

**CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE TEN
COMMANDMENTS**

**VOLUME 1
THE FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS**

**BY
H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III**



See of St. Mark

**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**

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COMMANDMENTS**

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**BY
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Alexandria and the See of St. Mark***

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PREFACE

The Ten Commandments were not given just for the days of Moses the Prophet, nor for the olden times only, but they are for all generations. till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass (Matt. 5:18).

Yet, Christianity gave the commandments a certain concept that coincides with the sublimity of the New Testament. Thus, the Commandments remained without change but with a broader concept as God allows with His Grace through contemplation.

True indeed are the words of David the Prophet: *"I have seen the consummation of all perfection, But Your commandment is exceedingly broad."* (Ps. 119:96).

This book is the fruit of the lectures delivered in 1967 by myself, and have been published several times in Arabic and English.

Shenouda III

INTRODUCTION

A GENERAL STATEMENT ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. A Covenant with God:

I wish with God's help, to speak to you about the Ten Commandments in the light of the Christian doctrine.

These commandments are not only for people of the olden times. We also are required to comply with them, though we shall understand them nevertheless, in the light of the teaching of Christ and His holy apostles.

The first thing to begin with is that the Commandments are a covenant between God and man.

Therefore, when Moses the Prophet spoke to the people in Deuteronomy he referred to the commandments saying, "*The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here*" (Deut. 5:2,3).

Thus, the two tablets on which the Commandments were written were called, *"The tablets of the covenant"* (Deut. 9:11), and the book in which they were written, *"The Book of the Covenant"* (Ex. 24:7).

God's Commandments then are a covenant between the Lord and us, a covenant we have made when we believed in Him.

God made this covenant with us in circumstances inspiring strength and awe to make us feel its value. When God gave the people His commandments on the Mount, the whole mountain shook violently. The Mount was wrapped in smoke with a thick cloud on it and a loud blast of a trumpet and thunder (Ex. 19:16-19). Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, *"I am exceedingly afraid and trembling."* (Heb. 12:21).

This shows us how powerful and obligatory is the commandment and that it should be carried out.

2. The Importance of the Commandments:

To show how important they are, it is sufficient to know that they were spoken by God (Exodus 20), and written with His finger on the two tablets and given to Moses (Deut. 9:10). And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord and offered burnt offerings and sacrifices as offerings of well-being. He took of the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, *"This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."* (Ex. 24:8).

So important were the Ten Commandments that they were repeated in the Pentateuch, and were written more than once by God's hand and Moses' hand.

They were written in the Book of Exodus (Ex. 20:2-17), and in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 5:6-21). And God wrote them twice; the first time was on the two tablets that Moses broke, and the second time on two tablets like the former ones (Deut. 10:41 & Ex. 34:1).

3. The Number Ten (10) :

The number ten (10) is a symbol of perfection. So, the Ten Commandments, though ten in number, are a symbol of the whole Law, of all the commandments.

Let us take some examples which show the perfection in the number ten (10).

✠ **The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1)**; in this parable the number ten (10) refers to the whole world, to all people whether righteous or wicked.

✠ **Likewise is the parable of the servants** whose master gave them money to do business with until he comes; as the Bible tells, *"He summoned ten of his slaves and gave them ten pounds and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'"* (Luke 19:13).

These ten slaves are a symbol of all people, righteous and wicked.

It is worth mentioning that the most perfect of these slaves said to his master, *"Master, your mina has earned ten minas."*(Luke 19:16).

Thus the number ten (10) became a symbol of the perfection of the person who makes use of his talents and wins.

The reward also is perfect; for the master said to the slave, *"because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities."*(Luke 19:17).

✠ **The Parable of the Lost Coin** also shows the perfection symbolised by the number ten (10). The Bible tells about **a woman having ten silver coins** (Luke 15:8) of which she lost one. The ten coins were a symbol of all the woman's money.

✠ **And perhaps the commandment of the tithes** finds its basis in this supposing that man's wealth is ten parts and he should give God one part out of them.

✠ **The same number is mentioned in the story of Daniel the Prophet;** for he said to the palace master, *"Please test your servants for ten days"* (Dan. 1:12). Thus the number ten (10) here referred to the utmost period the man can test them.

✠ **The words of Jacob to his two wives** about Laban his uncle had the same meaning, *"Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times."* (Gen. 31:7). Perhaps they were not ten times in number but meant innumerable times.

✠ **The words of Job the Righteous** to his three friends have the same meaning, *"These ten times you have reproached upon me"* (Job 19:3). Many other examples can be traced in the Holy Bible.

What is said about the number ten (10) applies also to its multiplies such as one hundred and one thousand.

Take for example **the Parable of the Good Shepherd** who went after the one lost sheep. In this parable the words *"a hundred sheep"* refer to all the believers (Luke 15:4).

The same applies to **the words of St. Paul the Apostle**, *"I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue."* (1 Cor. 14:19). He meant the perfection in what would be spoken in tongues not just the number ten thousand.

This resembles also what the Lord said about the servant who owed ten thousand talents (Matt. 18:24). The Lord meant the sinner who committed the greatest number of sins.

Since the number ten (10) symbolises perfection, it is good then that St. Augustine has mentioned that it is a symbol of the whole law as represented by the Ten Commandments (St. Augustine: Commentary on St. John 21:11)

In fact, if we consider well the Ten Commandments we shall find that their contents cover all other commandments. But as a whole they focus on one commandment which is love - as we shall see afterwards.

4. Two Tablets:

The Ten Commandments were written in two tablets. The First Tablet contained four commandments relating to man's relationship with God. The Second Tablet contained the remaining six commandments relating to men's relationship with each other.

In these two relations, love of God's and love of neighbour, the whole commandments are summed up.

Therefore, when the Lord Christ was asked by one of the lawyers, ""Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?". Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the first and great commandment. "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' *"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*(Matt. 22:36-40).

It is good that the commandments concerning the relationship with God were written first, in the first tablet, separately, to give them greater importance. Then came the love of others in the second tablet.

The same is followed in the Lord's prayer: The prayers relating to God come first: **"Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done,"** then the other prayers relating to man.

5. A Reminder and Grouping:

These commandments, though written by God on the two tablets and given to Moses, existed in fact since the olden times, many generations before Moses and the tablets. They were just given to Moses as a reminder or grouping or as a written commandment, for they were not in writing before that.

a) Take for example the Commandment, *"You shall not murder"*:

Certainly it is not a new commandment that people came to know from the second tablet!! Why then did the Lord God punish Cain when he killed his brother Abel? And why the punishment of Cain was greater than he could bear (Gen. 4:13)? **Such commandment had been inscribed in the conscience, within the heart before being written in the stone tablets and was known as "moral law"**

b) The same applies to the commandment, *"You shall not commit adultery"*:

Did people know that adultery is a sin only from the days of Moses? Certainly not as Joseph the Righteous who preceded Moses with hundreds of years, when the wife of Potiphar asked him to be with her, he refused and said, ***"How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"*** (Gen. 39:9).

So it is clear that before the Law was written, Joseph had been aware that committing adultery was a wickedness. And because of such great wickedness God brought a flood of

waters on the earth and rained on Sodom sulfur and fire out of heaven (Gen. 6:19).

And when Shechem defiled Dinah, Jacob's daughter, the sons of Jacob were indignant and very angry *"because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel"* and defiled Dinah, and they avenged by killing all the household of Shechem *"because their sister had been defiled"* (Gen. 34:5,27). Thus, adultery had been considered defilement and wickedness hundreds of years before the written commandment was given.

c) As for the sin of stealing, it has been known since the past and because of it Laban rebuked Jacob who defended himself and denied the accusation of stealing Laban's gods (idols) (Gen. 31:30-39).

d) The sin of lust had been known even hundreds of years before Moses as we know from the words of Job the righteous *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?"* (Job 31:1).

e) The commandment of Keeping the Sabbath was known before the Ten Commandments and was mentioned in the commandment of gathering the manna (Ex. 16:23-29). Keeping the Sabbath dates even back to the days of creation when God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2).

Time is lacking to mention all the commandments that had been engraved in the hearts and minds of people before being given in the written law under the name, "The Ten Commandments".

These are the Ten Commandments which God uttered and which were written twice by God's finger, and which became a covenant between us and God bestowing blessings upon whoever complies with them and curses upon whoever breaks them. We shall consider them one by one in full detail and expound on them so that we may understand God's commandments for us and carry them out in the light of the Christian doctrine.



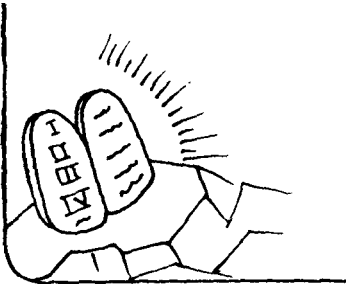


THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

*"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out
of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

(Ex. 20:2-3, Deut. 5: 6-7)



I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, WHO...

God reveals Himself to us and reminds us of His loving kindnesses:

First of all, God reveals Himself to us, "I am the Lord your God", God often appeared to people and revealed Himself to them. He appeared, for instance, to Moses the Prophet and said to him, *"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"* (Ex. 3:6). Here also He reveals Himself to the people, "I am the Lord your God" But what did He reveal to them?

He did not say, "I am the Lord God who made heaven and earth, who created light, man, animals and plants". Nor did He say, "I am the Lord your God, the Boundless and Unattainable" He said rather, "I am the Lord your God who was benevolent to you. Have you forgotten soon? I brought you out of the house of slavery". Have you forgotten God's kindness, His help and support just recently?

God reminds us of His loving kindness, so that when we remember His love, kindness and compassion towards us, we may love Him in return and give Him love for love.

God constantly whispers in our ears the same words: I am the Lord your God who healed you from such and such disease, and from such and such operation. I am the Lord your God who gave you success this year. I am the Lord your God who delivered you of this or that problem, who shed over you and covered you so that you were not exposed. I am the Lord your God who did so and so for you. Can you forget all this and forget me also?

God reminds us of His loving kindness, because we actually forget.

We usually remember God before He does what we want, when we ask Him for something. But after He had done it we forget Him. We remember Him in the beginning not at the end. Therefore He says to everyone of us: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of slavery. Have you forgotten the times when you were humbled, enslaved and captivated? Have you forgotten all this?.

Since God reminds us of these things, it is better to remember them by ourselves.

How beautiful indeed for one to kneel down before God and say, "O Lord God, You are My God who did so and so for me. I am indebted to You for every breath I breathe, for my life, my existence, my survival and for all Your countless benevolences to me."

My brother, sit to yourself and remember, contemplate on God's loving kindness to you and kneel down before Him, then

carry out the Commandment. Say to Him: You did such and such things for me. I shall never forget Your benevolence, for if I do forget my love will weaken. But when I remember, I shall be ashamed of my sins and negligence.

It is very well that God introduced the Commandments with these words. Wonderful indeed God is in His dealings with us.

God reminds us of His loving kindness before giving us the Commandments so that when they are given, we receive them as from a kind father to his beloved children, not as orders from a master imposed on his servants.

He does not require us to worship Him so that He might do good to us, but because He has already done good to us when we were yet in our sins.

So, what is the First Commandment? What do the words, "*I am the Lord your God*" imply?

These words imply worship, *"For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"* (Matt. 4:10). And as Joshua said, *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Josh. 24 : 15).

Such worshipping requires praying and appearing regularly in the Lord's house, reading the Holy Scriptures and contemplating on them, fasting, prostration, etc.

Whoever neglects to perform these things and the like is faced with the words *"I am the Lord your God"* These words reprimand him because since He is the Lord He has rights with you. Have you given Him His rights?

Performing the duties of worship is not an obligation which you do by force but it is for your interest. See how beautifully this is expressed in the Liturgy of St. Gregory:

‘You were not in need of my servitude, but it is I who am in need of Your Lordship’. This gives us another point to contemplate on the words, ***"I am the Lord Your God"*** which **imply also "love"**

God does not call us servants but friends (John 15:15). So, He let us call Him in our prayers *"Father"*. We love Him - as God - because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). God required such love from the beginning as He said to Moses the Prophet, *"The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."* (Deut. 6:4,5).

God requires the heart, requires love, not just formal worship. Therefore he reprimanded the sinful Israel saying, *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honour Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me."* (Matt. 15:8, Is. 29:13).

He also defined the way we ought to worship Him when He said, *"My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways."* (Prov. 23:26).

Thus the words, "I am the Lord your God" necessitate submission and obedience as well as faith and surrendering one's life to God.

Time is lacking to contemplate on all the meanings implied in these words. But we have to go into the depth and perform what is required in them.

What else does the Lord say after that?

YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME....

One may say, when reading this Commandment, "What is this to do with me? These words ought to be addressed to heathens, atheists or existentialists. They certainly concern those who deviate due to knowledge or a philosophy or some thought. As for me, I fast twice a week, give the tithes, pray the hours, learn the hymns by heart and attend the church regularly. Surely this Commandment is not for me".

No, brother, this Commandment concerns you in particular as well as me and not others. Everyone of us is addressed by the words, ***"You shall have no other gods before Me"***.

But do not think that the other gods meant by this verse are the statues made by man for worship or the sun, sea or fire. No, there are many other gods worshipped!! Some worship power, others worship authority, others positions, money, beauty or lusts. Everyone has an idol, a god and the strange thing is that each of them cries loudly, "Truly we believe in One God". We

do not know whether they deceive themselves or deceive others.

When we look back on people of the olden times, we find that they worshipped strange gods either out of fear, due to lust or seeking a benefit.

So, they had gods for good and gods for evil. They sought benefit from the good gods and feared the power of the evil gods. To both, they gave worship and loyalty, and showed enthusiasm or zeal.

1. Worship of power and fear:

People began to worship those whom they feared. They worshipped spirits because they feared such spirits and worshipped kings out of fear also. They worshipped Pharaoh and knelt before him. And in the times of the judges, the Israelites worshipped and served Cushan king of Mesopotamia and Eglon King of Moab (Judg. 3:8,14).

Some people worshipped fire, and the Egyptians worshipped the Nile; either seeking its water and goods or fearing its flood. And they sought to please it with offerings. **Worship of fear led people to hypocrisy and flattery to please the gods.**

An example of such flattery is the song people used to sing in the ears of Pharaoh while they carried him with a sedan: "The sedan with Pharaoh on, is lighter than when alone "They wanted to say that their happiness with carrying Pharaoh made them feel the sedan lighter than before.

Their flattery showed in worship of power demonstrates mean spirits and can be considered a kind of polytheism because it deifies human beings in a way that cannot please even God Himself, for He does not like to be flattered by His worshippers.

He who worships power contradicts his conscience, his heart and God's Commandments and utters words which he knows they are wrong and just a kind of flattery and sycophancy to please and gratify people. Such a person in fact worships people, not God, and is faced by the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me".

2. Worship of love and benefit:

Often love changes to worship, and lust also changes to worship as people used to say, "These two love each other to the extent of worship" or "adore each other". Moreover, it happens sometimes that a young man forsakes his religion or faith for a young woman he loves!! Can he say then that he believes in one God? He would be a liar.

Love worship branches many ways: worship of money, beauty, friends, well-doing, worship of the world, of lusts and self.

Amidst all this, God cries aloud, *"I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me There is no other god besides Me"* (Is. 45:5,21). However, we answer Him: no, Lord, there are many besides You.

3. **Worship of money:**

Money is an idol worshipped by people and competes with God. Therefore the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."* (Matt. 6:24).

Whoever says then that he believes in one God and at the same time loves money, deceives himself. We do not mean here, by love of money, collecting and spending it on one's desires and lusts; for money then will be a means not a goal and god in this case is the lust on which money is spent.

But who collects money and treasures it without spending is in fact is a money worshipper.

Such a person feels very happy with money and rejoices when he puts one piastre (0.01 of a pound) besides the other and one pound on another and a thousand over a thousand, treasuring and treasuring . He feels delighted when looking to money without using it anyhow, or spending any part of it !! When he gets one piastre out of his pocket, he feels as if his flesh is being severed with a knife!! All his concern and joy lies in collecting, and he is happy with what he collects without any aim. Even if he mentions some aim it would be merely to conceal his feelings.

Perhaps you would ask: Why then does he collect's money? But you will find no answer for the question. It is just a disease, or deviation, a kind of love between him and money.

It becomes a friend to him or rather an idol worshipped by him. So, the Lord Christ said, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth"* (Matt. 6:19).

Don't let, my brother, the love of money enter your heart and master over you. Whenever money increases with you, seek a good project or business to spend it on. Listen to the beautiful words of a holy father to one of the monks advising him, "If you have money, spend it all, and if you have not, do not collect any".

