Holy Spirit.

Of the *Theotokos*, glory to
 the one who was formed in
 you, being born and
 enfleshed with good
 pleasure, God the Word.
 Beseech with the saint, **save
 our souls**. Now and ever
 and unto the ages of the
 ages. Amen.

For example, see *Cairo CCP 400 (1896-1897)*, f5 which asks the deacon to chant the Holy Thursday Psalm and Gospel in the mournful tune in Coptic then read the interpretation of it in Arabic.

⁹⁷ New York MLM M574 (897-898), f74

⁹⁸ Quecke, *Untersuchungen*, p. 107.

⁹⁹ *New York MLM M574 (897-898)*, f71. Greek transcription and English translation are mine. The first strophe here is similar to a prayer in the *Μικρόν Απόδειπνον* in the Byzantine tradition: Ὑπερένδοξε, αειπάρθενε, εὐλογημένη Θεοτόκε, προσάγαγε τὴν ἡμετέραν προσευχὴν τῷ Υἱῷ σου καὶ Θεῷ ἡμῶν, καὶ αἰτήσαι ἵνα σώσῃ δια σου τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

ΔΩΞΑΣΕ ΧΕ: ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΙ
ΚΑΥΧΗΜΑ: ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΝ
ΑΓΑΛΛΑΙΑΜΜΑ: ΤΩΝ ΚΥΡΙΚΜΑ
ΤΡΙΑΣ ΕΝΟΜΟΟΥΣΙΟΝ. ΑΛΛΗ
ΑΛΛΗ ΑΛΛΗ

Δόξασε Χριστέ: απόστολοι
καύχημα: μαρτύρων
αγαλλίαμα: τῶν κήρυγμα
τριάς ἐν ὁμοούσιον.
Ἄλληλούια, Ἄλληλούια,
Ἄλληλούια.

**Glory to [you] Christ, the
Apostles boast, the joy of
the martyrs: the
proclamation of the
Trinity in one essence.**
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Christological and Trinitarian glorification at the end of this short text is strikingly similar to the second and third strophes of IttC. Quecke also notices that only the Trisagion and the immediately following texts are Greek, while the other texts in the Liturgy of the Hours are Coptic.¹⁰⁰ The post-Trisagion text mentioned above and the pre-Creed text mentioned earlier are both within the larger set of Greek texts (f71-73), beginning with the Trisagion. Although Quecke does not mention IttC, he asserts that even in contemporary Liturgy of the Hours the angelic hymn is followed by the Trisagion, which in turn is followed by texts that are at least partially identical to the invocations of *M574* mentioned above.¹⁰¹ He is cautious, however, to note that there is no reason to assume that all of these texts were written at the same time.¹⁰²

When considering the position of IttC in the contemporary rite between the Trisagion Prayer and the Creed, along with the striking parallels to the post-Trisagion and pre-Creed Greek texts in *M574*, a few possibilities present themselves. One possibility is that the Bohairic IttC and the Greek texts of *M574* developed independently from a shared core of traditional prayers. The other possibility could be that the Bohairic IttC is the final translated, metered, and condensed form of the *M574* Greek texts. Finally, it is still also possible that IttC was based on the translation of a shorter text that was expanded into the *M574* Greek texts. Although IttC likely was composed originally in Bohairic due to the lyrical features, it could be based on a translation from a Greek text, but it was surely modified to a metered and hymnographic final form in Bohairic. Overall, there appears to be some relationship between the mentioned Greek text of *M574* and the Bohairic IttC, even if the exact development trajectory cannot be fully determined due to the scarcity of Sahidic sources and the late date of the Bohairic ones.

The oldest documentary witnesses of the Bohairic Liturgy of the Hours are not older than the 12th or 13th century, by which the rite had largely reached its present form.¹⁰³ Because IttC

¹⁰⁰ Quecke, *Untersuchungen*, p. 108.

¹⁰¹ Quecke, *Untersuchungen*, p. 108.

¹⁰² Quecke, *Untersuchungen*, p. 111.

¹⁰³ Zanetti, "Liturgy in Wadi el Natroun", p. 122.

appears first in a 14th century text, all one can assert with confidence is that this hymn was composed sometime prior to the 14th century. Since the first mentions of IttC are in some of the earliest available documents, perhaps one could make an argument that the hymn is older than the 12th century; however, to confine the composition to the time of Ephesus is difficult, especially with no good reasons to rule out an earlier or a later composition than the council.

Earlier than the Council

The Text, as it stands, has nothing that ties it to the polemics of the council of Ephesus. The hymn is mostly composed of phrases of praise that are not tied to the Christological struggle and would have been just as accessible before as after the council. The only word that may be directly tied to the council is the word God-bearer (ΜΑΡΤΟΥΡΙΑ), which is equivalent to *Theotokos* in Greek. However, this word is not enough to eliminate the possibility of an earlier composition.

As demonstrated by Johnson and Shoemaker, there are many instances of the use of the term *Theotokos* prior to the council of Ephesus. In patristic writings John Chrysostom (347-407 AD), Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373 AD), and the Cappadocian fathers used the term with some frequency.¹⁰⁴ The historian Socrates even mentions the term being used as early as Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-c. 253 AD).¹⁰⁵ The term is also found in early prayers and hymns, as demonstrated by its use within the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* —an Egyptian prayer dated to the third century AD.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Johnson confirms that the term *Theotokos* appears four times in Athanasius' *Orationes tres contra Arianos*, once in his *Vita Antonii*, three times in *Expositiones in Psalmos*, and at least once in *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*. Johnson also cites Herein Starowieyski, who confirms that many Pre-Ephesus figures, including the Cappadocian fathers along with John Chrysostom and Ephrem the Syrian, all used the term. Maxwell E. Johnson, "Sub Tuum Praesidium: The Theotokos in Christian Life and Worship before Ephesus", *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 17/1 (2008): pp. 52-75 and pp. 54-55.

¹⁰⁵ Socrates testified that Origen used the title (and may have been the first to do so). Johnson, "Sub Tuum Praesidium," 74.

¹⁰⁶ The *Sub Tuum Praesidium* is a prayer dated to 3rd century AD with the following text, "To your protection we flee, holy Mother of God (Theotokos), do not despise our prayers in [our] needs, but deliver us from all dangers, glorious and blessed Virgin." Johnson, "Sub Tuum Praesidium," 62. This prayer is housed in fragment housed at the John Ryland library, but the prayer itself is still used liturgically by several traditions today., Stephen J Shoemaker. *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 68-69.

One of Youssef's arguments for the IttC being composed shortly after the council is the alleged similarity to the Formula of Reunion (433 AD).¹⁰⁷ The similarities he highlights are the phrases "and for our salvation born from Mary the Virgin, according to his humanity" and the title "Mother of God".¹⁰⁸ However, neither of these phrases are unique or novel to the Formula of Reunion. The former phrase is found in the Nicene Creed, along with many of the Alexandrian and Cappadocian patristic writings.¹⁰⁹ The latter title "Mother of God," similar to *Theotokos*, is found in the Christian tradition prior to Ephesus as previously explained. In Egypt, the title "Mother of God" even predates Christianity. A hymn to Isis dated to the first century BC,¹¹⁰ and inscribed on her temple in the Faiyum region of Egypt, has this line, "Μητέρα δὴ κλήζουσι θεῶν καὶ Θρήϊκες ἄνδρες"¹¹¹ (and also the Thracian men call you 'Mother of gods'). Even further back in history, hymns to Isis dating to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BC)¹¹² have the title ⲙⲙⲧⲏⲧⲏⲣⲏ "Mother of god" consistently throughout.¹¹³ Thus, the phrases outlined by Youssef do not necessitate a specific date but could be as early as Christianity itself.