An old person told me once about someone who died leaving behind him much money he accumulated throughout his life and treasured it no one knows where. That person fell ill and stayed in bed. During his illness, they observed that he held the pillow tight and when he was dying he held it violently as if fearing it would be taken from him. They wondered, and after his death they opened the pillow to find within it a bundle of money. That was the god of that wretched person, which he worshipped unto death. Even at the point of death he did not forsake his love for money. So he died with his god in his bosom!! He did not hide it far from him lest anyone should steal it while being in bed. He put it in a pillow under his head and at hand all the time.

4. Worship of those who do good to us:

Many are those who worship the person who does them favour as the poet says, "Do good to people and you will own their hearts for often a person is a slave to a well doing". And as the saying goes, "Feed the mouth, the eye will be ashamed".

If someone showed kindness towards you or supported or helped you in any way, you will worship him, and if anyone speaks against him you will defend him though you know that what is said against him is true and right. You justify his faults and pass them without examining.

If such a person says to you one day, "I am sorry for such a thing" you will answer, "Not really, you did nothing, you are not wrong, a person like yourself never does wrong". Thus, you fall in flattery and hypocrisy.

This is the confusion between gratitude and hypocrisy. Gratitude is one thing, while worshipping people is another thing altogether. It is not right to let one virtue waste another. Be grateful as far as you can towards who does you favour but do not turn to hypocrisy and flattery and lose your morality, offering it as a sacrifice to please him who does good to you even though he offends God and people . Another similar kind of worship is:

5. Worship of Courtesy:

Someone defends a friend rightly or wrongly. That friend commits a very serious mistake-that might be against the church, the society or the state and you warn the person who has this friend but because he is courteous and worships his friend he replies, "It is all-right nothing has happened!"

You argue with him logically but he refuses logic. All his concern is to defend his friend and justify his views, no matter how clear and serious the error may be! He wants

only to show his friend innocent and puts all principles and rules aside. It does not matter to him.

The poet says the same meaning:

*A friendly eye is closed to every defect
while an unfriendly eye reveals every offence.*

He means that a friend is unable to see any faults, as the saying goes [Who loves you swallows pebbles for you]. Nowadays many people are used to do so !

It is good to find an excuse for people sometimes. But it is unacceptable that one turns over values in order to defend others and to make of the wrong right and of the right wrong, for some purpose in mind, to support someone in such a way as if he is giving worship to people or to other gods because of some friendship or courtesy at the expense of truth. See what the Scriptures say in this regard,

*"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just,
Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD " (Prov. 17:15).*

It is not proper to love someone more than God or be courteous at the expense of the truth; for Truth is God as our Lord Jesus Christ said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6).

When you are courteous to someone at the expense of God, you are worshipping such a person instead of God!

Likewise, if you obey someone more than you obey God, you are worshipping such a person instead of God.

We want to give worship to God without our conscience reproaching us. We do not worship people and cannot please people if this contradicts God's Commandments. St. Paul says the same, *"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ "* (Gal. 1:10).

Suppose someone does something wrong and asks your opinion about such doing. If you say to him, "You are wrong," he will feel offended and angry. But would you say to him, "Oh, no, You are right. I admire your action in this regard!" Such flattery destroys your conscience as well as that person himself. Besides, you are like one who worships people not God.

One ought to act with a pure upright conscience, flattering no one, seeking no one's love at the expense of God's love, nor disobeying his conscience to be courteous to anyone.

Where can you escape, brother, from the Commandment, *"You shall have no other gods before Me"*?

Give worship to God, God alone, and seek no profit from anyone; for cursed is the person who depends on a human arm. Do not be afraid from anyone as the psalm says, *"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"* (Ps. 118:6).

Such a person whom you flatter and worship rather than God, you may either consider him a fearful god or a good god. So either you are afraid of him and such fear makes you ignore God's rights, or you seek some benefit from him and for that purpose you trod God's rights. In both cases you are in fact worshipping a person rather than God.

Another worship that resembles the preceding one as regards its result though different in form for it takes the appearance of righteousness is:

6. Worship of guides and fathers:

They Holy Bible orders us: *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls"* (Heb. 13:17). Notice here, the apostle did not say "worship your leaders," for we are faced here with a serious question that has to do with our spiritual life. It is:

What if the guide or leader deviates? Should we submit to him?

A guide or spiritual father might deviate with regard to faith as Arius did though he was a priest, and as many Arian and Nestorian bishops did, or as Eutyches who was an abbot. Certainly all of them had spiritual children before their deviation. Were those sons committed to obey them in spite of their deviation?! Certainly not.

At this point, we find an important verse that puts an end to the whole matter:

"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

A person then should obey his guide or spiritual father, but not more than God! For every spiritual obedience comes within the scope of God's obedience. Thus, obedience to God must not be replaced by obedience to a human, whoever that human might be.

The Holy Bible sets a very clear condition in the verse: *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord"* (Eph. 6 :1) (This point is expounded in the contemplations on the Fifth Commandment *"Honour your father and your mother"* Chapters 2, 3 and 5).

Spiritual as well as natural fathers ought to lead their sons to God. If the fathers deviate, no obedience is due to them, and the commandments and stories relating to obedience will not apply to them.

If a spiritual father ties you to himself not to God, he is not in this case a true father and you do not have to obey him.

If your obedience to the spiritual father brings you away from God's obedience, you should not obey. And if you do, this will be a sin.

Be obedient then to your father "in the Lord" only. You ought also to put before you, in every guidance you receive from him,

the divine commandment, putting in mind the words of the apostle John the Beloved:

"Test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4: 1).

Obedience then is not blind obedience but with understanding and discerning; for if obedience is a virtue it ought to be correlated with the virtue of wisdom.

The disciples of St. Arsanius blamed and reprimanded their great spiritual father, but he accepted this meekly and humbly.

St. Tadros also often did the same directly or indirectly with his spiritual father and guide St. Pachomius, and the Saint accepted it lovingly and with consideration to his spiritual son. God Himself accepted the words of Abraham: *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* (Gen. 18:25).

God accepted also from Moses his words, *"Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people."* (Ex. 32:12-14).

On the other hand, if your spiritual father asks you to obey him blindly without thinking or understanding, and does not comfort your conscience regarding his guidance - or commands - he has then deified himself, scorning at the same time your humanity.

Such a reaction would be a worship not "obedience in the Lord" especially if a person presses on his conscience to obey and silences it by time!

If God Himself does not treat man like that, though He is God, how dare a guide claim such obedience being merely human, who is required - the same as his son - to obey God and his own spiritual father as well as those who are elder than him.

Obedience that destroys the inner self and makes a son in conflict with his own mind and conscience is not the kind of obedience God requires from us; for He created man in His image and after His likeness.

Hence, a spiritual father should not destroy his son with inner conflict like that. It is not fatherly.

Again I stress: Just obey your fathers, do not defy them, do not worship them nor obey them rather than God. The commandment is explicit and clear and the contradiction is also explicit and clear.

Fatherhood, in the spiritual concept, is a helper for solving the children's problem and ought not turn into a problem facing them itself ! Or he would stand perplexed before it asking: Whom should we obey: our fathers, or our conscience?

The same applies to all fathers, whether natural or spiritual, as well as to all leaders or superiors. Another point concerning the First Commandment is:

7. The world and its desires:

The world is another god, whoever gets attached to it will forsake God's love and service and even the whole faith. This is expressed by St. James the Apostle in his epistle, *"Friendship with the world is enmity with God"* (James 4:4).

St. John the Beloved also expounded this point in his first epistle, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it "* (1 John 2:15-17).

Either we worship God or worship the world and its desires. If we do believe in God truly, we shall then overcome the world, and its desires will not dominate us. St. John says in this regard, *"And this is the victory that overcome the world; our faith"* (1 John 5:4). But, in case the desire of the world conquers us, it will exterminate faith within us.

St. Paul passed by this serious experience and told us of it in his second epistle to St. Timothy, *"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world,"* (2 Tim. 4:10).

The flesh, material and their lusts are all gods worshipped by people, and I wonder if those who walk in the lusts of the flesh do worship God! Certainly not.

Some people worship bodily beauty and speak of it bluntly and unashamed. As when a person loves a girl and says he loves her to the extent of adoration!! He may send her a letter addressing her as "my adored"!! Adored! What a shame! Is the matter so serious? What can such a person do regarding the Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me"? How can he respond to God's words "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath". Dare he say: No, Lord, I did not make it, but You made it!! Well I made it, God would say, but you worshipped it. You ought have not worshipped anything but God alone and ought to have given your heart to God not to any human.

There are others whose whole concern is to eat and drink. Do not be amazed; for the apostle Paul said of those, *"whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who set their mind on earthly things."* (Phil. 3:19). He even speaks of them *"as enemies of the Cross of Christ"* and remembers them with tears.

Sure there are people whose god is a full glass of wine, or who make clamour for food and drink! **Did not the Israelites weep** and complain for the meat, the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks the onions and the garlic (Num. 11:4,5)?

Did not Esau sell his birthright with all its blessing for lentil stew (Gen. 25:29-34)?

Did not Adam and Eve bring corruption and destruction to all mankind by eating from the tree when Eve saw that it was good for food and pleasant to the eyes (Gen. 3:6)?

It was good therefore that the first Commandment given by God to man related to fasting that man would practice control over his belly and not worship food.

All desires dominating over man are other gods. Whatever desire masters you, my brother, it is an idol which you adore. Come now and destroy your idols. Get into the sanctuary; that of the Holy Spirit which is you and cleanse it from all your idols.

Search for any idols that might be within you, which you adore and love with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. There might be a certain desire within your heart that destroys the commandment, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart"* (Deut. 6:5).

Such desire is your god and master because you are subject to it. The holy fathers preferred martyrdom to raising incense before idols. But you raise incense everyday to your idols, which are your desires.

A desire which one adores might be a position, a title, certain authority or property. And for the sake of such desire, one would sell God and conscience and turn into an arriviste who seeks to fulfil his desire whatever the price might be, forgetting the words of the Lord, *"You shall have no other gods before Me"*!

8. Self worship:

The most dangerous indeed of all idols is one's self. Man always desires to glorify and aggrandise himself. **He does not only worship himself but wants others also to worship him (or his self).**

He wants this self to be adored by all, respected and awed by all, he wants people to see everything beautiful in it and praise and admire it!!

But what brought ruin to King Herod? Why did the angel of the Lord strike him so he was eaten by worms and died? Was it not because he accepted to be glorified as god and did not object? (Acts 12:21-23).

Such a person like Herod might be able to forsake all other forms of worship mentioned before, and overcome the worship of power, money, beauty, authority, courtesy, etc. but cannot forsake his self-worship.

Such a person sees himself as the only god, no one could be brighter, more intelligent, better, wiser, nicer than him -- no one can ever be.

His self - in his own eyes - is the ideal form. He seems as if he is saying: All might be wrong except me. All might not understand but I alone do understand. If he conflicts with someone else, surely the other is wrong and he is right for it is impossible that he makes mistakes. Certainly people misunderstand him. And if you ask him: Then when will they

understand you properly? He would answer: It is not important that they understand me, what matters is that my behaviour is proper even though people do not understand it.

Self-worship is indeed the most dangerous idol, a curved portrait, and few escaped it. All disputes arising in the world are mostly due to self-worship.

Thus, the Lord Christ, being aware of the danger behind this worship said expressly, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself,"* (Mark 8:34).

What does it mean to deny oneself? It means that one ought to destroy this idol; the self, and turn it into dust and ashes.

But what makes the self conflict with God and compete Him? One of two things: either the wish to be great and puffed up, or the wish to fulfil some desires which are against God's will.

What caused the fall of the devil? The self made him fall; for it wanted to be great and higher than it ought to be.

So, he said, *"I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. "* (Is. 14:13-14).

He wanted to rise up high, to be like God!! When the devil made Adam and Eve fall, he tempted them with the same temptation, *"You will be like God, knowing good and evil"* (Gen. 3:5)

Therefore, if anyone is able to destroy the self in him and deny himself, he will have destroyed the first idol that competes with God in the worship due to Him. So the Lord said, *"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."* (John 12:25).

Who is meant by, "Those who love their life lose it"? **Here is meant the person who lets the self within him compete with God in love, or in other words, who loves his self more than he loves God and cares for it more than he cares for God.**

Do you feel such love to yourself? Examine yourself and search within you. If you seek rest and sleep during night and do not stand for prayer, would you thus be loving to your self or to God? When you take the tithes for yourself and do not give them to God, when you use the Sabbath for your affairs and not offer it to God -- in all this is it the self that you are concerned with or God? When your self desires things against God's commandments and you fulfil for it these desires, breaking the Commandment, are you then giving worship to God or to the desires of this self, and so on.

But when your self desires something against the Commandment and you refuse to fulfil for it its desire saying, *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John 3:30), in this case you seem as if you hate your life. But in fact you do

love your life and your self the true love void of coddling, and this love, "Will keep it for eternal life".

9. Atheism:

Atheism contradicts the first Commandment because an atheist denies God's existence as the Psalmist said, "The fools say in their hearts, `There is no God.'"

However, a person may not say there is no God, but he may be like an atheist!! **He may cry out, "Truly we believe in One God" but his behaviour shows that he even does not feel God's existence** nor feel that He is present. He sees, hears and keeps record till the day of judgement when He will reward everyone according to his work. The faith of such a person is mere words or intellectual faith which has nothing to do with his practical life.

On the other hand, a true believer is a person who keeps the Lord always before him.

He feels God's presence, tastes Him and finds pleasure in Him in all his actions and his words. He sees God before him, watching him, encouraging or reprimanding, rewarding or punishing him. Only such a believer differs from atheists.

10. Worship of devils:

Paganism is a kind of devils' worship as the psalmist says, *"For all the gods of the peoples are idols."* (Ps. 96:5).

However, kneeling down before idols is not the only form of giving worship to the devil; for trusting the devil, collaborating with him in work and recourse to him to solve problems or to know the unknown are forms of worship.

Some people submit to devils in return for certain services rendered them by the devils. Some of them make a covenant with Satan or send a devil to make an errand for him; perhaps to bring him something or influence someone.

St. Cyprian was a magician before his conversion and he used to seek the service of devils to achieve his purposes.

Those who deal with the devils no doubt break the First Commandment. Among those are the magicians who dazzle others with marvellous deeds such as Simon who practised magic and the slave girl in Philippi who had a spirit of divination (Acts 8:9, 16:16), or the beast and dragon mentioned in the Revelation.

Thus, we see that many signs and wonders can be perfected by the power of the devil. But God permits this to happen as a test for the believers. Of course, they differ from the signs and wonders done by saints through God's power.

A believer ought then to have discernment to distinguish between the two.

Some people do amazing things by collaborating with the devil. It is even said that so and so has a "servant" who fulfils} whatever he wants. But the devil does not work for free but in

return for something to be paid him by the person seeking his service. This is often at the expense of his faith in God.

Those who deal with the devil are two types:

One type knows that he is dealing with the devil, but accepts this for the sake of the benefit he gains from it. He may repent for this and try to set himself free but cannot.

The other type is deceived by the devils because, *"And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."* (2 Cor. 11:14). He might appear in the form and name of one of the saints and might give false dreams and visions. He often led saints and anchorites astray with his deceit. They followed him and fulfilled his will in their lives, giving worship to him and falling under his dominion and so perished.

Some people seek devils or the supporters of devils to know the future which God alone knows. **Recourse to the devil to know the unknown implies giving him one of God's attributes; a matter which contradicts the first Commandment.**

The devil can know the past as many humans can know. But to know the future is a thing that lies within God's power alone unless this comes "through" not needed by way of physiognomy, inference, far-sightedness or expectations.

So, mistaken are those who try to know the future by asking people who practise geomancy, palmistry or any other way of prediction such as reading cups of coffee or whispering to shells, horoscopy or asking the spirits of the deceased,

hypnotism or telling fortune through reading cards, etc.-- all of which suggests that there is some power other than God which knows the future and the unknown.

Even those who do not seek such means but believe in them break the First Commandment because God's attributes should not be given to others.

Thus, the divine inspiration warns us, *"you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, "* (Deut. 18:9-12).

This applies also to whoever uses mysterious powers to fulfil his (or others') purposes by amulets or incantation including mysterious words which no one - even he himself - knows their meaning.

The Scriptures tell us that a person who depends on a human arm (power) is accursed, how rather more proper is this for the person who uses such mysterious powers which, if not considered quackery, to deceive the simple, involve resorting to the devils, and it is known that devils do not work for nothing. No one should ever believe in any power managing the universe and people other than God.

There is also what is called "charm" by which people employ the power of the devils or magic to attain some purpose. A person who actually employs the devil in such purposes transgresses the First Commandment. He also who misleads the simple to gain some benefit for himself is also transgressing by offending or frightening or robbing them.

As for us, we must be sure that the devil has no authority over God's children, for the Universe is managed by the Almighty to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

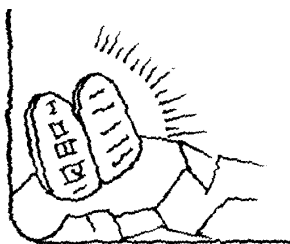




THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. "

(Ex. 20:4-6, Deut. 5:8-10).



YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF AN IDOL...

Prohibiting the worship of pictures or idols:

This commandment does not prevent adorning churches with the pictures of the Virgin, the angels or saints but the essence of this commandment lies in the words, *"You shall not bow down to them or serve them."* Giving worship to these pictures and idols is the thing meant by this Commandment especially at a time where paganism and idolatry spread.

But we adorn churches with pictures of the saints to remember those saints and take them as an example. We do not worship pictures, but rather honour the persons they represent as the Father Himself honoured them; for the Lord Jesus Christ said, *"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour."* (John 12:26).

Pictures in the Old Testament:

As for pictures, we do not follow the method of holding to one verse only of the Bible and leaving the others. God ordered in Exodus, "You shall not make for yourself an idol whether in the form of any thing" then He himself ordered Moses in the same Book, *"And you shall make two Cherubim {Cherubim is*

the plural of Cherub. They are a class of angels. Therefore the angels of gold over the cover of the ark (the Mercy Seat) was after the form of these Cherubim} of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one Cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; ", (Ex. 25:18-20).

Thus God did not find any contradiction between this and the Second Commandment.

Moses the Prophet carried out the command, and made the Cherubim of gold (Ex. 37:7), anointed them and all the sacred vessels with the holy anointing oil according to the Lord's command and they became most holy (Ex. 30:22-29, 40:9,16).

What Moses the Prophet did in the Tent of Meeting, Solomon the wise also did in the Temple. He made two cherubim of olive wood and overlaid them with gold. The height of one cherub was ten cubits and the length of the wing five cubits (1 Kin. 6:23-27). Solomon even furnished the Temple with many more pictures *"Then he carved all the walls of the temple all around, both the inner and outer sanctuaries, with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. ...For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors,he carved on them figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold;"* (1 Kin. 6:29-35), *"He also overlaid the house; the beams and doorposts, its walls and doors; with gold; and he carved cherubim on the walls."* 2 Chr. 3:7).

However, God did not see in all this any violation of the Second Commandment but He rather blessed all this and His glory came down on the temple (2 Chr. 7:1-3).

Moreover, the Lord God ordered Moses to make a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole *"if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."* (Num. 21:9).

This serpent of bronze was not to be worshipped nor was it against the Second Commandment, but was a symbol of the Lord Christ who said, *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:14-15).

We should therefore not take the general meaning of the Commandment or understand it literally, but we should grasp its spirit and purpose wisely.

As God gave us for example the cherubim and engravings of the temple, He gave us also another example: the Ark that had a great importance in the Old Testament. Before it, Joshua and the elders of Israel bowed down, not for worship, but in humiliation before the Lord when they were conquered at Ai.

David the great prophet also danced before the Ark when he brought it up in glory. This was not a worship of some idol but was glorification for the Ark of the Lord.

There are many similar examples in the Scriptures in which we set the difference between the pictures that have spiritual meaning and those involving worship.

The Second Commandment prohibits pictures meant for worship but allows them for adorning and giving honour.

As for the spiritual or symbolic meaning of the command, "You shall not make for yourself an idol whether in the form of," it has been expounded in some detail in our contemplations on the First Commandment.

Then there is a punishment for whoever breaks and violates the Commandment. He says, "You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents".

God warns that He punishes children for the iniquity of parents which means that children suffer because of the sins of their parents. But is the warning valid until now? Is the saying still standing, "The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge"? We know that Ham sinned against his father Noah and Noah cursed Canaan, Ham's son and the curse continued for many generations in Canaan's offspring as we see from the words of the Lord Christ to the Canaanite woman. So does God still punish children for the iniquity of parents?

The answer may be "yes" or "no" from two different aspects:

A. Children suffer for the iniquity of their parents:

They still suffer at least according to the natural laws of heredity; for a corrupt or sinful father often transmits to his child diseases, deformity or bad character. Many things come down to children - without any guilt on their part - whether bad health or bad temper besides the impact on their social life or fame.

Take, for example, a mother who was during pregnancy often angry, agitated and troubled. The embryo fed, all the nine months, from her agitated blood. What can be expected for that babe? Would he not inherit much of his mother's temper?

On the other hand, a saintly mother like the Virgin Mary who the Lord chose for being the holiest and purest girl in the world, and the Holy Spirit came upon her sanctifying and purifying her during pregnancy till her womb, became completely pure. Such a mother naturally cannot transmit to her born child anything wrong.

Therefore when you intend to marry, ask yourself: would my children inherit from me anything wrong or harmful? Would they inherit some disease or infirmity? Would they inherit a bad character or temper?

Marriage is a serious responsibility not just a relation between a man and a woman. Not every man is fit to be a father, nor every woman to be a mother, nor any couple to be entrusted

with the safety of a coming generation. They must have sound health of body and mind and must have purity.

This applies to people as well as to individuals. The people of one country may be famous for generosity or avarice. Others may be famous for quick agitation and anger, while others for calmness even to coldness, others for intelligence or wickedness.

Generations hand down to other generations characters and attributes. An intelligent father and a wise mother transmit to their children intelligence and wisdom, while others hand down foolishness and stupidity. This is the fact and it conforms with the verse.

Something else happens which seems out of anyone's control. It is near kinship which may cause great harm to the offspring when it transfers to the child weakness of mind, sight or anything else. This should be taken into consideration for the sake of the health of the children.

These are mere examples of punishing children for the iniquity of parents. But one may ask, what is the guilt of the children? The answer is given in the following point which shows that there is no guilt on their part and God does not punish them for the iniquity of their parents:

B. Children do not suffer for the iniquity of their parents:

With regard to physical matters and heredity laws of body, character and intelligence as well as some social relationships

and the like, children take a lot from their parents such as the features for example. But with regard to salvation, a child suffers not for the sin of his father nor perishes eternally. **Therefore God said through Jeremiah the prophet, "*In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.'* But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. "** (Jer. 31:29-30).

The same point was expounded fully by Ezekiel the prophet. He said, *"The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge'? 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.... If, however, he begets a son Who sees all the sins which his father has done, And considers but does not do likewise,... He shall not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live! ... The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. "* (Ezek. 18:1-20).

C. Questions on the Subject:

Q. What about the words of the Jews, "His blood be on us and on our children"? Do the Jews suffer till now the iniquity of their parents regarding the blood of the Lord Christ or not?

A. Simply, they suffer the iniquity of their parents if they are of the same belief ie., if they believe that Christ has not yet come and they are waiting for His coming and that the Christ of Nazareth, who was born in Bethlehem twenty centuries ago, was not the true Christ but just a blasphemer and deceiver who broke the Sabbath and violated the Law and it is good that their fathers condemned and crucified Him.

Only in this case, with such belief, they participate in the iniquity of their parents and are thus condemned with them for Christ's blood and to them shall apply the words, "His blood be on us and on our children."

However, in case they repent and believe in Christ and confess that He has come and that their parents have sinned when they crucified Him, then condemnation shall fall on their parents alone while they themselves will be free from the guilt. In this case they will be no more Jews but Christians since they would have relinquished their parents' beliefs. They will be like those Jews to whom St. Peter the Apostle said on the Pentecost, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; "* (Acts 2:38). Those who accepted the word joyfully, repented and were baptised. They became Christians and freed themselves from the sin of their fathers.

So, the Jews still bear the iniquity of their parents because they are still Jews. They have not yet believed, nor have they

denied the evil their fathers had done. They still hold the same beliefs, and participate in their guilt, thus they are subject to the same condemnation.

Q. Your holiness said that a person may inherit a bad temper. But a bad temper might lead to perdition, so heredity would have an impact on one's salvation.

A. If the child continues in his bad temper, this would affect his salvation. But if he repents, he will be saved and will be in a better position. How?

Suppose that a person is born with a calm, meek character. He has no hand in this and so will have no reward for it. But another person is born hot - tempered and irritable, yet, he resisted his temper and overcame it. Such a person will have a greater reward than the other who is born meek without any effort on his part.

A person is born with whatever temper but he has the will to change it if he wants. If he changes into better, his reward will be greater. Take, for example, St. Moses the black who was hot-tempered and quarrelsome, but he struggled until he became loving to all people and hospitable to strangers. His original character did not prevent his salvation; for his repentance gave him a greater crown.

Q. What is the guilt of a person who comes to the world hot-tempered and does not acquire meekness?

A. His guilt is that he did not struggle to attain it. The kingdom of heavens requires struggling, and requires people who labour to attain it. St. Paul rebukes us saying, *"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin."* (Heb. 12:4).

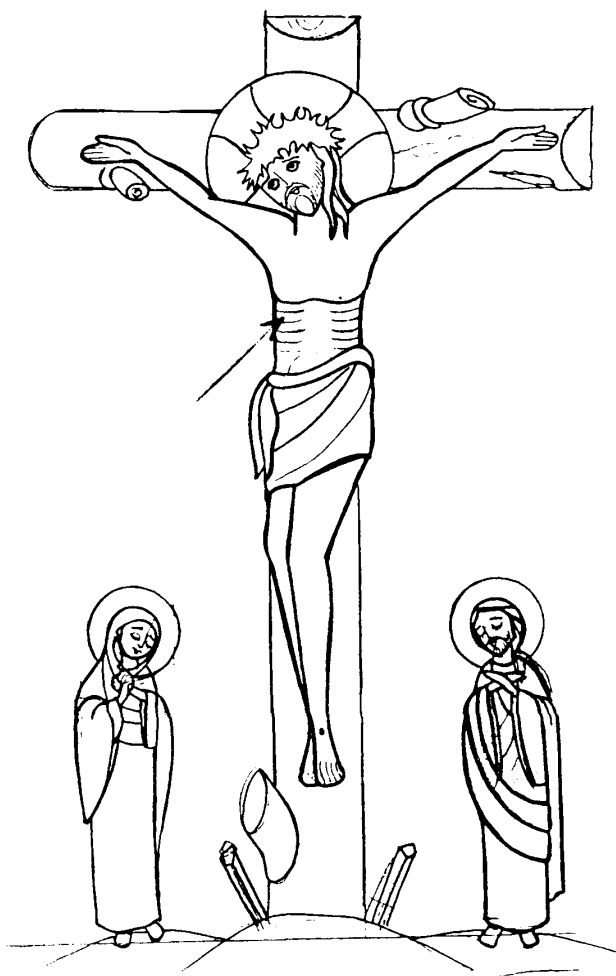
Suppose a person has such a bad temper, he has to resist it to the point of shedding his blood. But he must be confident that all the powers of heaven will support him in his struggle and the Holy Spirit will not forsake him. Grace will visit him and help him change his bad temper; for many people who were bad became, by God's grace, saints.

Q. If the child does not inherit the iniquity of his father, why then have we inherited the sin of our first parents Adam and Eve and consequently inherited the punishment?

A. When Adam and Eve fell in sin, we were in their loins, we were part of them. We became subject to the punishment.

Suppose we had been in existence before the sin was committed, we would not have inherited it for we would have no relation to it as it is stated in the prophecy of Ezekiel, *"The son shall not bear the guilt of the father,"* (Ezek. 18:20).

Therefore the sin committed by the father after the birth of his child shall not be inherited by that child who has no relation to it.

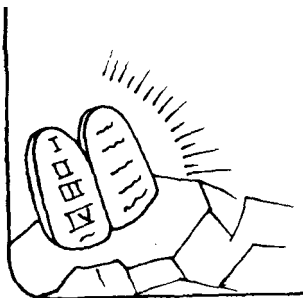




THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

(Ex. 20:7, Deut. 5:11).



YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN

The first and second Commandments relate to God's worship while the third relates to God's name. Let's now contemplate a little on God's name and what is proper to Him.

LET'S CONTEMPLATE ON GOD'S NAME

✠ His Name is Holy, Great and Wonderful:

It is not a common name, and we say in the incense of the vespers, the beautiful words of the Song of Songs, [*"Your name is ointment poured forth; "* (Song 1:3), and everywhere they offer incense to Your Holy name, a pure offering].

The all- holy Virgin St. Mary said also in her hymn, "*For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. "* (Luke 1:49). David the prophet said as well, "*Holy and awesome is His name*" (Ps. 111:9). This attribute of holiness of the Lord's name is highlighted by the Lord in the first request of the Lord's Prayer as He told us to say first, "*Hallowed be Your name*" (Matt. 6:9).

If we remember that God is Holy, we shall mention His name with all respect and awe saying all the time, "Hallowed be Your name." So, when we utter the word Holy (Agios) in the Church we bow down with reverence; for it is God's name.

The Seraphim, "the angelic rank" sang to Him, "Holy Holy Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." They uttered His great name with reverence while standing before His throne in awe, covering their faces with two wings, and covering their legs with two. *" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. This made Isaiah the Prophet frightened and he said : "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, " (Is. 6:1-5).*

This holy name by which the Seraphim sang to Him is the same by which the four incarnate living creatures who St. John the Apostle saw in his revelation standing around the throne and singing day and night without ceasing, *"Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come"* (Rev. 4:8-10). And whenever they mentioned the holy name of God with reverence, the twenty four elders fell before Him Who lives forever and ever and cast their crowns before His Throne.

God's name is holy and His name *" shall be great among the nations,"* (Mal. 1:11).

See how Jeremiah the Prophet speaks to Him, *"Your name is great in might"* (Jer. 10:6), and Joshua son of Nun says, *"What will You do for Your great name"* (Josh. 7:9). David the prophet sings to Him also saying, *"Your name will be magnified forever"* (2 Sam. 7:26), *"The LORD of hosts is His name"* (Jer. 50:34).

There is also the beautiful psalm by which we praise the Lord our God saying, *" O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens! O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth! "* (Ps. 8:1,9). ***Wonderful and majestic indeed is His name.***

When He told Manoah of the birth of Samson and Manoah asked about His name He said, *"Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?"* (Judg. 13:18).

When Isaiah the Prophet prophesied about His birth from a Virgin he said, *"His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace "* (Is. 9:6). Yes, wonderful is the name of God. St. James the Apostle refers to it as *"that noble name"* (James 2:7), and the psalmist describes it saying, "I will proclaim Your name, for it is good"

Regarding this holy, great, wonderful, awful, good and excellent name of God, He commanded us, *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. "*(Ex. 20:7). What else?

✠ **By His name wonders and signs are performed:**

How beautiful was the answer of St. Peter the Apostle when the cripple asked him for alms. He said to him, "*Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.*" (Acts 3:6), and the man stood and began to walk. And when the high priests arrested Peter and John and inquired: "By what power or by what name did you do this?" They answered, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified." What a powerful name it is indeed!

Therefore the disciples prayed God and asked Him, "... *grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.*" (Acts 4:29-30).

More wonderful still is the fact that the power of this name was effective even when used by some evil-doers who perished and who-many as they were - will say to the Lord on the last day, "*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?*" (Matt. 7:22). It means that God's name was powerful and effective even though it was used by undeserving persons.

Thus, we should not make wrongful use of this awesome and powerful name by which wonders and signs are performed.

✠ **His name is frightful to the demons:**

The seventy disciples returned with joy saying to the Lord, *"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."* (Luke 10: 17). They had that power, though they were new in the ministry, but this came as fulfilment of the Lord's promise, *"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;"* (Mark 16:17).

The holy apostles practised this gift as we read about St. Paul the Apostle that he was very much annoyed of the evil spirit that was in the slave girl of Philippi and said to the spirit, *"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.*" (Acts 16:18).

Amazing also is the fact that some evil doers were able - through the power of this name - to cast out demons and will say to the Lord on the last day, "In Your name we cast out demons." An awful name it is that frightens even demons. Should we not be afraid when we use such a great name wrongfully though it is also a powerful name?!

✠ **It is a name we depend on in our troubles:**

Beautiful indeed and giving comfort are the words of the divine inspiration in the Proverbs, *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run to it and are safe"* (Prov. 18:10).

David the Prophet experienced this, so he said, *" All nations surrounded me, But in the name of the LORD I will destroy*

them. They surrounded me, Yes, they surrounded me; But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. They surrounded me like bees; They were quenched like a fire of thorns; For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them." (Ps. 118:10-12). Then he summed up his experience in the words, *"Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth"* (Ps. 124:8). Thus he talked to the Lord with familiarity saying, *"Through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us."* (Ps. 44:5), and prayed Him, *"Save me, O God, by Your name,"* (Ps. 54:1). God requires us to trust always in His holy name (Is. 50:10, Zep 3:12, Ps. 33:21). We venerate the blessed name through which we acquire power and assistance and can never use it wrongfully, being God's name. And what else?