Later than the Council

Because of the similarities between IttC and the Encomium attributed to Cyril, one might be tempted to assume they were both composed by the same author. While this assumption would satisfy the timing proposed by Youssef and support the Coptic oral tradition, the reality is much more complex.

¹⁰⁷ The Formula of Reunion (433) refers to the profession of faith that brought unity between bishop John of Antioch and bishop Cyril of Alexandria following a long letter exchange between the two bishops regarding the condemnation of Nestorius' teaching at the Ephesus Ecumenical Church Council in 431.

¹⁰⁸ Youssef, "Introduction", p. 95.

¹⁰⁹ The Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed for example has, τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου, καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, (Who for us humans and for our salvation, came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and from Virgin Mary, and became human).

¹¹⁰ Vanderlip dates the hymn between 88 BC to 12 BC based on historical events. See: Vera Frederika Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), p. 13.

¹¹¹ Isidorus Hymn 1.20 (Vanderlip, *Four*, 17).

¹¹² L. V. Žabkar, "Six Hymns to Isis in the Sanctuary of Her Temple at Philae and Their Theological Significance," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 69/1 (1983), pp. 115-137, esp. p. 115.

¹¹³ See for example Hymn 1, which has the lines, "Praise to you Isis-Hathor, god's Mother, Lady of Heaven, Mistress of Abaton, queen of the gods" (Žabkar, "Six," 118). Hymn 2 has "Praise to you, Isis, the Great One, god's Mother, Lady of Heaven, queen of the gods", (Žabkar, "Six," 122). Hymn 3 has "O Isis the Great, god's Mother, Lady of Philae", (Žabkar, "Six," 130).

The authorship of the encomium has long been contested in scholarly writing. The attribution to Cyril came from Aubert, who first published the work in Minge's *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca* in 1864. In the first note of the text Aubert writes that he copied the homily from the famous codex of the Royal Library, and "amended it as far as conjectures could" *quantum conjecturis licuit emendavimus*, though he asserts that its genuineness will be obvious to anyone who examines it.¹¹⁴

James Chrystal sees Aubert as "woefully unfit" to identify or edit Cyril's work.¹¹⁵ Chrystal rejects the attribution to Cyril mostly based on his own theological bias, as he accuses the encomium of offering "creature-worship" to Mary, "idolatry in bowing to the cross," and inaccuracy in calling the Emperor "Orthodox".¹¹⁶ Although the reasons for Chrystal's rejection of this encomium are mostly based on biased interpretations, he has a valid point in highlighting the lack of external evidence in support of Cyril's authorship.¹¹⁷ Chrystal concludes that he "would put the date of this forgery, made by some paganizer, some centuries after Cyril's death and in corrupt and evil times".¹¹⁸

While Chrystal only questions the authenticity of the encomium, scholars such as E. Schwartz question the entire body of eight homilies at Ephesus and their attribution to Cyril.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, scholars such as Quasten and Santer cautiously attribute to Cyril all eight sermons delivered at Ephesus.¹²⁰ Quasten sees that Homily number four exhibits style and contents that fits within the Ephesian context and has no compelling reason to doubt its ascription to Cyril. He believes Homily four to be the basis for Homily eleven, the latter being an elongated and embellished version of the original.¹²¹

Even with the authorship question aside, the temporal relationship between the encomium and IttC is not clear. It is well-attested that patristic figures have quoted hymns in their

¹¹⁴ "Ex menosissimo Regiæ bibliothecæ codice hanc homilian exscripsimus, et quantum conjecturis licuit, emendavimus. Genuinum esse porro Cyrilli fetum vel eam intuenti statim patebit. Nam et invehitur in Nestorium, et Cælestinum archiepiscopum totis orbis luculento sane testimonio nuncupat; denique omni ratione se prodit." PG 77:1029 n 1

¹¹⁵ James Chrystal, *Authoritative Christianity, Third World Council* (Jersey City, NJ: James Chrystal, 1904), pp. 39-40, n 28.

¹¹⁶ Chrystal, *Authoritative Christianity*, p. 33.

¹¹⁷ Chrystal, *Authoritative Christianity*, pp. 39-40 n 28.

¹¹⁸ Chrystal, *Authoritative Christianity*, p. 32.

¹¹⁹ Antonia Atanassova, "Container of The Uncontainable God?: Mary The Theotokos in The Nestorian Controversy", (2003), p. 200 n 247.

¹²⁰ Atanassova "Container", p. 200 n 247.

¹²¹ Atanassova "Container", p. 200 n 247.

sermons.¹²² Thus, one possibility for the similarities could be due to the encomium quoting a hymn that resembles IttC, if not IttC itself. If the attribution to Cyril is genuine, this encomium would contain the only reference to Mary as Mother of the true light in the Cyrillian corpus.¹²³ Cyril would not be utilizing his common vocabulary, which suggests the possibility of quotation.

The opposite relationship is also possible. There are examples of Medieval hymns and prayers that quote earlier patristic text.¹²⁴ The text of IttC could have been written centuries later, even if quoting the alleged Cyrillian encomium. The possibility of a later composition deepens when considering that the first mention of the prayer is in the 14th-century writings of Ibn Kabar¹²⁵ and the earliest available manuscript with full text is dated to 15th century AD.¹²⁶

Overall, there is not enough evidence to dismiss the possibility of the text being earlier or much later than the Council of Ephesus. There is nothing particularly that confines its composition to the time of the council. One can only assert with confidence that this text is older than the 14th century.

Conclusion

The literary elements of the text of IttC fit the essential form characteristics of a hymn. The text is strophic and exhibits meter, rhyme, parallelism, words of praise, as well as shared phrases with an encomium. When comparing it to chanted strophes of other Coptic hymns, compelling similarities are present in both context and structure. Alternatively, when comparing the text to known creeds, even the most basic credal structure is absent from the text. Therefore, the conclusion is clear—this text is a hymn.

¹²² For example, Proclus of Constantinople (*sed.* 434-446 AD) cited two strophes of a fifth-century Jerusalem hymn in his famous *First Homily on the Theotokos*. cf. Shoemaker, *Mary*, p. 190.

¹²³ cf. note 62.

¹²⁴ For example, the prayers before communion written by Gabriel III (1208-1271 AD) have been shown to be based on a text by Ephrem the Syrian. cf. Arsany Paul, “Prayers before Liturgy and Approaching the Sacred: Church Entrance Petitions from the Thirteenth-Century Copto-Arabic Manuscript Suryān Liturgy 383 (Folia 190r-194r),” *Ecclesia Orans* 39 (2022): pp. 143-173, 169-170. Also, some hymns from Matins in the Byzantine rite have been shown to be based partially on the Christological writings of Cyril of Alexandria. Eirini Artemi, “Hymns of Matins of the Feast of the Nativity of Christ in the Greek Orthodox Church,” *Altarul Reîntregirii* 2/2 (2021), pp. 13-31, pp. 17-18 and 23-24.

¹²⁵ cf. note 73.

¹²⁶ *Paris BnF Copt. 69 (15th c)* has the full text without the small concluding prayers. *Paris BnF Copt. 11 (1537)* has the full text, including the small concluding prayers.

While the text could be related to Greek texts quoted before the Creed in the earliest Sahidic Psalmodia (M574), the IttC text itself is only found in Bohairic manuscripts. Also, this text is absent from the core of the Divine Liturgy as well as other rituals and sacraments. It is mainly included in the liturgy of hours, which is historically influenced, if not started, by the monastic community. The exclusivity of the text to the Bohairic liturgy of the hours would support Youssef's conclusion of the hymn coming from a Bohairic monastic community.

Dating the text to time of the Council of Ephesus appears to be unfounded as there is no literary or historical reason to confine this text to that time period. The text is largely free from polemical language that would be tied to the Christological or political issues of the council, and the use of a word like *Theotokos* is not sufficient to date this text since the word have been used in Egypt well before the council. The similarities with the encomium attributed to Cyril may help emphasize hymnal aspects of the text, but it does not help in dating. Besides the question of the encomium's authorship, the temporal relationship between the two texts cannot be adequately established. The available documentary sources only confirm that IttC was present prior to the 14th century.

After all is examined, one might be able to answer the question: what is the Coptic "Introduction to the Creed"? It is a hymn developed prior to the 14th century, likely by a Bohairic monastic community, and it bears strong parallels to Greek texts within the earliest known Sahidic Psalmodia along with strong parallels to an encomium arguably attributed to Cyril of Alexandria. As of today, that is all we know.

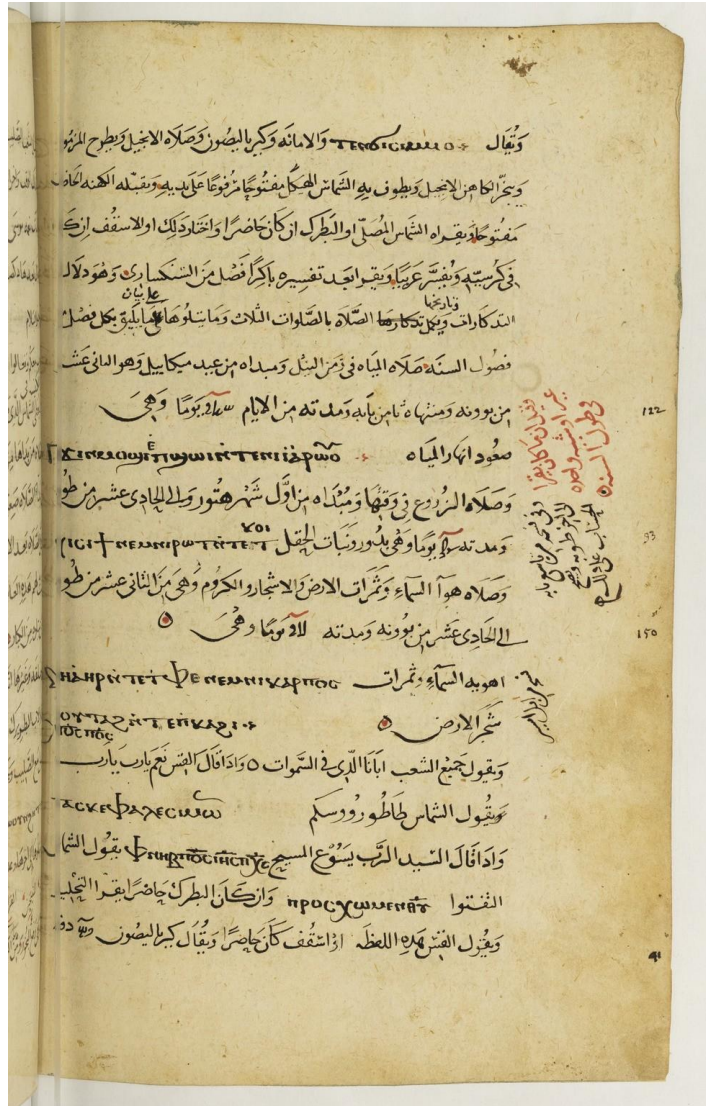
Appendix: Earliest Sources

Item	Source	Date	Full Text	Position in the text	
1	<i>Bnf Arabe 203</i> <i>Ibn Kabar</i>	1324	No, only mention	Ibn Kabar - <i>Miṣbāḥ al-zulmāb</i> After Doxologies of Vespers and Matins	f199v (Chapter 16)
2	<i>BnF 69</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	15 th c.	Yes	End of Midnight Praise. Before the creed. Missing the final KE.	F150-151
3	<i>BnF 11</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	1537	Yes	End of doxologies in Vespers and Matins. Before the Creed.	f244
4	<i>BnF 22</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	1671	Yes	End of doxologies in Vespers and Matins. Before the Creed.	f208
5	<i>BnF 34</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	1735	Yes	End of Midnight Praise. Before the Creed.	f86
6	<i>BnF 35</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	1669	Yes	End of doxologies in Vespers and Matins. Before the creed. Specifically calls it the “introduction.”	308-309
7	<i>BnF75</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	1732	Yes	Morning Praise	F277-278
8	<i>BnF 76</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	1702	Yes	End of doxologies in Vespers and Matins. Before the Creed. Specifically calls it introduction to creed... the creed is the “continuation.”	f 328-329
9	<i>BnF 81</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	18c. (or 1621/1624)	Yes	End of Midnight Doxologies after 4 th Hoos & Comm, before Sunday Theotokia (The Psali is on f134 before the doxologies). Not followed by the Creed.	f 109
10	<i>Toukhi</i> <i>Horologion</i>	1750	No, only a mention	In the Veil Prayer (<i>Satar</i>)	P309
11	<i>Toukhi</i> <i>Psalmodia</i>	1764	Yes	After Trisagion and Hail Mary, before the Creed and Doxologies. Earliest print text, missing the final KE.	P158
12	<i>MS-P</i> <i>Horologion</i>	20 th c.	Yes	Prime prayer before the creed (according to Burmester).	f52v
13	<i>Burmester</i>	1973	Yes	Prime and Veil prayers before the creed.	Veil p.

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					211
<i>Horologion</i>					Prime p. 154
					Coptic Text pp. 133-134
					English Text pp. 232-234
14	<i>MLM M574</i>	9 th c.	NA	No Introduction to the Creed. A Greek and Sahidic hymn is present.	f71, f73-74
15	<i>Brussels E 370</i>	7 th – 8 th c.	NA	Text matches the Hail Mary of <i>M574</i> .	Lines 21-27

1. *Kitāb mišbāḥ al-zulma wa-īdāḥ al-ḥidma* by Šams Al-Ri' Āsa Ibn Kabar Abū Al-Barakāt.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Arabe 203

Earliest mention (first line) of the text of interest. *Paris BnF Ar. 203 (14th c.), f199v*

2. Earliest full text available without the concluding prayers



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 69

Paris BnF Copt. 69 (15th c), f150 (The text starts at the bottom of the right page)



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 69

Paris BnF Copt. 69 (15th c), f151 (The text ends in the left page; the Creed starts on the right)

3. Earliest full text available (including the small concluding prayers)



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 11

Paris BnF Copt. 11 (1537), f244.