✠ **A name by which we have blessing and the gift of the Holy sacraments:**

How do we get the gift of Baptism through which we come to all sacraments? The Lord Christ commanded His disciples, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 28:19).

Therefore, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter addressed the Jews saying, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;"* (Acts 2:38). Thus the people got baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 10:48, 8:12).

See also what is written about the sacrament of the holy anointing, *"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the*

elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." (James 5:14); for a priest is a person who stands and ministers in the name of the Lord (Deut.18:5). And when he gives blessing to the people, he puts before him the verse, *"We bless you in the name of the LORD!"* (Ps. 129:8).

Furthermore, the church from where we obtain the sacraments is God's house, carrying His name. The time is lacking to mention the work of God's name in each of the Church sacraments.

Since God's name is the source of every power, gift and blessing, what is our duty towards it?

Our duty towards God's name:

Yes, what is our duty towards the name of God that is called over us (Acts 15:17), by which we are distinguished from all the world, and which will be on our foreheads in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 22:4)?

We ought to fear and venerate this holy name and use it with awe and respect as Moses the Prophet ordered, *"... fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD YOUR GOD"* (Deut. 28:58). Thus we may deserve the reward mentioned in the Revelation, *"And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name,"* (Rev. 11: 18).

We should utter the Lord's name with great humility as if we would say, "I dare not utter Your blessed name with my defiled lips".

Let us magnify the Lord's name *"And let us exalt His name together"* (Ps. 34:3).

Let our respect for Him be mingled with love; for in Him we find protection and happiness and remember His love and compassion. Listen to the beautiful words of the hymn, "Sweet and blessed is Your name, in the mouths of Your Saints".

It is not proper to use God's name in trivial matters, it is unseemly for His glory. But we use it rather in prayers and praise with longing and joy as David the Prophet said, "I will lift up my hands and call on Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ," (Ps. 63:4), *"Glory in His Holy name"* (Ps. 105:3), *"And sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High"* (Ps. 7:17). We should mention His name in our prayers and songs with solemnity, feeling His presence amidst us according to His promise, *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."* (Matt. 18:20).

I say this because we may not use God's name in trivial matters but only in prayers, **yet, we use it wrongfully as those who heap up empty phrases as the gentiles (Matt. 6:7), and for the sake of appearance they say long prayers (Luke 20:47). We may also set stumbling blocks in the face of the people when we pray much while our lives are void of true spirituality.**

Thus people suspect the value of praying and addressing God's name.

We may also use God's name wrongfully in prayers when our minds are distracted with something else, then the words of the Lord apply to us, *"This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me"* (Mark 7:6).

Are they not using God's name wrongfully, those of whom the Lord said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven,"* and those who will say to Him *"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name?"* (Matt. 7:22).

Are they not also using God's name wrongfully, those who begin their meetings with prayers, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, then they quarrel in their discussions or speak improper words as if all their prayers were useless and the use of the Lord's name was in vain?

It is not proper to use the Lord's name with reverence only in prayers and worship, or when we are in the Church. We ought to use His name with solemnity on every occasion and everywhere.

We ought to glorify and praise God's name all the time as the psalmist said, *"Praise the name of the LORD! Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forevermore!"* (Ps. 113:1,2). Job the Righteous said in his tribulations, *"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."* (Job 1:21).

In any work we do, our objective should be the glorification of the Lord's name saying, *"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory"* (Ps.. 115:1).

We can also glorify the Lord's name by invoking the Lord's Name.

Abraham the Patriarch built altars wherever he went, and invoked the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:8, 13:4). Isaac, his son, did the same (Gen. 26:25), and David the Prophet said, *"I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the LORD."* (Ps. 116:13). Samuel the prophet also, *"was among those who called upon His name"* (Ps. 99:6). We ought then to call on the Lord's name, so that, *"whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."* (Rom. 10:13).

This is how we can preach the name of the Lord and let the people know His name that His name may be proclaimed in all the earth (Rom. 9:17).

It is our duty to do so as the Scriptures say, *"I will declare Your name to My brethren;"* (Heb. 2:12). The Lord Jesus Himself said addressing the Father, *"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me ... I have declared to them Your name,"* (John 17:6,26).

In preaching the Lord's name, we ought to labour and endure for the sake of His name; as the Lord said about St. Paul the Apostle, *"For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."* (Acts 9:16). And the angel said to the Church in Ephesus, *"and you have persevered and*

have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary" (Rev. 2:3). Our fathers the apostles also endured persecution but were rejoicing, *"that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."* (Acts 5:41).

This was just a hint about our obligation towards God's great and blessed name, which we should utter with solemnity and reverence, use it in worship and preaching and never use it wrongfully but whenever it is appropriate with the respect fit for it.

Wrongful use of the name of the Lord:

The wicked use God's name without due respect, making light of it - in whatever talk they make even bad, obscene talk. They even use God's name in insults and cursing and in their jokes and amusement. They do not revere God's name neither in their serious time or pastime. This is the wrongful use of the name of the Lord, besides using it in oaths and blasphemy.

Swearing in the Old and New Testament:

The Lord Jesus Christ prohibited completely swearing, *"Do not swear at all. "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."* (Matt. 5:34-37). As for the Old Testament, the Law permitted swearing in truth only; for the Lord said, *"And you shall not swear by My name falsely,"* (Lev. 19:12).

Some would ask, why did God permit this in the olden times? Was swearing proper for revering God's holy name?

The answer is that God permitted it, because they lived in a time where paganism prevailed, and the heathen had their gods by which they swore. **Fearing that the people swear by the gods of the nations - which often happened - the Lord let them swear by His name, as a manifestation of the name of their God, and to distinguish them from the nations and as a protection for them lest they should swear by the strange gods.**

Thus the Law commanded, *"You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name."* (Deut. 6:13).

This was repeated in the same Book, *"You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name."* (Deut. 10:20). By the words, *"and take oaths in His name "* was meant, not to swear by the names of the other gods which was widespread in those days.

This became evident when God commanded them on the mouth of Joshua, saying, *"and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, "* (Josh. 23:7).

God said also to Jeremiah, *"And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the LORD lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal, "* (Jer. 12:16).

The Lord was very angry when the people swore by Baal and other gods and said angrily to the prophet, *"How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me And sworn by those that are not gods. "* (Jer. 5:7).

Thus, it became a virtue in that pagan age that a person swears by the name of the living God, manifesting his faith in God and rejection of paganism. The Lord therefore addressed His people saying, *"Hear this, O house of Jacob, ... Who swear by the name of the LORD, "* (Is. 48: 1).

Their swearing by God's name distinguished them from the heathen and so, *"Everyone who swears by Him shall glory; "* (Ps. 63:11).

The Lord even said concerning the spreading of faith, *"I have sworn by Myself; ... That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath. "* (Is. 45:23).

Then, when paganism diminished and there was no more reason to swear by the name of God, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Do not swear at all" (Matt. 5:34), to maintain reverence to God's name, as they had gone far in using it improperly... and swearing by God and the holies heedlessly.

Even their chiefs, the scribes and Pharisees set for them strange laws such as, "Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.. Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar is bound by the oath"!! And the Lord Christ explained to them how corrupt were these doctrines showing them how holy was the altar and the sanctuary: *"who swears by the*

altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it." (Matt. 23:16-22)

People neglected reverence to God's name in the oaths that they used to swear while cursing themselves or the others or when doing something wrong. Even Saints did this.

An example is David the prophet, when Nabal of Carmel refused to give him food, David was very angry, ordered his men to strap on their swords and swore swaying, *"May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light."* (1 Sam. 25:22). And David was about to fulfil his oath and shed blood, when Abigail the wife of Nabal reconciled with him with presents and soft words and asked his forgiveness, saying to him, *"when the LORD ... has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offence of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged "* (1 Sam. 25:30-31).

This made David feel the fault he was about to make in fulfilling his oath. So, he replied, *"And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand."* (1 Sam. 25:33).

There was a Christian who worked as a servant in the house of a person who swears often. Whenever the master swore, the

servant used to bow and cross himself with the sign of the cross. The master often swore and every time he swore, the servant bowed and crossed himself. The master was greatly amazed and asked for the reason and the servant replied, "How can I not bow when I hear the name of my Great God, to whom every glory and reverence is due?!" The master was thus ashamed of not giving due reverence to God. He compared himself to that humble servant and abstained from using God's name wrongfully.

So if we do not have such a servant to make us ashamed, we can rather be ashamed of the angels and the spiritual ranks such as the twenty four elders who fall before the throne whenever God's name is mentioned and cast their crowns (Rev. 4:10) .

Types of awesome swearing:

If God has prohibited swearing entirely, even though in truth, so as not to make slight of God's holy name and make Him witness to our trivial matters, how much rather this prohibition applies to a person who swears falsely as if he is calling on God to confirm his lie!! What a shocking thing! Some swear wrongfully that something has happened though it has not, and others swear wrongfully that they will do something while they are sure they will not.

More shocking still is **the person who swears that he will do something bad**; for example, swears to kill so and so or show him up, dismiss or insult him. It is better for such a person not to fulfil his oath, else he would commit two mistakes: using God's name wrongfully, and the evil he swore to do. King

Herod , ashamed of going back on his word, fulfilled his oath, committing a greater sin by cutting off John's head.

A similar example is that of **a person who swears not to do a certain good or a certain virtue**; for example not to go to church or not to confess. Fulfilling such an oath is another great sin added to that of swearing.

The oath becomes more sinful if something holy is included, as when a person swears untruly while he puts his hand on the Holy Bible or on a cross, or on the sanctuary, or when he swears by the holy offering, by the body of Christ or the priesthood of someone, making slight of such holies.

A sin also is to compel someone to swear before you, pressing on him and putting a stumbling stone in his way, thus taking part in his sin. A greater sin is when you do not believe him though he swore!! Why then did you compel him to swear and disdain God's name while you do not believe his oath?? A greater sin still is when you make someone swear to do something wrong!

Some people swear merely being used to that, not revering God's name, without having any reason to do that and without being asked to. They may swear for an ordinary matter or even a slight thing or nonsense!!

No respect for the person who swears:

A person who swears often, in addition to his using God's name wrongfully, admits for sure that his words have no value to

those who hear him and that they do not trust him; **for if they do trust him, they would believe him without need to his swearing. When he swears, he accepts the accusation of being a liar. Thus he tries to convince them that he is true!** He may swear and people do not believe him, so he goes on swearing and swearing and they go on unbelieving him. His words are not respected, and his oath has no value.

If you do want your word to be respected, say it and let it be believed by whoever wants to believe and never mind for that person who does not believe you. Time will prove to that person that you were true. If that person asks you to swear, do not swear, but say to him: this is the truth and you are free to believe it or not.

As long as your life is honest in the eyes of people, and as long as no one charges you of lying, then people will believe you without swearing. But be careful not to let people ask for a proof of your truthfulness.

Examples of disdaining God's name:

We notice that the third commandment did not say, ""You shall not take wrongfully the name of the LORD your God," but it said, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain," This makes the commandment wider and deeper; for thus it is not confined to wrongful oath but includes any wrongful use of the name of God.

God's name has become an easy word on the mouths of many people, using it in cursing and insulting others, in their jokes and stories and in their angry and threatening words during their quarrels!! What a shame.

They use God's name improperly, then they say in their prayer, "Hallowed be Your name"! They forget that God's name should be used with complete veneration and respect proper for His holy glory.

Some people are used to pray when dining while sitting at the table. This does not glorify God's name. How can we talk to Him as we are sitting, while the angels and archangels stand before Him.

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian asks us to use God's name with all reverence due to Him as if we were standing before a flaming fire.

People often pray inattentively, and utter God's name with a distracted mind and unsteady body. Is it right to be less respectful to God because He condescends to our level?

When God gave the Ten Commandments, the mount shook and was wrapped in smoke. There was thunder and lightning and the sound of trumpet. The people trembled in awe of Him. Should He then behave the same way with us so that we might dread Him and respect His name? Should He use the way of thunder and lightning since when He treats us kindly we do not respect Him?

He addresses us: My children, I love you. Would we slacken because of such love, and say our prayer while sitting or sleeping?! No, brethren, God does not acquit anyone who misuses His name.

Furthermore, I hear some people mention the Lord's name without due respect. They just say Jesus, Jesus did such and such things, Jesus said. Why do you do that, brothers? The holy church,

mentioning this blessed name, says, "Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ to whom glory is due for ever." Perhaps some think that mentioning His name as merely "Jesus" is a kind of familiarity. But such familiarity, if it goes far, shall make one lose respect to God's name.

Another grave type of wrongful use of God's name is:

Blaspheming:

I know that I am speaking to believers who do not blaspheme in the serious meaning of the word ie., cursing or insulting the name of God. But some people in the times of troubles may do something else such as grumbling against God, blaming Him, accusing Him of injustice or neglect or threatening Him to abstain from praying or to cut relations with Him, etc. This is utterly improper; for we should revere God and be careful in every word we utter.

If the person who insults his brother shall be liable to the council and who says, "you fool," shall be liable to the hell (Matt. 5:22), how more deserving hell shall be for a person who says a bad word against God!

It is not right to blaspheme against God or behave in a way that might cause others to blaspheme against Him.

God does not acquit those who misuses His name:

If we cannot swear by the earth because it is God's footstool, how much more deserving punishment is for a person who uses

God's name wrongfully. He has no excuse, he is not justified before God.

In the Old Testament, a person who blasphemed was put to death: *"And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death."* (Lev. 24:16).

God is jealous for His holy name (Ezek. 39:25). So He said about the children of Israel, *"When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name ... But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations, ... but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations, "* (Ezek. 36:20-22).

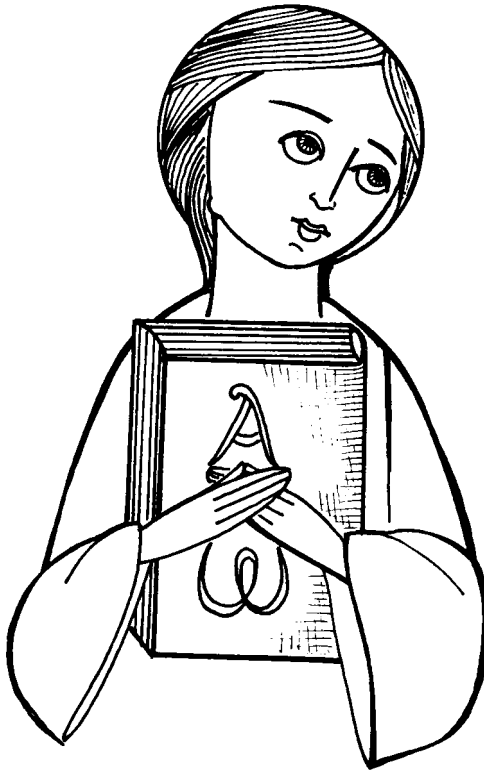
Therefore God said, "I will send out the curse, says the LORD of hosts; It shall enter the house of the thief And the house of the one who swears falsely by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house And consume it, with its timber and stones." (Zech. 5:3-4).

He also warned the priests who do not give glory to His name, saying: *"If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name," Says the LORD of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings."* (Mal. 2:2).

How solemn indeed is the Lord's name. The Lord does not acquit anyone who misuses His name. Let us bless the Lord's name all the time and glorify it.

*Your name is sweet and blessed,
in the mouths of Your holy people.*

*O my Lord Jesus Christ,
my good Saviour.*





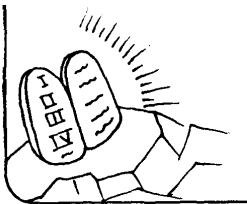
THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God"

"You shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. "

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." (Ex. 20:8-11) , (Deut. 5:12-18).



REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY AND KEEP IT HOLY....

1. It is a blessed day, a day of rest in the Lord:

It is an old Commandment given by God to people before writing down the Ten Commandments. Or we may say it is the first Commandment which the Lord God Himself carried out before giving it to the people. Ought not we to carry it out rather more?

This commandment dates back to the beginning of the world when the divine inspiration said, *"Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."* (Gen. 2:3).

God blessed and consecrated the Sabbath before giving the Law or the Commandments.

God did great things. He created the light, the heavens, sea, earth, plants, the sun, the moon, the stars, the animals and man. It is not said about any of the days of creation that God blessed it. It was just said, *"And God saw it was good"* or *"it was very good"* (Gen. 1:12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

The only day that God blessed and consecrated was the day of rest to show us that labour and working - even though

useful and productive -- cannot be blessed as one calm day which man spends with God.