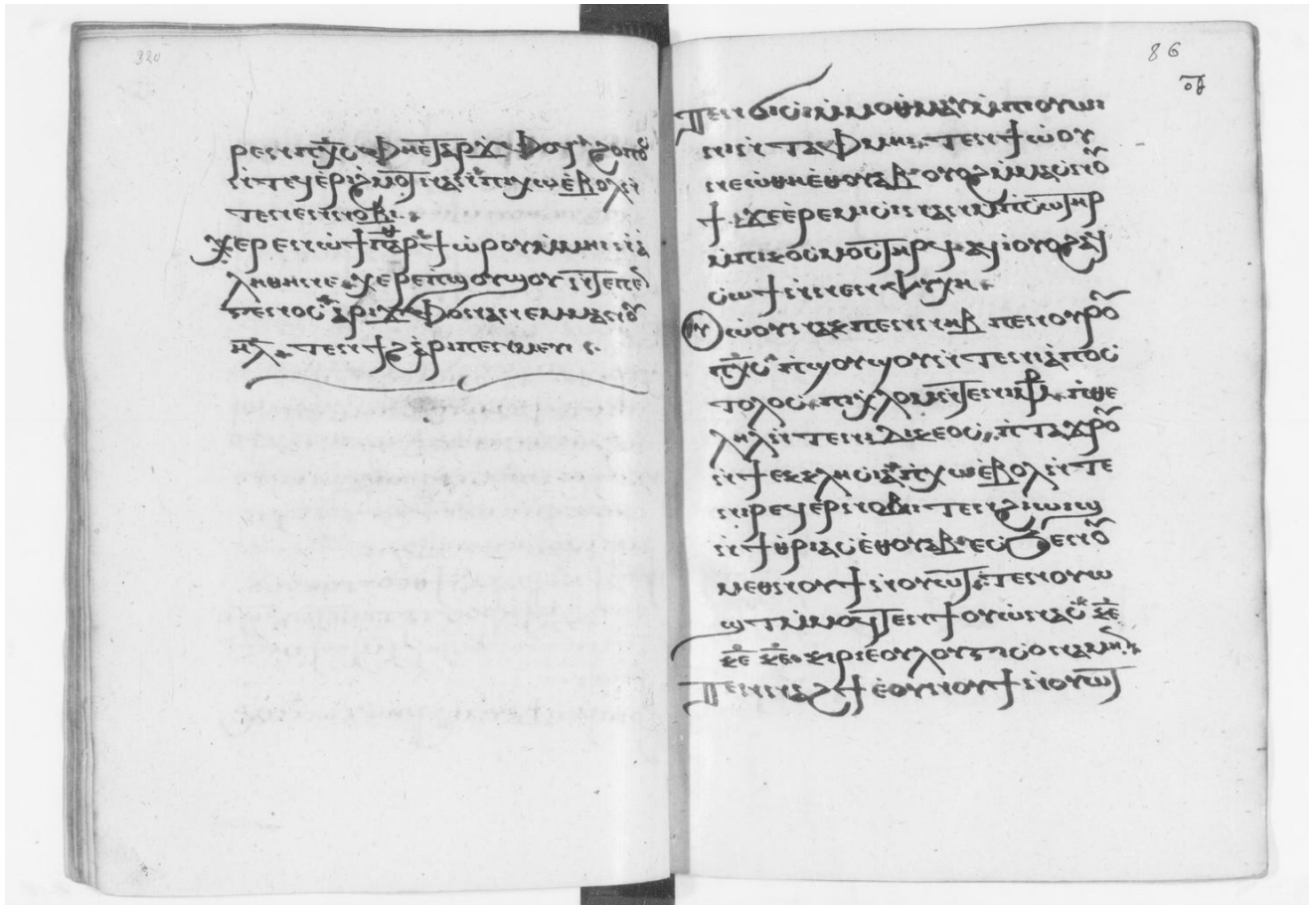
4. Manuscript



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 22

Paris BnF Copt. 22 (1671), f208

5. Manuscript



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Copte 34

Paris BnF Copt. 34 (1735), f86

6. First manuscript to call it "Introduction to the Creed"



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 35

Paris BnF Copt. 35 (1669), f308



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 35

Paris BnF Copt. 35 (1669), f309



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 75

Paris BnF Copt. 75 (1732), 277



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 75

Paris BnF Copt. 75 (1732), 278

8. Manuscript: specifically calls the text "Introduction to the Creed" and calls the creed "Continuation of the Creed"



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 76

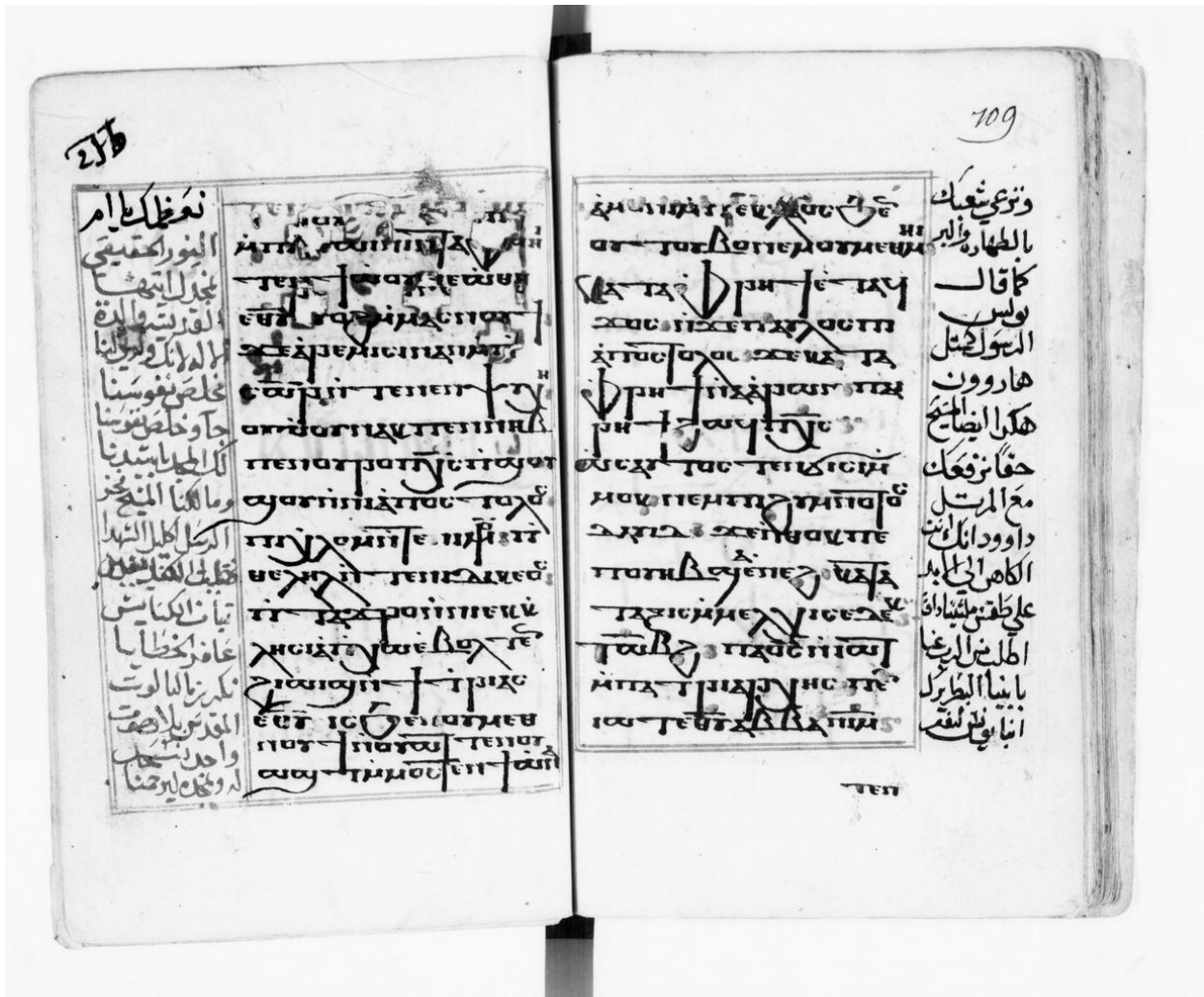
Paris BnF Copt. 76 (1702), 328



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 76

Paris BnF Copt. 76 (1702), 329

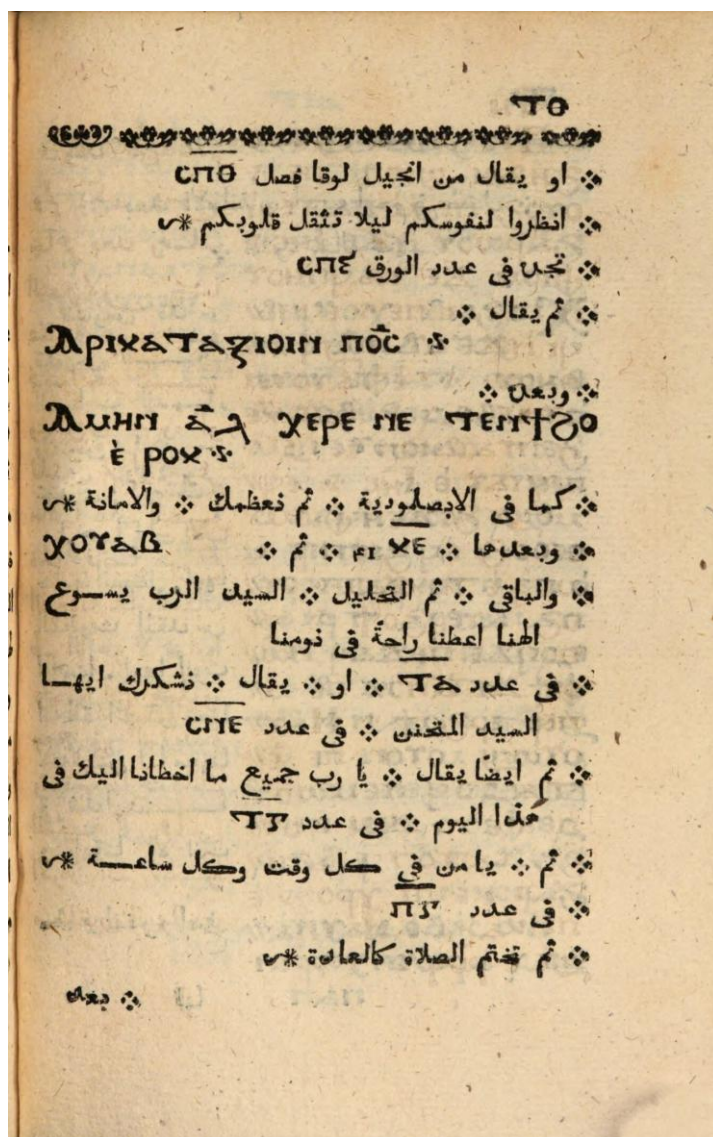
9. Manuscript: no creed follows



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Copte 81

Paris BnF Copt. 81 (18th/17th c.), f109

10. First mention in a printed book (1750 al-Ṭūḥī horologion)



Mentioned in the Veil prayer (an exclusive prayer to the monastic tradition) al-Ṭūḥī, Raphael. ΟΥΧΩΜ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΕΥΧΗ ΜΠΙΕΞΟΥ ΝΕΜ ΠΙΕΧΩΡΞ ΝΖ [The book of the seven prayers of the day and night]. (Rome, 1750), p. 309.

11. First Print Text (Missing the Kyrie eleyson at the end of the prayer)



Raphael al-Tūhī, ΠΙΧΩΜ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΘΕΟΤΟΚΙΑ ΝΕΜ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΑΞΙΣ ΝΤΕ ΠΑΒΟΤ ΧΟΙΑΚ [The book of the Theotokias and according to the rite of the month of Kihak] (Rome, 1764), p. 158.

12. MS-P (20th century) as transcribed by Burmester

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ΤΟΥΣ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥΣ ΕΒΛΗΣΟΝ ΗΜΑΣ → ΔΟΣΑ ΠΑΤΡΙ ΚΕ ΥΪΘ
 ΚΕ ΛΥΘ ΠΛΑΤΙ → ΚΕ ΜΥΝ ΚΕ ΛΙ ΚΕ ΙΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΕΒΗΛΑΣ ΤΩΝ
 ΜΣ.Ρ 4.50^ν