Imagine! Even creating the sun, the moon and the stars does not equal a calm day away from work. Martha was doing many good deeds, causing joy, by which she served the Lord, however all her deeds did not match what Mary did by sitting calmly at the feet of the Lord Christ.

2. When did the Lord God rest?

God blessed the seventh day because He rested on it, but what does the word "rested" mean? Does God get tired and need to rest? Or "rest" represents some great meaning which we shall understand on these pages?

And what thing God toiled for; is it the making of the world, or the redemption? The creation of the world did not take from God any effort but giving the order or just willing as David the Prophet says, *"For He spoke, and it was done, He commanded, and it stood firm"* (Ps.. 33:9). He said "Let there be light" and there was light. Let the waters under the sky be gathered... and it was so. Let the earth put forth vegetation ... and it was so. What toil did all this cause to God? None.

But the real toil was in the redemption, for it required from God to be incarnate, to quit His glory and take the form of a slave, to labour, accept insult, be crucified, suffer, die and rise again. This is the real hard labour.

Therefore the true rest God took was after the salvation of man, while the rest on the Sabbath had been just a symbol of the true rest after the redemption.

On that Great Friday, He exterminated sin through death and He had still to put an end to death which was the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). Which thing He performed on Sunday by His Resurrection? Only then God rested from His work. For what use would there be of creating mankind if they were all to go to death and perdition? The Lord God did not toil in creating man but really toiled in saving him. So the Sabbath of the Old Testament was just a symbol.

Furthermore, the word Sabbath is a Hebrew word which means rest, and the real rest God obtained was on Sunday when He condemned sin and overcame death. Thus, Sunday is called the Lord's Day of which David said, "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." This is the Sabbath in its spiritual not literal meaning.

3. When was the Commandment of the Sabbath given?

- It is older than the Ten Commandments. Therefore when God wrote it on the first tablet he started it with the word "Remember" to remind them of it. The Ten Commandments are written in Chapter 20 of Exodus, while the Commandment of the Sabbath comes in Chapter 16 with the rules of gathering the manna.

God rained manna from heaven for them and they were allowed to gather it day by day and on the sixth day gather twice as much as they had gathered on other days. And Moses told them, *"This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'"* (Ex. 16:23).

So they put it aside until morning and it did not become foul, and Moses said, *"Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none ...See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. "* (Ex. 16:25-30).

Thus they kept the Sabbath holy. They did nothing on it nor came out of their houses to search for food. They did not even cook but they rested. God blessed the bread of Friday giving them double the amount.

The blessing they had on Friday in the manna given them from heaven was a symbol of the blessing given to the whole world by the Lord Jesus Christ: *"the bread of life... which came down from heaven... If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, "* (John 6:32-51).

God gave the commandment of the Sabbath among the commands concerning the manna as we have seen, then He put it in the Ten Commandments written in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and repeated it many times in Exodus as well as through the prophets. Any work on the Sabbath was thus considered as defiling the Sabbath.

4. Seriousness of the Commandment of the Sabbath and the punishment of violating it:

Some people often make light of the Commandment of the Sabbath thinking it less serious than the other Commandments: you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, etc. While God mentioned it before all the other commandments. Its seriousness appears in that its punishment was putting to death the person who violates it as God said to Moses, *"You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ... Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death."* (Ex. 31:14-15).

The same punishment was mentioned again in (Ex. 35:1-3) "... on the seventh day, you shall have a holy Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord, whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the Sabbath day"

So, breaking the Sabbath or defiling it was not a slight sin as some may think for whoever did so was put to death and cut off his people. **A practical example of this is stated in**

Numbers: *"Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses, 'The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.' So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died. "* (Num. 15:32-36).

God even threatened all the city of Jerusalem of the same punishment for breaking the Sabbath. He said, *"But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, ... then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched. "* (Jer. 17:27).

Keeping the Sabbath was the concern of Nehemiah after the return from captivity. When he saw people working on the Sabbath he said, "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, *"What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."* (Neh. 13:17-18). And he warned them he would lay hands on them if they did so again.

Ezekiel the prophet also talked much about profaning the Sabbath saying that because of it God said, *"but they profaned My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfil My anger against them in the wilderness."* (Ezec. 20:21).

All these punishments demonstrate how serious keeping the Lord's day is. Do we now keep the Lord's day to make it holy, or neglect that, seeing that there is no punishment now? Today, who breaks the Lord's day is not cast out of the camp, not killed, nor stoned. Would this be a cause for us to neglect God's commandments? God forbids.

5. Rest for all people because He knows our nature:

Moses the prophet said, "See, the Lord has given you the Sabbath". Great! It is then a gift or a reward from God, not a burden or a heavy load.

Because God created us, He knows our nature and that it needs one day's rest every week. So, keeping the Sabbath is useful for you; you cannot work every day. Your body is like a machine which has a certain capacity, if you run it at a greater capacity it will be damaged. Your body is the same, its capacity is to work six days a week. If you make it work seven days, it will be damaged. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ said, ***"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."*** (Mark 2:27).

Many people work continually... weeks pass without their taking any rest. Some are taken by heart failure, others by angina, pectorals or nervous breakdown.

So, God gave you the Sabbath as a gift for rest, and you should thank Him for it. *"you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, ... And remember that you were a slave ..."* (Deut. 5:14-15).

Here the spirit of mercy and equality is clear in the Law. It is not proper that the master takes rest while the servants go on working. It is not proper that the old take rest while the young go on working. All must take rest as the Scriptures say, "*... that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.*" (Deut. 5:14). **Even the livestock need rest because they have bodies as well.**

Some may think that the donkey, for example, does not get tired and they say, "Donkey work"! But the Scriptures say something different, "*Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.*" (Ex. 23:12). How merciful God's heart is!

6. Even the solid land takes rest:

God gave rest even to the solid land, He said: "*Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, ...*" (Ex. 23:10-11).

In our days, we complain that the crops are weak. There are many reasons among which is that the land takes no rest. God created the earth with its land and knows its nature; so He commanded that it should take rest every seven years, to enjoy its Sabbath as well. We are not wiser than God!

We cultivate the land unceasingly and it does not yield all its power. You may say, "I cultivate it for seven years to have yield?" But I say to you: Even if you cultivate it for six years only, it will give you more yield, if you obtain 6 Ardabs per year (an Egyptian measure of capacity for grain) for seven years

with a total of 42 Ardebs. But if you cultivate it for six years only, it will give you 9 Ardebs a year with a total of 54 Ardebs which is much more.

We should not forget that when God ordered to rest the land the seventh year, He gave His blessing in the sixth year so that the land yielded a crop for three years" (Lev. 25:20-22).

This is God's way in giving rest to someone or something. He gives more fruit. By this He teaches us that coveting for worldly matters destroys us spiritually, physically and financially.

Take, for example, a person who works the whole week; his health gets worse, his nerves and spirituality break down. He cries to the Lord, but the Lord replies, "I have given you the Sabbath, but you did not obey!!"

Blessings of Keeping the Sabbath:

If you keep the Lord's day, you will benefit physically and spiritually and moreover you will have a blessing according to the Lord's promise, *"Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, ... and hold fast My covenant, these I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of Prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar... I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off, ..." (Is. 56:2-7), and also, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honourable, And shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words.*

Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,..." (Is. 58:13-14).

7. The Sabbath is given as a sign:

The Sabbath was a sign as the Lord said, *"Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you."* (Ex. 31:13).

So, the Sabbatherians say: As long as the Sabbath is a sign, it should not be changed or replaced! But we reply to them "Circumcision was also a sign, and it is replaced by baptism."

Circumcision was certainly a sign as it is written, *"This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."* (Gen. 17:10-11).

These two signs then; the circumcision and the Sabbath were distinguished but were also symbols replaced in Christianity by the things symbolised for.

Circumcision was the removal of a part of the body to make it die, which symbolised mortifying the body and its lusts. This was a symbol of baptism which is death with Christ (Rom. 6:3,4) and so was replaced by it.

The Sabbath was a sign for rest, bodily rest, and it was replaced by the rest of the spirit when we rested from sin and death. Thus, it was replaced by Sunday on which the Lord took real rest as we explained before. What is the Sabbath but the Lord's day which we should keep holy? In its essence it is not abolished; for we still honour the Lord's day, but in a more powerful way.

The Sabbath was a sign. But of what? The Lord says, "A sign between Me and you... that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. **"On Sunday we feel this actually; for we remember how the Lord sanctified us with His holy blood, putting an end to sin and death. But on the old Sabbath, I wonder how they felt the Lord had sanctified them!"**

When we keep the Lord's day holy, we remember that He sanctified us with His death and resurrection.

You may ask: We know that the Lord sanctified us when He exterminated sin by His death. But how did He sanctify us when He overcame death by His resurrection?

Death in the Old Testament was a punishment, the wages of sin, and whoever touched a dead body was defiled because the dead died with his sin. But now, as the Lord Christ died for us and paid off the wages of our sins, He sanctified our dead. Thus, death became just departure and whoever touches a dead body is not defiled any more since the Lord exterminated the power and sting of death by His death.

They say also that the Sabbath was a sign of delivery from servitude as the Scriptures say, *"And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD*

your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." (Deut. 5:15).

This servitude was a symbol of the servitude of sin, while coming out of the servitude of Pharaoh was a symbol of coming out of the servitude of Satan which has been realised when the Lord Christ overcame death on Sunday.

8. Saturday and Sunday:

To those who argue if Saturday is still the Lord's day or is replaced by Sunday, we say the express words of St. Paul the Apostle, *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, ..."* (Col. 2:16-17). These are only symbols and references to the spiritual matters of the New Testament.

The same was said also about the circumcision (Acts 15:10-24). It was only a sign just as the Sabbath.

When God rested on the seventh day from creating the world, this was a symbol of His true rest when He redeemed us and overcame death on Sunday. Even this Sunday on which we rest refers to the great Sabbath in the everlasting eternity *"when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father,... The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. ... that God may be all in all"* (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Only then we come to the everlasting rest, the rest of eternity.

This small Sabbath then has changed into Sunday in Christianity. On that day the disciples used to meet and break bread (Acts 2:46). It is also the day on which the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and the early Church was founded. It was on Sunday also that the Lord Christ appeared to the disciples and women. The main point is that we keep the Lord's day holy and make of it a blessing to our lives and rejoice and be joyful on it in the Lord.

9. You shall not do any work:

The Law commanded that no work be done on the Lord's day. And as they were used to celebrate the Sabbath from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32), they prepared themselves from Friday and they called Friday *"the day of Preparation"* (Luke 23:54).

The Jews used to carry out the Commandment, "You shall not do any work" in a literal way, lacking spirit. Even doing good on the Sabbath was considered by them a sin!! So they opposed the Lord Christ regarding this matter.

But the commandment not to work on that day did not mean turning the Lord's day into a day of laziness, sleep and rest in bed! Good things ought to be done on it. So a question that caused argument between the Jews and the Lord Christ was, *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"* (Matt. 12:10, Luke. 14:3).

The Lord used to heal and teach on the Sabbath:

The Lord used to intentionally heal many people on the Sabbath; the man born blind was healed by the Lord on the Sabbath intentionally *"Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus*

made the mud and opened his eyes." (John 9:14). He was born blind and the Lord could have healed him on any other day. It would not matter if he continued blind another day. But the Lord made it with purpose to establish a rule concerning the Sabbath.

He created eyes to the blind, out of the mud, in a miraculous way that demonstrated His divinity, but the Jews were literal and did not see the greatness and significance of the miracle but only said that He was a sinner because He did not observe the Sabbath (John 9:16,24).

- **The Lord also healed the man with the withered hand, and discussed the matter with them if it was lawful to cure on the Sabbath.** He said to them, "*...What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. ...*" (Matt. 12:10-13).
- He healed, on the Sabbath, also the woman who the devil crippled for eighteen years. He said to the leader of the synagogue, "*... Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound; think of it; for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?*" (Luke 13:10-16).
- **The Lord healed also the man at Bethesda who had been ill for 38 years.** The Lord could have healed him on any

other day no matter if the thirty eight years increased by two days or so. But the Lord wanted to give a principle, **He did not only heal the man but also ordered him to carry his bed and walk** (John 5:2-8).

- On the Sabbath, He healed also the man who had dropsy (Luke 14:1-6).
- Furthermore, when His disciples plucked heads of grain on the Sabbath and the Pharisees objected, He answered them, *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:23-28), and said to them, *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice"* (Matt. 12:7).
- To prove to them that a spiritual work is lawful on the Sabbath He said, " ... *on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?* " (Matt.. 12:5,6). By **this, He meant circumcision on the Sabbath**; for a child was to be circumcised on the eighth day, and if this came on a Sabbath, he was circumcised and yet they were guiltless. Thus He said to them, " ... *If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?*" (John 7:21-23).

10. Doing mercy on the Sabbath:

We ought not understand the commandment of the Sabbath in a literal way, *"for the letter kills."* (2 Cor. 3:6).

Let us have some examples for this:

- Suppose a physician keeps the Lord's day holy by not working on it, and one Sunday a person who is in danger and about to die called for his help, would he say: **No, let him die and the Lord's day be not broken!! In this case, the physician has no mercy and God desires mercy and not sacrifice.** It does not mean that a physician ought to open his consulting room every day without waiting for the clients, giving himself excuse that his work is to comfort people's pains!! No. We mean only urgent cases. For example, a surgery which can be postponed for some days should not be performed on the Lord's day. But if it was so urgent that if it is not performed immediately the patient would die, doing it will not be breaking of the Lord's day. The same applies if it is necessary for a patient to have some injection at a certain time or have a wound dressed on Sundays.
- Another example: a house is on fire on a Sunday; would we say: This is the Lord's day, we leave it to burn today and put out the fire from the remaining part on Monday!! This is unreasonable. The same can be said in case of a person who is drowning or a case which needs urgent help or a merciful work that cannot be postponed.

11. Religious teaching and worship on the Lord's day:

God has commanded that the Sabbath be allocated to worship, "*... a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation.*" (Lev. 23:3). It means that spiritual meetings should be held on it. He said also, "*From Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me*" (Is. 66:23). He ordered also that burnt offerings and grain offerings be offered to Him on the Sabbath (Ezec. 46:4). The Holy Scriptures were also read on that day, "*For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.*" (Acts 15:21).

Not only was the Sabbath a day for worship, but also for teaching. The Lord Christ taught on the Sabbath (Mark 6:2). His apostles did so as well.

St. Paul the Apostle used to teach in the synagogues every Sabbath, "*And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.*" (Acts 18:4). And in Thessalonica, "*... Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*" (Acts 17:1-2).

Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church in the Liturgy every Sunday, and sermons are delivered to the people, and children are taught in the Sunday schools.

The Lord's day is not a day for laziness and sluggishness, but a day for worship, contemplations, spiritual meetings and

readings and not just stopping worldly works; otherwise we would be negative on it.

The expression "Keep Holy" means "dedicating." Keeping the day holy, then, means dedicating it for the Lord, and so it is called the Lord's day because on it He rests as He rested on the Seventh day and our spirits rest in Him.

Be careful also not to think that the Lord's day means taking rest at home, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines or entertaining yourself in places of amusement. Remember rather that the Lord requires you to make this day holy for Him.

12. It is a day for the Lord:

You do not own this day to act on it as you like. It is the Lord's, you should give it to Him; learn verses from the Holy Bible, learn hymns, sing for the Lord and praise Him, pray, serve the Lord, visit His children or contemplate on the Holy Books. Do not spend it in making errands, shopping, or cleaning your house. Let all the day be for the Lord.

If you cannot give all the day to the Lord, in case you are not on holiday in your work, give what you can out of it to the Lord and compensate the rest on another day.

One day a rich man was returning home in his car after shopping, and he was stopped suddenly by a godly man crying to him, "Take care, you man, see what you are treading on". He stopped quickly thinking he ran over a child, but he found

nothing. He asked that godly man who answered him, "You are treading on the Lord's day. You tread on the Fourth Commandment".

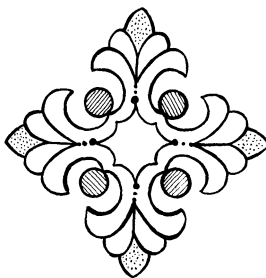
See what St. John the Beloved said in the Revelation, "*I was in the spirit on the Lord's day*" (Rev.1:10). What a beautiful verse to contemplate on and to carry out in your life.

Do the works that make you grow spiritually; for as your body is in need of rest, your spirit also needs to rest in the Lord.

Conclusion:

Now we have come to the end of our talk about the First and Second commandments relating to the Lord's worship, as well as the Third Commandment relating to the Lord's name and the Fourth commandment relating to the Lord's day.