 ΕΒΗΘΩΝ ΑΝΗΝ → * ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΑΣ ΕΒΛΗΣΟΝ ΗΜΑΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ
 ΤΡΑΣ ΕΒΛΗΣΟΝ ΗΜΑΣ Τ ΤΡΑΣ ΕΘΥ ΝΑΙ ΝΑΙ → ΠΕΣ ΧΑΛΕΙ-
 ΝΟΒΙ ΙΑΝ ΕΒΟΛ ΠΕΣ ΧΑΛΕΙΝΑΜΟΙΑ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΠΕΣ ΧΑΛΕΙ-
 ΠΑΡΑΝΤΩΜΑ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ → ΠΕΣ ΖΕΜΠΩΝΙ ΙΝΗ ΕΤΩΒΩΝ
 ΗΤΕ ΠΕΚΑΛΟΣ ΜΑΤΛΑΧΩΟΥ ΕΒΕ ΠΕΚΑΝ ΕΘΥ → ΠΕΝΙΟΤ
 ΝΕΜ ΝΕΝΕΠΝΟΥ ΕΤΑΧΕΝΚΟΤ ΠΕΣ ΜΑΝΤΩΝ ΠΝΟΥΤΑΧΗ →
 ΜΣ.Ρ 4.51^ρ
 ΟΡΕΠΠΕΠΕΤΩ ΕΡΟΚ → ΦΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΩΟΥ ΝΕΜ ΠΑΝΑΖΙ ΠΕΝ
 ΠΤΡΕΣΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΕ ΚΕ ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΥΛΟΓΗΣΟΝ ΑΝΗΝ →

— 133 —

ΤΕΝΕΙΣΙ ΜΝΟ ΘΝΑΥ ΠΝΟΥΩΝΙ * ΗΤΑΦΜΗ ΤΕΠΤΩΟΥ
 ΝΕ Φ ΘΗ ΕΘΥ ΟΥΟΣ ΗΜΑΣΟΥΤ ΧΕ ΛΕΜΕΙΣ ΝΑΝ ΗΠΕΩΤΗΡ
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 ΜΣ.Ρ 4.52^ρ
 ΤΕΠΤΩΟΥ ΠΑΣ ΚΕ ΚΕ ΚΥΡΙΕ ΕΥΛΟΓΗΣΟΝ ΑΝΗΝ →
 ΠΝΑΖΤ ΕΘΥ ΕΤΑΧΣΕΜΠΗΤΑ ΘΗΝ ΠΙΚΑ
 ΘΗΝ ΟΥΜΕΠΝΗ ΤΕΠΝΑΖΤ ΕΘΥΠΟΥΤ ΠΟΥΤ ΦΩΤ ΠΠΑΝ-
 ΤΟΜΑΤΩΡ ΦΗ ΕΤΑΧΩΜΙΟ ΗΤΦΕ ΝΕΜ ΠΚΑΖ ΠΝ ΕΤΟΥΝΑΥ
 ΕΡΦΟΥ ΝΕΜ ΠΝ ΕΤΕ ΝΕΣΝΑΥ ΕΡΦΟΥ ΛΗ ΤΕΠΝΑΖΤ ΕΘΥΣΕ
 ΜΣ.Ρ 4.53^ρ
 ΠΟΥΤ ΠΣ * ΠΣΕ ΠΩΡΙ ΠΦΤ ΠΜΟΠΟΤΕΝΙΣ ΠΠΙΣ ΕΒΟΛ
 ΘΗΝ ΦΩΤ ΘΑΧΕΝ ΠΣΩΝ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΟΥΟΥΩΝΗ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΗΝ
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 ΦΗ ΕΤΑΧΩ ΠΒΕΝ ΦΩΠΗ ΕΒΟΛ ΑΠΤΟΤΑ ΦΑΙ ΕΤΕ ΕΒΗΓΗΤΕΝ
 ΑΠΩΝ ΘΑ ΠΡΩΠΗ ΝΕΜ ΕΒΕ ΠΕΠΟΥΧΑΙ ΛΙ * ΕΠΕΣΗΤ ΕΒΟΛ
 ΘΗΝ Τ ΦΕ ΛΕΠΣΑΡ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΗΝ ΠΠΙΧ ΕΘΥ ΝΕΜ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΗΝ
 ΜΑΠΑ Τ ΠΑΡΒΕΝΟΣ ΟΥΟΣ ΜΕΡ ΡΩΜΙ ΛΥΕΡΤΑΧΩΡΩΝΗ ΜΜΟΝ
 ΕΖΗΝ ΕΣΧΩΝ ΠΑΖΕΠ ΠΟΠΤΙΟΣ ΠΑΛΑΤΟΣ ΛΥΕΡΠΠΑΖ ΟΥΟΣ
 ΛΥΚΟΣ ΟΥΟΣ ΜΤΩΠΗ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΗΝ ΠΝ ΕΒΩΠΟΥΤ ΘΗΝ Π-
 ΕΘΟΥ ΜΝΑΣ Τ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΠΤΑΦΗ ΛΩΦΕ ΠΑΚ ΕΠΩΦΗ ΕΠΗΦΟΥ
 * ΛΙΖΕΜΕΙ ΣΛΟΥΠΝΑΝ ΠΠΕΠΩΤ ΚΕ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΠΠΝΟΥ ΘΗΝ ΠΕΦΟΥ
 ΕΤ ΠΑΠ ΘΗΝ ΕΠΩΠΗ ΝΕΜ ΠΝ ΕΒΩΠΟΥΤ ΦΗ ΕΤΕ ΤΕΠΝΕΤΟΥΡΟ
 ΟΥΑΠΕΘΟΥΚ → ΣΕ ΤΕΠΝΑΖΤ ΕΠΠΠΣ ΕΘΥ ΠΣΕ ΠΡΕΦ
 ΠΠΩΠΗ ΦΗ ΕΒΩΠΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΗΝ ΦΩΤ ΣΕΟΥΣΩΤ ΠΜΟΝ
 ΣΕΤΩΟΥ ΝΑΠ ΝΕΜ ΦΩΤ ΝΕΜ ΠΩΡΙ ΦΗ ΕΤΑΧΣΑΖΙ ΘΗΝ
 ΜΣ.Ρ 4.54^ρ

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ΤΟΥΣ] Υ. s.l. | ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥΣ] The text has ΟΥΡΑΝΟΣ, s.l. | ΑΓΙΑ] ι. s.l. |
 ΕΒΗΘΩΝ] ι. s.l. | ΕΒΛΗΣΟΝ] ω. s.l. | ΕΤΩΒΩΝ] ω. s.l. | ΑΠΕΚΧΑΠΕΠ-
 ΝΟΒΙ] ι. s.l. | ΤΟΥΤΩΝ] η. s.l. | ΗΠΕΠΠΗΤ] η. s.l. | ΠΠΑΝ] ι. s.l. |
 ΕΒΟΛ] s. l. | ΤΟΥΤΩΝ] Υ. s.l. | ΠΟΡΟΥΦΟΥ] Υ' and Υ' s.l. | ΗΠΕΠΝΑ-
 ΠΟΥΠΑΣ] Υ. s.l. | ΠΠΕΠΟΥΤ] The text has ΠΠΕΥ, s.l.

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ΚΑΙ] Υ. s.l. | ΗΠΙΔΠΟΣΤΑΟΣ] Υ. s.l. and η. s.l. | ΗΜΑΣΟΥΤ]
 Υ. s.l. | ΗΠΙΣΩΤΗΡ] ω. s.l. | ΠΟΥΤ] Υ. s.l. | ΓΡΕΠ: ΤΕΠΝΑΖΤ] η' s.l. |
 ΠΠΑΡΤΟΚΑΤΩΡ] ω. s.l. | ΕΤΟΥΠΛΑ] Υ' s.l. | ΕΒΟΛ] s. l. | ΟΥ-
 ΠΠΟΟΥΣΙΟΣ] Υ' s.l. | ΑΠΤΟΤΑ] η. s.l. | ΕΒΩΠΟΥΤ] Υ. s.l. | ΝΑΠ] η. s.l. |
 ΠΠΩΠΗ] Υ. s.l. | ΤΕΠΝΑΖΤ] The text has ΤΕΠΝ, s.l. | ΘΗΝ] η. s.l.

O.H.E Burmester, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church: Coptic and Arabic Text from a Mediaeval Manuscript.* (Cairo: Edizioni del Centro Franceseano di Studi Orientali Cristiani, 1973), p. 133.

14. English Text as presented by Burmester

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The *Beginning* of the *Canon* of the Creed.

^(MS. P)
f. 52 v^o We exalt thee, the Mother * of the True Light, we glorify thee, O thou who art pure and the God-bearer, for thou didst bring forth for us the *Saviour* of the whole *world*. He came and He saved our *souls*. Glory to Thee, our Master, our King, Christ the boast of the *Apostles*, the crown of the *Martyrs*, the joy of the *righteous*, the foundation of the *Churches*, the forgiveness of sins. We proclaim the Holy *Trinity* in * one Godhead. It we worship, It we glorify. *Lord, Lord, Lord bless.* Amen.

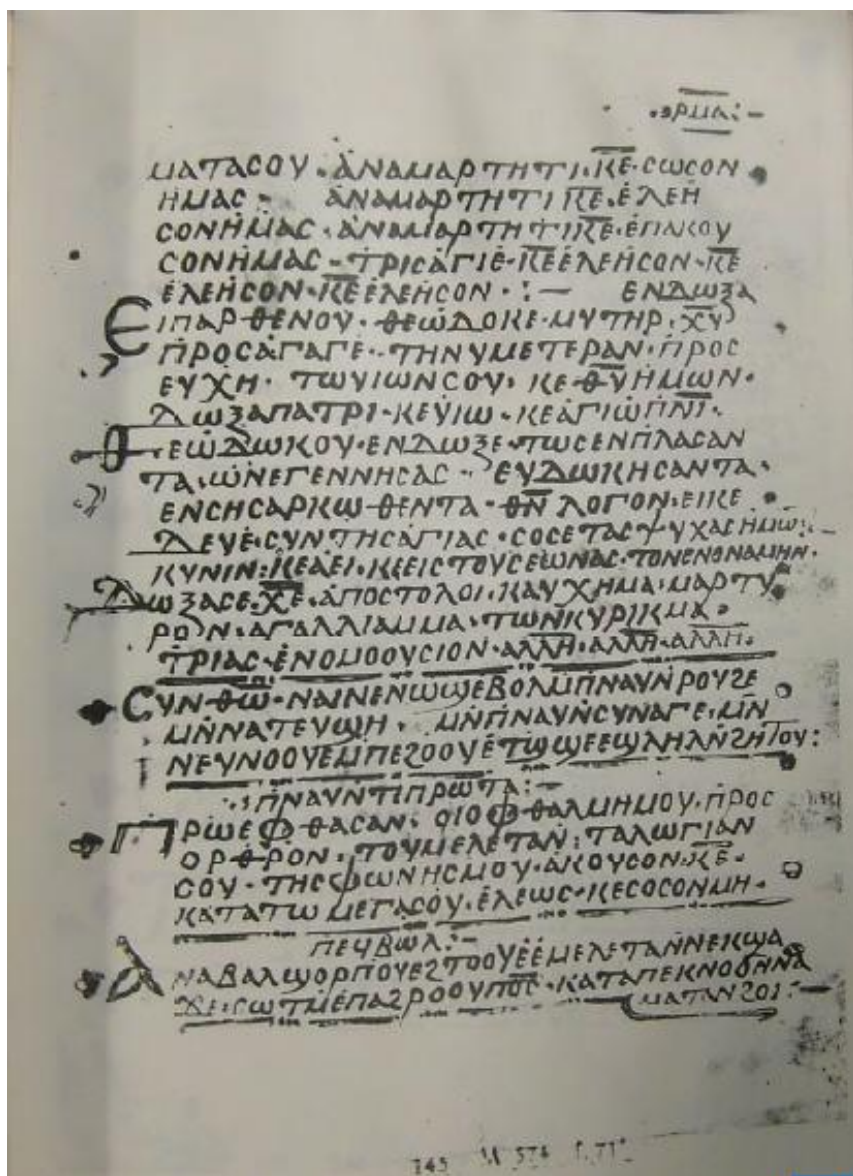
The Holy Creed which was established at Nicaea.