In the next book, we will contemplate on the commandments relating to our relations with the others. The First will be "Honour your mother and your father."



**IN
THIS BOOK**

*In the Name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
One God,
Amen*

The Ten Commandments are old and new at the same time; for they were not given for the olden times alone but for all times and to all generations.

Few words they are, but have deep and broad meaning as David the Prophet sang in his psalms:
*"I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but Your commandment is ex-
ceedingly broad"*

(Ps. 119:96)

and also,

*"The commandment of the Lord is
clear, enlightening the eyes;"
"Sweeter also than honey,
and dripping of the honeycomb".*

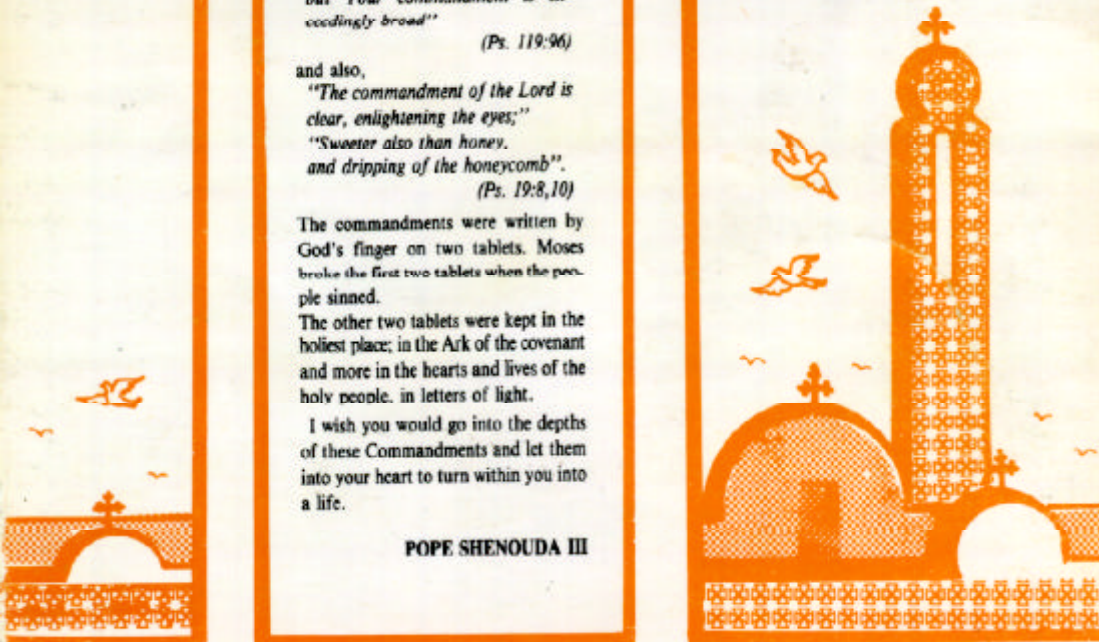
(Ps. 19:8,10)

The commandments were written by God's finger on two tablets. Moses broke the first two tablets when the people sinned.

The other two tablets were kept in the holiest place; in the Ark of the covenant and more in the hearts and lives of the holy people, in letters of light.

I wish you would go into the depths of these Commandments and let them into your heart to turn within you into a life.

POPE SHENOUDA III

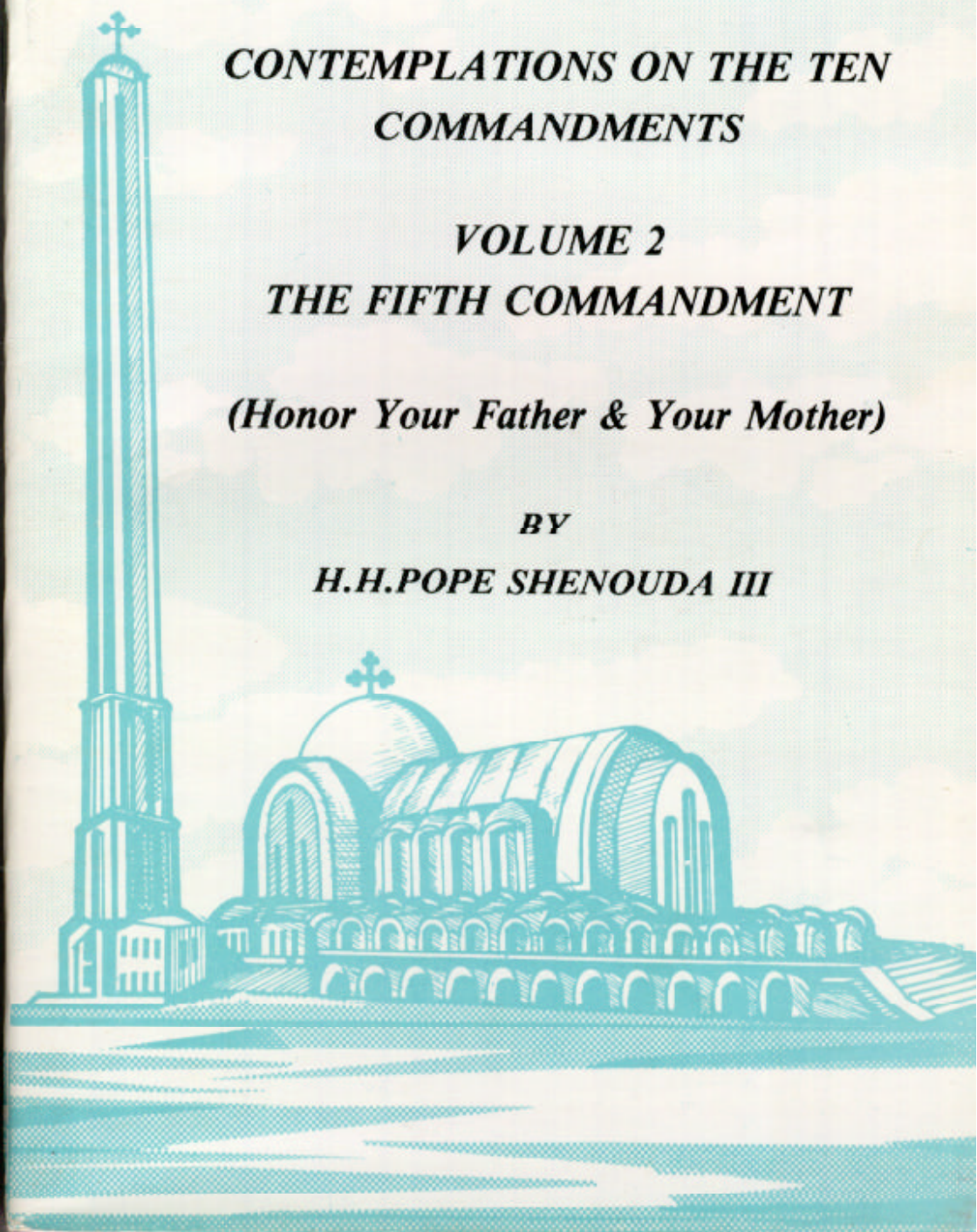


**CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE TEN
COMMANDMENTS**

**VOLUME 2
THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT**

(Honor Your Father & Your Mother)

**BY
H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III**



**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**



See of St. Mark

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H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

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***H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark***

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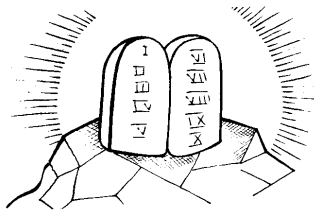
PREFACE

The Ten Commandments were not meant for the times of the prophet Moses nor the times of the Old Testament, but were rather addressed to every generation, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law (Matt. 5:18).

Through Christianity, the Ten Commandments were given a new meaning which coincided with the new standards understood by the believers in the New Testament. So the Commandments remain the same but their concept widens as God grants with His grace an opportunity for meditation. How true then was the prophet David when he said, *"I have seen the consummation of all perfection, But Your commandment is exceedingly broad."* (Ps. 119:96).

This series of lectures were given in 1967 and have been published more than once.

Shenouda III



THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." (Ex. 20:12).

"Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you." (Deut. 5:16).



CHAPTER 1

NATURAL FATHERHOOD AND RESPECT FOR OLDER RELATIVES

Literal Meaning of the Commandment

This Fifth Commandment, in its literal, primitive, and original meaning, before acquiring a broader human understanding and before attaining its full Christian application, was meant to honour the natural parents.

Its Broad Meaning and Concept

Subsequently, the meaning extended to include blood relatives who are of the same level of the father and the mother such as uncles and aunts. Later, it included the elders who are by virtue of their age as the father and the mother.

Still later, the meaning broadened to include spiritual fatherhood and became applicable to those who take care of our spiritual needs and our minds, such as priests and teachers as well as those in authoritative positions and those who are under our care.

In this chapter, we will talk about natural fatherhood, although this discussion will also lay down rules applicable to other forms of fatherhood.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT

This Commandment derives its importance from the following factors:

1. The first Commandment concerning human relations

This particular Commandment honouring the parents is found to occupy the top place on the second tablet and preceding the Lord's saying: *"Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, etc.* This arrangement gives us an idea about the seriousness of this Commandment which the Lord made first among those concerning human relations.

In order to give us a deeper understanding of honouring the parents, the Lord says, "Honour your father and your mother" before He says, "*do not murder*" and before He says, "*do not commit adultery*", and before He says, "do not steal", "do not lie" and "do not covet". It is as if whoever sins by not honouring his parents is more sinful than whoever commits murder or adultery or steals, or more sinful than whoever bears false witness or covets his neighbour's belongings.

The Lord has, therefore, put this Commandment up front so as not to take it lightly. Many would tremble to crimes of murder and say 'God forbids that I would ever kill. I am not a criminal'. However, God said, *"Honour your father and your mother"* before He said, *"do not commit murder"*. In this way, God revealed to us the magnitude of the crime one commits if one does not honour one's parents.

2. It is the First Commandment Associated with a reward

"Honour your father and mother which is the first Commandment with a promise" said St. Paul the Apostle in Ephesians 6:2 And what promise did the Lord give to whoever honours their parents? It is a dual blessing:

"That it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." (Eph. 6: 3, De. 5:16).

The opposite is also true. For whoever does not honour their parents, reaps the opposite; their days become few and unpleasant.

Take Jacob the father of fathers, who took advantage of his father's blindness and misled him, and cunningly received his blessing, we see him demonstrate the validity of this rule when he said to Pharaoh : *"few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers."*(Gen. 47: 9).

Undoubtedly, this leads us to another point which emphasises the importance of this Commandment, that is, the death penalty for whoever breaks it.

3. Dishonouring parents was punishable by death and cursing

Death was the punishment for breaking this Commandment.

About this, the Law said: *"He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death... and he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."* (Ex. 21:15-17). This strict punishment is emphasised by the Lord when he says in another place, *"For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him."* (Lev. 20:9).

And, perhaps, to these Commandments pointed the Lord Jesus as He said to the scribes and Pharisees, *"For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'"* (Mark 7:10).

The father and the mother are, therefore, not ordinary people. For if a person cursed ordinary people, he would not be put to death but would rather stand before the synod and the matter could be resolved peacefully. But, if he cursed his father or his mother, his punishment would surely be death.

In addition to the death penalty, a curse also follows whoever curses his father or his mother. About this the Bible says, *"Whoever curses his father or his mother, His lamp will be put out in deep darkness."* (Prov. 20:20).

Not only was the death penalty restricted to whoever strikes or curses his parents, but was also applied to the stubborn and disobedient son.

About this the Lord says in Deuteronomy, *"If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his*

father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you," (Deut. 21:18-21).

The curse was also upon whoever took lightly his father or his mother, by mocking them or not receiving them with due respect and reverence.

On Mount Ebal the Levites used to stand and cry loudly *"'Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'" (Deut. 27:16).* The Bible also says, *"The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it."* (Prov. 30:17).

The curse upon Canaan, the son of Ham, gives us a good idea about the punishment of not honouring the parents. Let us find out the reason for this fatal curse.

It did not happen that Ham disobeyed his father or struck him or cursed him or spoke evil of him. All he did was that when he saw his father, Noah, drunk and naked, he did not cover him but *"he saw and told his brothers."* (Gen. 9:20-26). And because of this, the curse struck his seed the Canaanites for thousands of years to the extent that the Lord Jesus Himself (Christ the gentle and the tender, whose words are a mix of

kindness, tenderness and compassion) when He spoke to the Canaanite woman, emphasised this curse as He said, *"it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."* (Matt. 15:26). Dogs?! A hard word no doubt, made even harder by the fact that it has come out of the mouth of the decent and kind Christ and addressed to a poor woman asking for the recovery of her daughter.

But this harshness proves that the Lord approved the curse of Noah upon the seed of his son Ham and consequently, gives us an idea about the importance of honouring the parents and that it is not a minor sin for anyone to dishonour his father or his mother.

In the meantime, we notice that as Ham's seed of was cursed, the blessings went to Sam and Japheth for when they heard of their father's nakedness, they *"... took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness ."*(Gen. 9:23).

4. The Prominent Place of the Father

The father is the head of the family. This includes the children as well as their mother, for *"the husband is the head of his wife."* (1Cor. 11:3). And, in the old tribal system, the father was the ruler of the family and the grandfather was both the ruler and the Judge of the tribe thereby combining the natural and civil leadership at the same time.

The father was the family's priest and intercessor with God too. When the Law of Moses was implemented, Priesthood was restricted to the sons of Aaron but prior to that the father was the Priest of the family. We hear for example that the righteous Job used to offer burnt offerings on behalf of his children according to the number of them all, for he said, , *"It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."* (Job 1:5). So he was their intermediary and their intercessor with God, as did Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all our forefathers the Patriarchs.

A father's blessing was a great thing for which the son had to work hard, and ask with tears and seek by all means for whoever received his father's blessing also receive God's.

So we hear that Isaac blessed Jacob. And despite the fact that Jacob sought this blessing cunningly, it was nevertheless confirmed and later approved by God, and so, God blessed Jacob (Gen. 28:1-14). We also find the mighty Esau crying bitterly with tears asking for his father's blessing (Gen. 27:38).

And in as much as God approved the father's blessing, He also approved the curse. We have already seen an example in Noah's curse of Canaan, thrice pouring on him the curse of slavery as he said, *"Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren. "And he said: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant."* (Gen. 9:25-27). This slavery repeated thrice by Noah in cursing Canaan was later approved

by the Lord as is evident from His talk to the Canaanite woman as previously mentioned.

Likewise, the Lord approved all the blessings and rulings which Jacob the father of fathers gave to his children and all were fulfilled in due time (Gen. 49). An example of the evidence of the importance of the position of parents is:

5. God likened His love to the kindness of a father and mother

When the Lord wanted to reveal the depth of His relationship with us and the depth of His love for us, He made an analogy between this relationship and the kindness and compassion of a father and a mother. It is true that the Lord is the Master of all creation. All was made by His hands and all is subdued under His authority and frequently we call Him Lord, and He is.

But our kind Lord prefers to be called "Father" as this signifies love and compassion.

So when our good Saviour taught us to pray He didn't ask that we address Him as our Master, Creator and ruler, but rather ordered us to say *"Our Father who art in heaven"*.

The New Testament is full with verses which point out the fatherhood of God and express His lovingness and His compassion.

As the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of our needs, He said *"Do not be anxious.... for your heavenly Father knows that you need all*

these things." (Matt. 6:31-32). *"... how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"* (Matt. 7:11). And, in His speech about the kingdom He told us *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Luke 12:32). And in His speech about making the good deeds in secret, He repeated more than once the phrase *"your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."* (Matt. 6:6), and many are the verses that prove God's Fatherhood to us, they are not easy to count.

This fatherhood is not a new teaching of the New Testament, but it is evident from the very beginning and from the early chapters of Genesis.

The story of the Flood starts with this overture *"the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful;"* (Gen. 6:2), and so we find that God in His wonderful Fatherhood, did not disown His human children even while in the depths of their sins. The prophets of the Old Testament also felt the Fatherhood of God and addressed Him saying, *"You, O LORD, are our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name."* (Is. 63:16) *"But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand."* (Is. 64:8).

In all of this, the Lord has revered fatherhood by calling Himself our Father He also likened the love to the **compassion of a mother** as He blamed Jerusalem saying *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her*

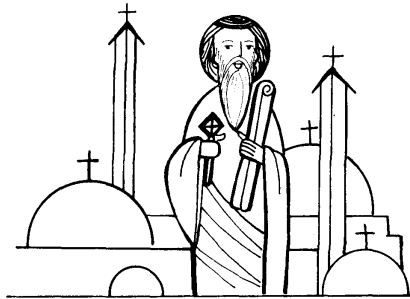
wings, but you were not willing!" (Matt. 23:37). Here He likens His love to that of the mother hen toward her chicks. Furthermore, He says that His compassion is greater than that of a mother who never forgets her nursing child (Is. 49:15).