In truth, we believe in one God, the Father, the *Almighty*, Who hath made the heaven and the earth, those things which are seen and those things which are not seen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus * Christ, the Son of God, the *Only-begotten*, born of the Father before all the *ages*, Light of light, true God of true God : born, not made : *consubstantial* with the Father by Whom all things have been made : Who for us men and for our salvation came * down from the heaven. He took *flesh* of the Holy *Spirit* and of Mary the *Virgin*, and He became man. He was *crucified* for us under Pontius Pilate : He suffered and was buried, and He rose from the dead on the third day *according to the scriptures* : He went up to the heavens : * He sat at the right-hand of His Father, *and again* He cometh in His glory to judge the living and the dead : Whose Kingdom is unceasing. Yea, we believe in the Holy *Spirit*, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who cometh forth from the Father : He is worshipped, He is glorified with the Father and the Son : Who spake in the *prophets*. In one *Holy Catholic * Apostolic Church*. We *confess* one baptism unto the remission of sins : we look for the *resurrection* of the dead and the life of the coming *age*. Amen.

After 41 *Kyrie (eleisons)* there shall be said :

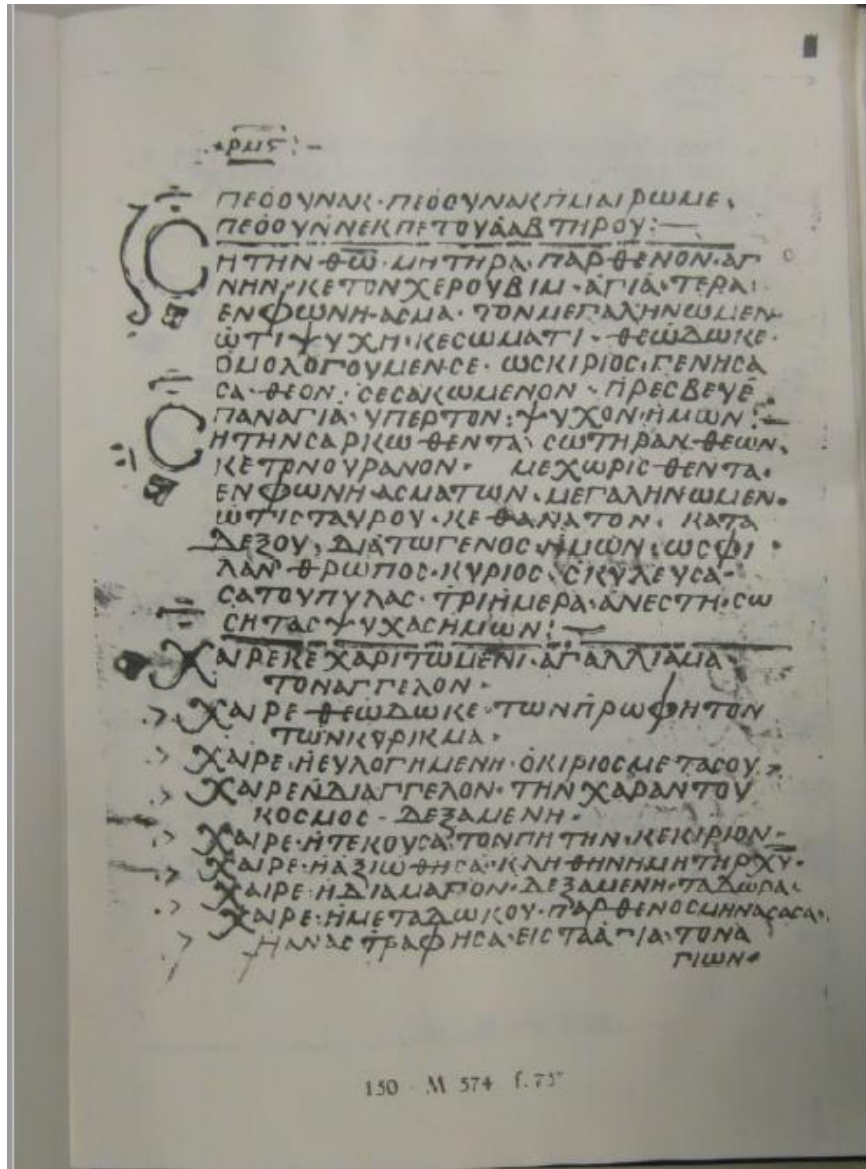
^(MS. P)
f. 55 v^o Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth, the heaven and the earth are full of Thy glory and Thine honour. *Have mercy on us, God * the Father, the Almighty. All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.* Lord God of the powers, be with us, for there is not a *helper* for us in our afflictions and our

14. Post-Trisagion Greek Text in the Earliest available Psalmody (M574)



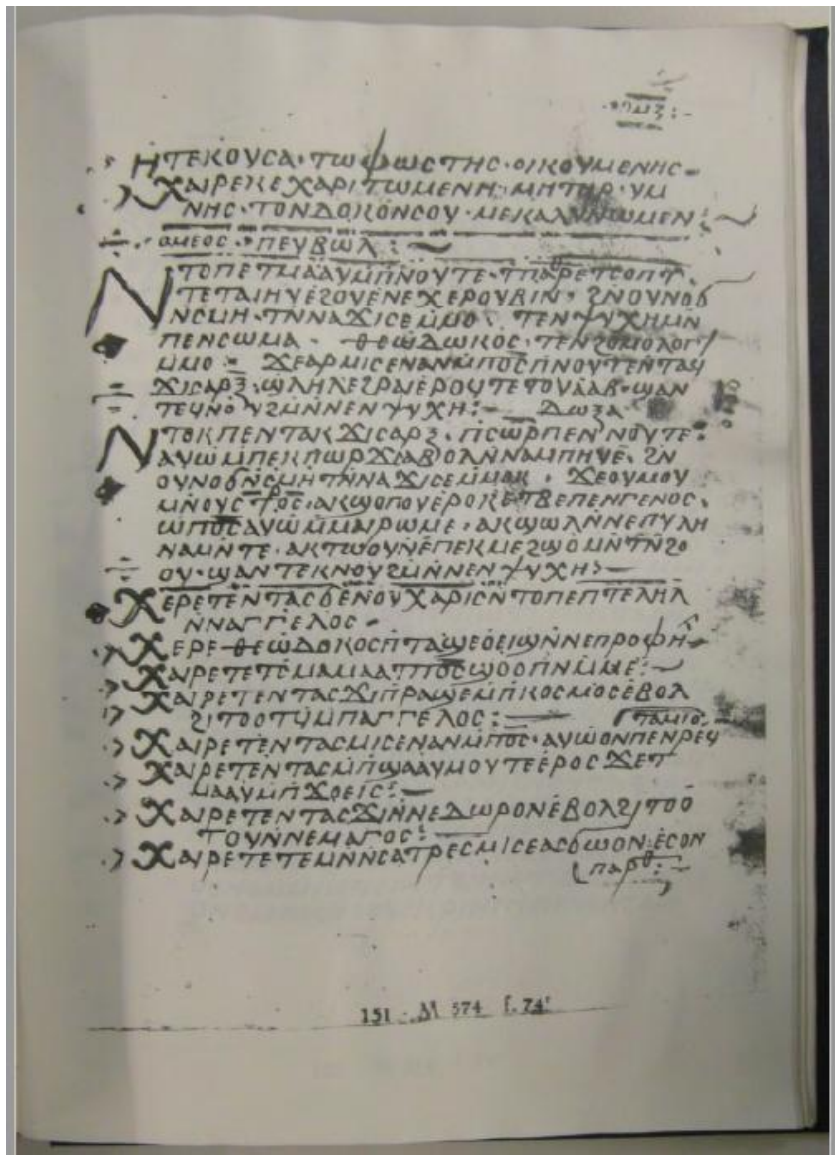
Greek Text written in Coptic script. *New York MLM M574 (897-898), f71.*