Finally, as God in all His kindness is our Father, the Church is our mother. All of us are the children of the church.

The apostles were in pain for our birth (Gal. 4:19) and the Church delivered us in the baptismal font and fed us the milk of orthodox teachings and we lived in her bosom all this time enjoying her love and caring.

For this reason we place these above every love and above every fatherhood and motherhood:

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND THE MOTHERHOOD OF THE CHURCH



CHAPTER II

HOW TO HONOUR PARENTS

One may say I am convinced of the seriousness of this Commandment and of the necessity of honouring the parents, but how should I honour my parents?

Honouring parents requires love, obedience, respect, gratitude and support. Add to these, another element which we will begin with, that is success.

SUCCESS

There is no doubt that success in life is one indication of honouring parents. Your success does honour your father and your mother and fills their hearts with joy. True are the words of the Holy Bible, *"A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son is the grief of his mother."* (Prov. 10:1) and also, *"the father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him."* (Prov. 23:24).

If you study hard and pass with distinction, if you are honest in your work and enjoy the confidence and love of your superiors, if you become successful in life and earn a good reputation and people speak well of you, then you are an honour to your father

and your mother and they will rejoice and boast about your success.

But, if you are a failure, then your father won't know where to hide his face and your mother will be ashamed. And, whenever someone brings up your conduct in their presence, they will keep their heads down. Rightfully the Bible says, *"a foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him."* (Prov. 17:25). *"He who begets a fool, does so to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy."* (Prov. 17:21). The Bible goes even farther by saying, *"A foolish son is destruction to his father."* (Prov. 19:13).

History is full of mothers who were joyful to see their children successful.

Hannah was pleased with her son Samuel, and Joseph, the successful man, was a joy to his father, and more so was Jesus to His mother the Virgin Mary as He *"kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men."* (Luke 2:52). He had truly honoured her because of His exemplary life which deserved everyone's admiration.

In contradiction, there were the lost and failing children. The Bible says that Esau brought *"grief to Isaac and Rebekah."* (Gen. 26:35) as so also Augustine as he went astray, was the reason behind the fountain of bitter tears shed by his mother St. Monica.

Therefore, my beloved, be successful so that you may make your parents glad and honour them by your achievements.

GRATITUDE

It is a must that you realise the favours you received from your father and your mother. I do not want to advise reading a medical or a psychology text that you may recognise the status of your mother during pregnancy when she carried you in her womb for nine months and suffered a lot for your sake.

It is enough to know that she could not enter the Church during her confinement and at other times during her pregnancy. Add to this the hard work she did while nursing and as you were a little child for your meals, for your cries, for your cleanliness, by carrying you in her lap, on her bosom, and on her shoulders, and no doubt, a nursing child may, at times, deprive his mother of sleep.

To be sure, if your mother had failed to provide for your proper care, you would have suffered countless harms and angers. Therefore, no one should forget to be grateful to his mother.

It is possible that one says, "True! My mother suffered for my sake sometime ago but she is now giving me hell." but even so, you must not forget to be grateful for she supported you as a child and now you should support her and tolerate her.

Also, do not forget to be grateful to your father who struggled to bring you up and paid for your expenses and spent of his sweat and blood to satisfy your needs and felt that whoever touched you touched the pupil of his eye. Not only should your

gratitude be for the financial assistance, but also for the love, kindness and compassion which he had happily offered you.

In order to realise the importance of these passions, we only have to see how many of those who were deprived of the kindness of their parents had fallen into serious psychological troubles and difficult problems.

If your mother is now causing you problems for some reason or another, it is not appropriate that you forget her long and caring past. And be sure that if you counter her past kindness with a little of your present kindness, she will never forget your compassion and you will indeed reach the bottom of her heart.

How difficult it is for a mother to work long and hard to bring up a child, only to find out that as she grew older, he left her as if he has never known who she was!

SUPPORT

It is a must that a person should take care of his parents and provide for them, especially in their old age, their sickness and their need.

The scribes and Pharisees were blamed by the Lord Christ as they were not forthcoming in honouring their parents claiming they had to make offerings to the Temple, so He answered and said to them, *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? "For God commanded, saying, 'Honour your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever*

profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"; 'then he need not honour his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." (Matt. 15:3-6).

And so, the Lord did reveal that honouring your father and your mother by supporting them with your money in the time of their need is more important than making offerings on the altar. And there is a strong verse dealing with this subject in St. Paul's first epistle to his disciple Timothy. It says, *"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* (1 Tim. 5:8).

Therefore, in as much as your parents took care of you in your childhood, you should also take good care of them when they grow old. For as the days go by, their responsibilities grow bigger. Sometime ago your father had only one or two children, but now he has a bunch of them with some going to College and girls getting ready to marry.

As expenditures grow, all members of the family should cooperate to meet the expenses. **By "cooperation" I do not mean that whenever another child finds a job, he/she should provide for extras around the house** which may not be necessary, or worse, may encourage sin, but rather, provide for the real needs of the parents and whole family thereby acknowledging their previous support and care as he grew and became able to earn an income.

On the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ did not forget His mother but left her to the care of His disciple the beloved John, telling him, *"Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.*" (John 19:27).

It is important then that a child takes care of his parents and provides for them. In the years of hunger, Joseph did not forget his father while far away but sent him saying:

"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. "You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. "There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine." (Gen. 45:9-11)

When I was a boy, I heard a story about a man who looked after his father who was pretty old. Because of old age, his father used to drop the plates as he ate. Frustrated, his son made him wooden plates to use. so he won't break them. Whenever the grandson visited his grandfather, he noticed that he was using wooden plates. So he asked his father about the reason. When he knew, he told his father, "please do not lose these plates dad for I would serve you food in them when you grow old like my grandfather". The child had apparently thought that was customary when people grew old. It is true though that in as much as one honours his parents, so also his children will honour him.

I read another story about an army that invaded a town and killed all its people. In this town, there were two young men who knew the commander of the invading army and whom they had done some favour earlier. Wanting to pay them back for their favour, the commander asked them to carry their most precious belongings and escape the town as soon as possible to guarantee their safety. They then entered their home to carry their most precious belongings and came out, one carrying his father and the other carrying his mother. Their parents were the most precious thing they had in life!

LOVE AND RESPECT

The first love a person experiences is that of his mother, then, of his father. This comes naturally, without an effort to acquire it or to keep it. It is also a reciprocal love. Any deviation from this love is abnormal. This love may be manifested either in active or passive way.

ACTIVELY

The child shows his love to his father and his mother by doing all he can to make them comfortable and satisfied thereby winning their blessing and satisfaction. This love and satisfaction continue throughout their lives and even after they leave to the other world when the child offers prayers and liturgy on their behalf and carry out their will to the best of his ability.

PASSIVELY

The child should not anger or agitate his parents nor should he treat them with cruelty or hatred or ignore their opinion. He should not also exhaust his parents with frequent needs, especially those which are beyond their capacity. He should not also waste their belongings or taint the family's reputation through his indecent behaviour. The worst attitude, however, that a child may acquire is to wish evil or even death to either of his parents.

The Bible ordered that whoever struck or insulted a father or a mother should be put to death. It also cursed whoever dishonoured his father or his mother.

Dishonouring means disrespect. **An example is the child who puts himself at the same level with his parents** as if he is equally becoming argumentative and meeting anger with anger and loud voice with loud voice as if there are no differences, the sort of thing which happens between two equal parties lacking spiritual basis. This of course is inappropriate.

It is fitting for the child not to put himself at the same level with his parents for it is the father's right to rebuke and the child should not answer back but keep silent and listen. If the father or the mother raises their voice, the child should not raise his, for if he does, he commits a sin. Further, this is not consistent with the etiquette of talking with a father or a mother or showing respect towards them.

One sign of respecting your parents is to fulfil all their needs. By this, I do not mean to merely obey them in whatever they ask you for, which you should, but I actually mean more; for a wise child realises on his own that his parents need and helps them in all respects without being asked to do so.

If, for example, you see your father standing and tired, do not wait till he asks you to bring him a chair but rather go and do this on your own and respectfully ask him to sit and be comfortable. If you sit at the table and see that your father needs something, bring it to him and if you see his glass of water empty, fill it for him. Also, if you find your mother tired of the housework, give her a hand and do not wait until she asks you to help. At the table, do not sit and wait for her to serve the food, but rather help her do so, and after dining, help her clean up the table.

So help your parents and respect them. And do not think that you humiliate yourself by doing so. On the contrary, you will rise in their eyes and before all men, and most importantly, before God.

An example from the Holy Bible: is the wise Solomon as he sat on his throne. When his mother came to him, what did he do? The Bible says:

"Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand." (1 Kin. 2:19).

When King Solomon stood up leaving the throne and bowed to his mother, he did not lose his prestige but rather added to it! Is it then too much for a person to kiss his father's or mother's hand? or kiss the Priest's hand who is a spiritual father?

Another example is that of the righteous Joseph when he was the second man in Egypt after Pharaoh, ruling all Egypt, wearing Pharaoh's ring on his finger and holding all powers and authority and all people kneeling before him (Gen. 41:40-43) even becoming *"A father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all His house."* (Gen. 45:8).

But despite all the greatness surrounding Joseph, he did not disown his father, the shepherd, but welcomed him into Egypt by sending him chariots to use. And, Joseph took his chariot and personally went to meet his father and introduced him to Pharos and was not embarrassed to say that his father and brothers were shepherds (Gen. 46:31). In this way, Joseph had given a lesson to anyone who shows embarrassment because his father is poor or uneducated or holds a minor job or suffers a particular failing.

A child must, therefore, respect his father. He should not take him lightly or ignore his opinion. **He should not think that he is "old fashioned" belonging to an older generation which should give way to the newer and (rising) generation!** Also, it is inappropriate for the child to ridicule his parents either by words or by looks or through any gesture or even through kidding; for the Bible says: *"Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father."* (Lev. 19:3).

OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION

Obedience is an important element in honouring parents. It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that He obeyed the Father even to death, the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). **When He was incarnate on earth it is said of Him that He submitted to Mary and Joseph** (Luke 2:51). He submitted to Mary for she was His mother and submitted to Joseph despite the fact that he was not His natural father but was in the same level of a natural father, for Joseph had cared for the Lord Jesus just as a natural father would, so much so that Mary said to our Lord, Jesus Christ: *"Your father and I have sought You anxiously."* (Luke 2:48).

The submission of the Lord to Mary and Joseph is a great and instructive lesson to us. **He, who the angels and archangels submit to had submitted to his parents!** He, who every knee of those in heaven and on earth and beneath earth do worship (Phil. 2:10). The Lord Himself has therefore showed us how far the Fifth Commandment must be followed.

Of the magnificent examples of obedience in the Holy Bible is that of Isaac obeying Abraham for he delivered himself to his father to be a burnt offering to the Lord. Another example of extraordinary obedience is that of **the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite** who delivered herself to her father to fulfil in her his word to the Lord (although it was a wrong vow) and so her father made her a burnt offering to the Lord (Judg. 11:30-40).

Another example of obedience which the Bible admirably mentioned, and which the Lord used to blame the children of Israel for their disobedience to Him, is that of the **children of Rechab** whose father commanded them saying, *"you shall not drink wine, you or your sons forever. And, you shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed, and you shall not plant a vineyard or own one," but in tents you shall dwell all your days* (Jer. 35:6-10). The Lord was well pleased with their obedience and said to them, *"Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever"* (Jer. 35:18-19).

Yes, how beautiful it is to obey the parents. The Bible instructs us saying, *"My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother;"* (Prov. 1:8, 6:20, 23:22). Yes, how beautiful is obedience and how beautiful is submission, for they are two of the fruits of humility and good manners and, they are evidence of meekness and love.

In obedience there is also self-denial and a challenge to one's personal will. And undoubtedly, the more one obeys against his will, the greater is his obedience. Of the beautiful words on obedience which the Lord Jesus Christ said, *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."* (John 6:38).

ELEMENTS OF OBEDIENCE :It is mandatory that a child obeys his parents being obedient from the heart based on love and a desire to please. True obedience - and not merely

pretending obedience - is based on true acceptance and without murmuring, it is also a quick obedience without wasting time and is obedience in their presence as well as in their absence and lastly, obedience in the Lord.

TRUE OBEDIENCE

A child should obey his parents, not only for obedience sake, but also to avoid hurting their feelings, and also should obey aiming at pleasing their hearts even if the child doesn't like what he hears.

Once a child wanted to go to a party with his friends. When he asked his mother if he could go she refused and said, "do not go". The child was not pleased for he really wanted to go. When his mother saw he was sad and irritated, she gave him permission to go against her own wish. But the child thought it over and said to himself: "My mother doesn't feel good about my going. It was only to make me happy that she gave me permission to go but she is not at peace regarding this decision. And that means, if I go, she won't be happy, so it is better for me to stay". This obedient child finally prevented himself from getting his wish because of his love to his mother and his desire to please her heart. He was not convinced with her apparent, yet not true, approval.

It is a lesson to all of us for a child may appear to obey his parents by getting their approval through insisting and pressuring them over and over if ever they refuse to give him what he wants. He may look irritated and sad until they give him the "OK", and then he quickly goes on with his plans before they have a chance to change their minds. Later,

he boasts and says "never in my life have I disobeyed! I always get their approval". **True it is an approval, but it is one obtained under pressure. It is only from the mouth** and not from the heart, from within. It should have been a true obedience and not a superficial one.

PROMPT OBEDIENCE

Obedience should also be prompt and without procrastination or delay or vacillation and without such words as "later", "OK, after a while", or "tomorrow, God willing", for this kind of response is improper. A good child obeys promptly. No sooner the word comes from his parents than he puts it immediately into action. Doing so, a child certainly enjoys the love of his parents, their blessings and their prayers.

An elderly monk was once asked: "why do you like your spiritual son "x" more than the rest and prefer him to the others?" He said: "Just wait ... wait". He then called on his disciples and asked for something but they all vacillated except that particular son. As soon as he heard the order, although he was busy writing, he stood up quickly, not even finishing the word he was writing. When the people saw that, they were amazed.

This prompt obedience, we find most evident in the army. An officer must obey promptly and without any delay. This is actually one of the virtues a person acquires in the service.

OBEDIENCE IN THEIR ABSENCE

Obedience that pleases the parents should be the same in their absence as well as in their presence.

It was said that one of the youths was invited by his peers to go to a certain place with them. He apologised saying, "I can't, for my father has ordered me not to go there", they told him "don't worry, your father will never know". He replied, "yeah, I may go without him knowing but if I do, I won't be able to face him when we return, for I will be ashamed of myself because I disobeyed him".

OBEDIENCE WITHOUT OBJECTION

True obedience should be from the heart and without murmuring. There are children who carry out orders but with murmuring in their heart or with murmuring of the tongue. They walk while talking to themselves and **utter phrases of objection damning what they are about to do.** They just obey out of habit but without actual desire or love, and may indeed carry out the orders but without winning the heart or gratitude of whoever ordered them. They may also obey out of fear and not out of love and honouring.

There are also those who do not obey before a lot of argument and bitter questioning. They subject every order to meticulous examination and analysis thus causing a lot of tension to those who order them, so much so, that a father may abandon his orders as he gets tired of arguing or may prefer not to request anything from an argumentative child.

How sweet is the story of the tree of obedience in which the elderly hermit ordered his disciple John to plant a dry stick and to water it daily, and the disciple obeyed, faithfully watering the rod for three years without questioning or argument in spite of the strange order. But, because of his faith and obedience, the rod blossomed (as did Aaron's stick) and grew into a tree which was named "The Tree of Obedience".

OBEDIENCE IN THE LORD

Here is what the apostle said: *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."* (Eph. 6:1). The phrase "in the Lord" means within the Commandments of God. For if you obey a father or an instructor in what clearly does not conform to God's Commandments, then both of you fall into a pit. This, we say because sometimes we encounter devious fathers.

So be obedient my child, submit to everything with all humility till death, deny yourself and your will and dignity but do not deny your conscience.

In obedience, walk with wisdom and discrimination and remember the saying of St. Anthony the Great: "If you are ordered to do something which conforms to God's will, do it. But, if you are ordered to do what is different from the Commandments, then tell yourself that God's obedience supersedes obedience to men, and remember the Lord's saying: *"My sheep hear My voice ... and they follow Me."* (John 10:27).