15. Pre-Creed Greek hymn in the Sahidic Tradition: Earliest available Psalmody (M574)



Greek Hymn written in Coptic script. *New York MLM M574 (897-898), f73v.*

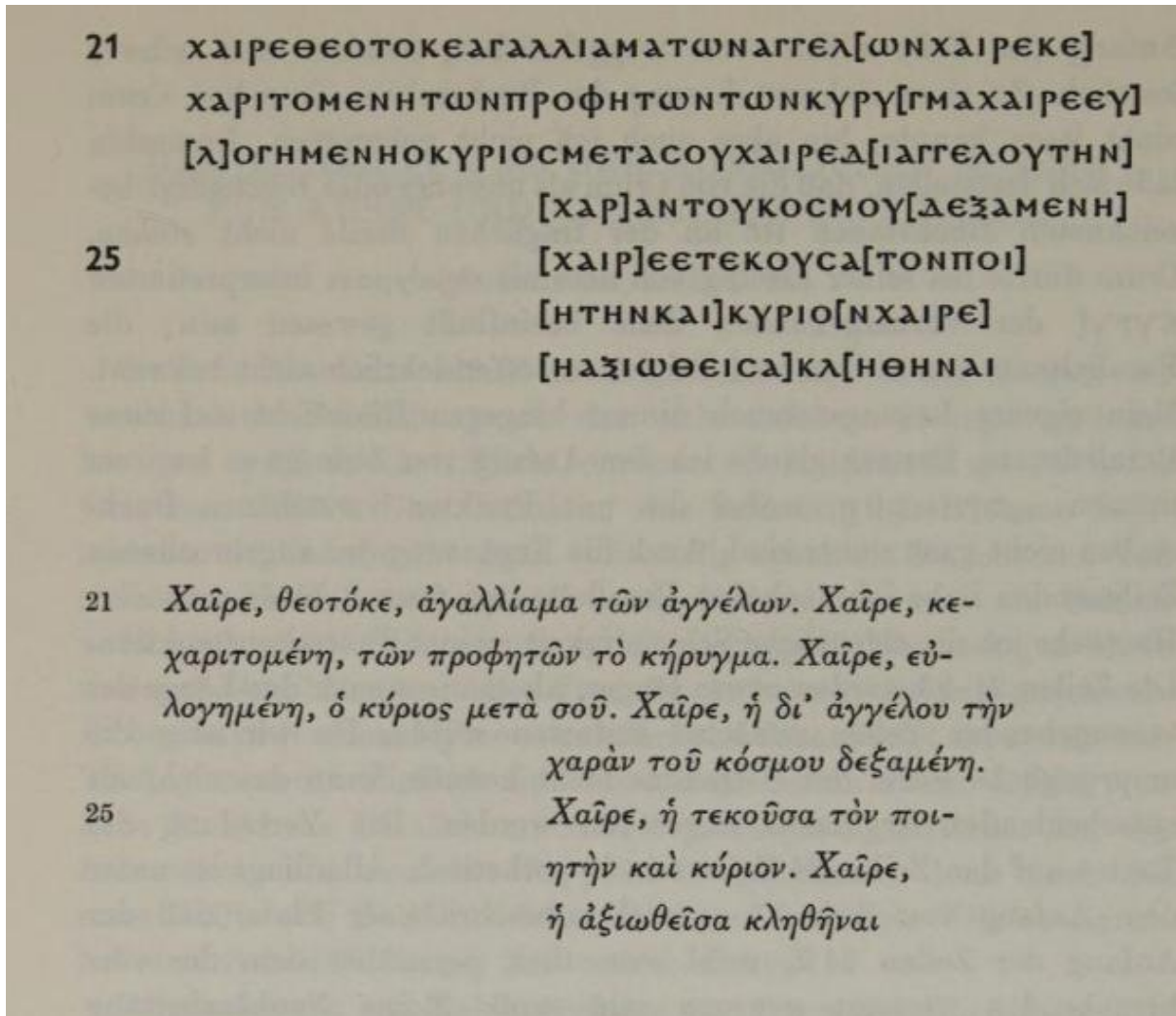
16. Translated Hymn written in Sahidic Coptic. *New York MLM M574 (897-898), f74r*



17. Continuation of Sahidic text followed by the Creed (Sahidic). *New York MLM M574 (897-898), f74v*



18. Brussels Ostracon with text parallel to M574



Brussels Musées Royaux E 370 (7th / 8th c.), line 21-27. Text retrieved from: Hans Quecke, *Untersuchungen zum koptischen Stundengebet*, (Louvain: Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1970), p. 518.

Abstract: The Coptic “Introduction to the Creed” is a text that precedes the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed within the Bohairic Liturgy of the Hours. Because the current rite in the Coptic Orthodox Church includes two components from the Liturgy of the Hours (Matins raising of incense and hourly prayers of the horologion) before the Eucharistic liturgy, the “Introduction to the Creed” is recited twice in such context. However, this text is completely absent from the core of the Eucharistic liturgy or any other liturgical prayers outside the Liturgy of Hours. Traditionally this text is dated to the Council of Ephesus and attributed to Cyril of Alexandria. Although very little scholarship has been done on this text, previous scholarship have challenged its credal status and have proposed that it was composed by some Bohairic Monastic community. The paper at hand will build upon previous scholarship showing that this text is actually a hymn and not intended to be a creed at all. Although the text has strong parallels to Greek texts in the earliest Sahidic Psalmody as well as an Encomium attributed to Cyril of Alexandria, there are significant challenges to dating this text. There is no literary or historical reason to confine its origin to the period of the Council of Ephesus. What we could assert with confidence is that it was present before the 14th century, and likely before the 12th century, based on manuscript evidence.

Keywords: Coptic Introduction to the Creed; Coptic Liturgy of the Hours; Marian Hymn; Copto-Arabic Manuscripts; Cyril of Alexandria; Council of Ephesus.

Resumen: La “Introducción al Credo” en copto es un texto que antecede al Credo Niceno-Constantinopolitano en la Boháirica Liturgia de las Horas. Debido a que el rito actual en la Iglesia Ortodoxa Copta incluye dos componentes de la Liturgia de las Horas (maitines elevando incienso y oraciones por horas del horologion) antes de la liturgia eucarística, la “Introducción al Credo” se recita dos veces en dicho contexto. Sin embargo, este texto está completamente fuera del núcleo de la liturgia eucarística o de cualquier otra oración litúrgica fuera de la Liturgia de las Horas. Tradicionalmente, este texto está fechado en el Concilio de Éfeso y atribuido a Cirilo de Alejandría. Aunque se han realizado muy pocos estudios sobre este texto, estudios anteriores han desafiado su estatus de credo y han propuesto que fue compuesto por alguna comunidad monástica boháirica. Nuestro trabajo se basa en estudios anteriores que muestran que este texto es en realidad un himno y no es en absoluto un credo. Aunque el texto tiene claros paralelismos con los textos griegos de la primera Psalmody sahidica, así como con un Encomio atribuido a Cirilo de Alejandría, existen problemaas importantes para su datación. No hay razón literaria o histórica para limitar su origen al período del Concilio de Éfeso. Lo que podemos afirmar, con certeza, es que estuvo presente antes del siglo XIV y probablemente antes del siglo XII, según la evidencia manuscrita.

Palabras clave: Introducción copta al Credo; Liturgia copta de las Horas; Himno mariano; Manuscritos copto-árabes; Cirilo de Alejandría; Concilio de Éfeso.