One of the magnificent examples of obedience is what the children of Rechab did, according to Chapter 35 of the Book of Jeremiah. The Lord used them as an example in obedience to the Israelites so He sent them Jeremiah the prophet to tell them *"drink of the wine"*.

The Lord knew they were not going to obey even that great prophet. He also knew that in their disobedience to the prophet they demonstrated a great obedience to Him-- in its true sense with wisdom and discrimination. The prophet took them to the Lord's house as the Lord had requested and put before them cups filled with wine and told them, *"drink of the wine"*, but they said, *"we won't drink"*.

They said 'no' to the prophet with a clear conscience and without fear, and God was so pleased with their disobedience to the prophet that he rewarded them.

This was a test by the Lord to set up a model for all of us. And the Lord considered their stand a very fine example of obedience for which He praised them and rewarded them and contrasted them with His disobedient people.

They knew that if they obeyed the great prophet Jeremiah in this matter, their obedience was going to represent a shattering of the sound spiritual principle they had followed for a long time-- that of the Fifth Commandment which the Lord had previously given. And God's Commandments never oppose each other.

Here, as we look with great admiration to the stand of the Rechab, we should meditate with greater admiration on what

St. Paul the apostle said regarding obedience: "... *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*" (Gal. 1:8).

Notice that the apostle did not say " ... to that which are preached to you, do not obey" but he rather said "*let him be accursed*". In explaining this verse, the Great Saint Basil elaborated to show the importance of the great principle forwarded to us by St. Paul concerning obedience. He said in his commentary revealing the seriousness of this principle in this verse, St. Paul the apostle, dared to excommunicate angels.

Since the subject of obedience and submission is all sensitive and important in relation to most of the types of fatherhood, we have assigned the next chapter of this book to deal with it.



CHAPTER III

OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION

A question which frequently perplexes people is: **"To what extent should a person obey and submit? Is it an absolute obedience? And what would an individual do if obedience means going against his conscience? Should he obey out of humility or should he listen to his conscience even if he is accused of being arrogant?"**.

The answer is that obedience as well as submission should be understood in a wise manner. Foremost, obedience should be to God before anything or anyone else. Next, we should obey people within the scope of our obedience to God.

If, however, a conflict arises between obedience to God and obedience to people, then there is no doubt that one's conscience should listen to St. Peter the Apostle as he says: *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* (Acts 5:29). Thus, within the limits of God's Commandments, you must obey your parents. But, if you are ordered by either of your parents to break one of God's Commandments, then with a clear conscience, you may not listen to them, for God requests that you obey them as long as there is no conflict between their orders and His.

For example if your father asks: "If someone calls, tell him I am not here", you may then excuse yourself politely and in a pleasant manner. In this condition, It is improper to obey your father. Or if your father were a business man and bought some goods for twenty pounds and intended to sell them for forty pounds but told you to say he had paid thirty seven, here again, it is improper to obey but you should remember the verse that says "*obey your parents in the Lord*".

In these circumstances, it is not proper for the parents to object and say: "Now how about the Fifth Commandment, which was written at the top of the second tablet and whose breaking brings penalties such as this and that?" Therefore, if parents want their children to obey them, it is imperative that they make requests compatible with and within God's Commandments.

Of the prominent problems which meet religious children are some orders given by their non-religious parents. As an example: A father tells his children: "Let me treat you tonight by taking you to the movies" while that particular film may be obscene! Now this father may have a religious child who wants to excuse himself of going. The father, however, insists but the child is firm in his spiritual principles and refuses to go.

Here, instead of granting the child his wish and encouraging him to follow his religious principles, the poor father thinks that his powers are shaken and his treat changes into an order which must be carried out. He insists on enforcing his powers and on the literal application of the Fifth Commandment. He may then resort to accusations and

punishment. Whom should the child obey - God or his father in flesh?

Should he obey his Father who is in heaven or his deviant father on earth?!

So, because the child refused to see an obscene picture, all this furore has happened from a father so occupied with his authority and his orders without any regard to the spirituality of his children! And, from this point on, this father may accuse his child of mutiny and disrespect and mistreats him, giving him daily another cross to carry.

This same furore may happen when a mother insists that her religious daughter should wear clothes which expose her body and beautify herself in a manner objectionable to the girl.

The daughter insists on being conservative. But, instead of an encouragement she meets furore from her mother: "You are going to embarrass us!! People will say you are not sophisticated or classy. They may wonder if your mother really cares for your appearance. You've got to obey and wear this type of clothes, like it or not or else No Church .." This sounds more or less like the father's furore in the previous example.

To you, Fathers and Mothers, If you care to keep your self-respect, make your orders to your religious children within God's Commandments and agreeable with their clear conscience. Make orders that you know they won't object to, as

the saying goes: "If you expect obedience, ask for what is possible to carry out". **God asks that parents be obeyed. It is true. But, He also says, "*Obey your parents in the Lord*".** Christianity doesn't depend on a single verse, but is rather a spirit. And, it is dangerous to take only a part of the teaching and leave its complementary part, for one half of a fact does not make a whole fact.

DO NOT PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN

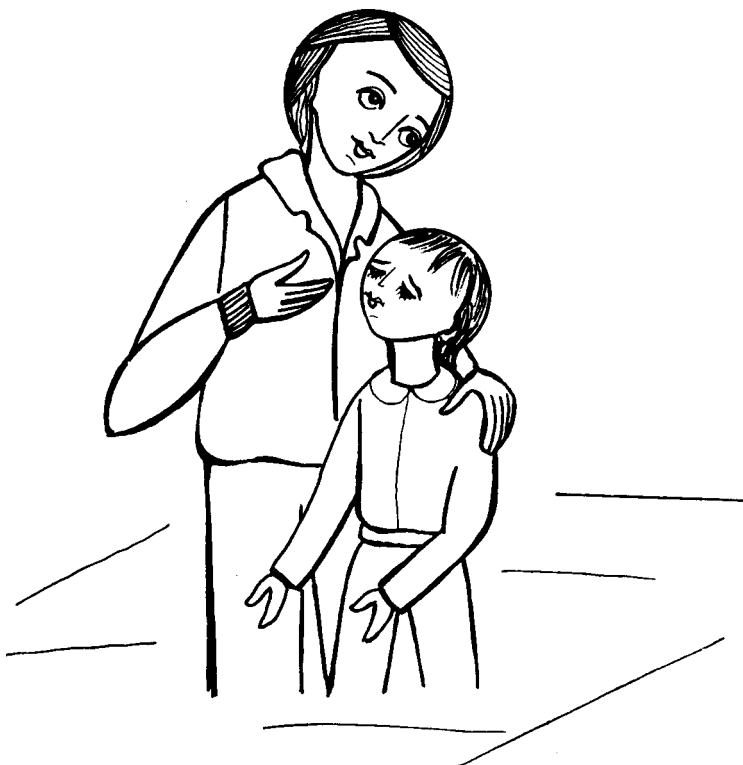
Let us meditate on what St. Paul the apostle said in his Epistle to the Ephesians. He said,:

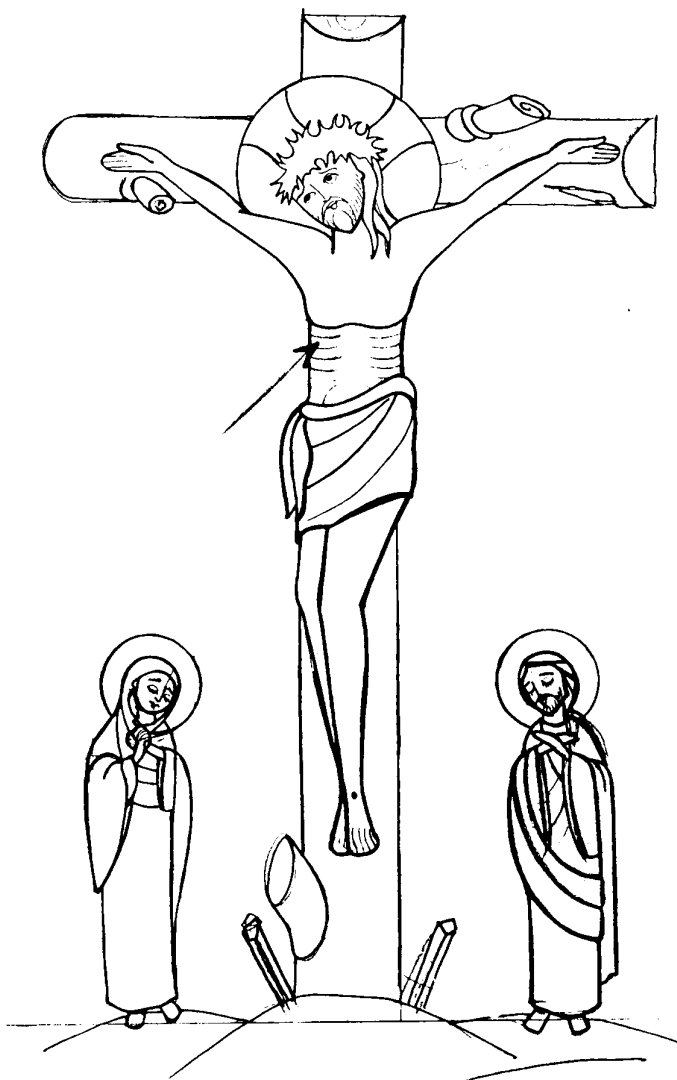
"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother. " (this is only half the teaching! and what is the other half?) "And, fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6:1,4).

Here we see that half the teaching is directed to the children and the other half is directed to their parents.

The phrase "*do not provoke your children* " was repeated by St. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians with a warning to the parents (Col. 3:20-21). It is as if God addresses every parent saying: "This child of yours I have put in your hands and have given him plenty of Commandments to obey you, **but you must not take advantage of this obedience and press on him or hurt his feelings and burden his conscience or ask of him**

what is beyond his reach so that he may not fall; because if he does, I will hold you responsible for his blood!





CHAPTER IV

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THEIR CHILDREN

There is a duty on parents in return to their being honoured; for the principle is: **"for every acclaimed right, there is an assumed duty or responsibility"**.

Therefore, it is not appropriate that parents demand that their rights always be met without fulfilling their duties. This, we say to the parents. To the children we say: "It is your duty to honour your parents even though they do not carry out their duties and obligations towards you". **Some of the most important duties of the parents are** to bring up their children in the fear of God, to treat them well, to meet their needs, to care for them, provide for their education, set up a good example for them and to discipline them as necessary, firmly but with love and compassion.

Bringing up the children in the fear of God: At the time of baptism, fathers and mothers alike (acting actually as Godfathers and Godmothers), promise, before the Church to bring up their children in the life of faith and virtue. So they are responsible before God to bring up their children in a good spiritual way.

Often however, we see parents confine their obligation only to bodily and material needs without paying attention to spiritual matters. We see that they provide for food, clothes and medicine and prepare the child to achieve a prominent position through good education and prepare the daughter for marriage and to settle in a good home. But as to their spiritual future and ensuring their eternal life, they do not take these matters seriously, as if they are of no importance.

If, therefore, you see that one of your children is corrupt or ill mannered or has caused you much trouble, remember then that you are reaping what your hands had previously sowed. This child of yours was once like a soft dough in your hands which you could have shaped any way you wanted. Why then did you not give enough care that he might grow up a good child who could have pleased your heart and God's?

We do not deny that sometimes we come across abnormal children, as an example, Adam had both the righteous Abel and Cain the murderer. And Noah had among his children the blessed Sam and Japheth and also Ham who did not cover the nakedness of his father and brought the curse to Canaan. Likewise, Jacob had the righteous Joseph and also had his brothers who sold Joseph and lied to their father. Isaac himself had Jacob the righteous and also Esau who dared to sell his birth right for a pottage of lentil.

This, however, does not mean that you leave your child to become corrupt and say: "I am just like our father Isaac whose son Esau was daring killer." This cannot be an excuse, for your circumstances and those of your child are

perhaps sharply different from those of Isaac and Esau. But if you had tried to the best of your ability to help your child build his spiritual life and work for his eternal future and despite your efforts he slipped into corruption under circumstances out of your control, then and only then, you may have an excuse.

Marriage is a responsibility before God:

So long as parents have a responsibility before God to bring up their children properly and to set through out their lives a good example, marriage, without a doubt, becomes a responsibility.

Marriage is not just a relationship between a man and woman but is rather a responsibility which requires fitness and credentials for fatherhood and motherhood.

A question that needs to be answered is, "Is the man, who proposes to marry, fit to be a father properly bringing up children and setting a good example? And is the woman fit to be a mother, properly bringing up children and setting a good example? And are they both fit to be ideal spouses, building a holy home without quarrels or disputes or wrong doing which may stumble the children?"

There is no doubt that motherhood and fatherhood require certain credentials such as spiritual and mental maturity and proper understanding of parental duties and of the psychology of children and the ability to bring them up in a sound manner.

It is amazing to see a young man who proposes to a young woman confine his thoughts to one point only and that is whether she could be the good companion able to please him throughout his life or not, with no regard to her abilities as a mother. The same applies to young women considering young men as future husbands.

This results in people having children without any ability to properly bring them up. Then if a child makes a mistake, he will face beating, screams and curses and will be accused of mutiny and disobedience. But, what about parental duties and obligations? They are apparently non-existent, with parents only insisting on the Fifth Commandment as a source of absolute powers and rights.

Parenthood is a responsibility and a duty, and not just powers, it is caring, love and compassion, a continuous effort and sacrifice to bring up healthy and good children.

Remember **the mother of Samuel the Prophet** who brought up her child in the fear of God and dedicated him to the altar and said the beautiful verse: *"For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD..."* (1 Sam. 1:27-28).

We also remember with admiration **the mother of St. Timothy** about whom St. Paul said to him, *"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."* (2 Tim. 1:5).

Again with lots of admiration we mention **the mother of St. Augustine, Saint Monica**, who kept weeping concerning her son for twenty years beseeching the Lord for his sake and gave St. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, charge of him. So much so that this righteous Bishop said to her the son of these tears shall not perish indeed. And sure enough he repented and became a saint through the prayers and tears of his mother.

We mention too with all respect and glory **the mothers of the righteous martyrs** who brought up their children in the love of God and encouraged them to die for the Lord's sake. Of those mothers, some witnessed the martyrdom of their children even on their laps. These saints and mothers enjoyed an overwhelming spirituality that prevailed over their maternal compassion.

Of the great examples in motherhood is **the mother of Moses the prophet**. How deep was her spiritual effect on her son despite the short years (of his childhood) which he spent with her! How long did Moses actually stay with his mother? She actually received him from Pharaoh's daughter as a baby, and he stayed with her until she weaned him and he grew up a bit and was able to walk and then she returned him to the daughter of Pharaoh to be her son.

But this religious and amazing mother was able in just a few years to fill her son with all the religious principles and to plant in him all the roots of faith. So, the forty years which Moses spent in the Palace of Pharaoh - with all

pagan worship around - could not strip him of his solid faith which he had received from his mother in his childhood. It was such a short period which he lived with his mother but again it was of a special depth which helped him take the first step toward his spiritual leadership which was to come.

And now, how about you mothers nowadays? How many years did your child spend under your care or rather how many tens of years? I see you some twenty years after their birth, weeping, feeling sorry for their ill manners and fierce nature!!

Through all those years which they spent with you, what kind of spiritual instructions did he receive from you, especially when they were like a soft dough in your hands?! Let us hope that you take a good example from the mother of Moses and the other holy mothers so that you learn about your real spiritual duties as a mother.

And before you ask your child's obedience of the Fifth Commandment, we would like to ask you what kind of spiritual preparation have you done to your child to make of him a good person who cares to carry out this Commandment and other Commandments as well?

What I say to the mothers I also say to the fathers. And let us put before us the story of Eli the priest who did not bring up his children in the fear of God. And let us consider the ill fate which he had to face because of his negligence (1 Sam. 3:10-14;4:18).

SPIRITUAL WORK AT HOME

Fathers and mothers, what is the spiritual work you do at your holy homes for yourselves and for your children?

Do your practice family prayers in which all the household meet and pray so that your children may get used to prayers from early on, or at least do you regularly pray for your children?

Do you celebrate Masses and make offerings for your children's sake? Look at Job and what he did in the Old Testament. He regularly made burnt offerings for his children's sake according to their number for he said: *"It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus Job did regularly* (Job 1:5).

Do you read the Bible and explain the stories to your children and make them learn the verses by heart? Here is what the Lord told us regarding His Commandments: *"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."* (Deut. 6:6-7).

So who among you carries out this Commandment at home? One day, a friend of mine pointed out a young man and told me that he came from a good family. He said: "I remember him since he was a little boy. **His mother was a saintly woman always bringing him with his two brothers to Church and kneeling with her three children before the altar with great**

reverence. Now, many years later, the child has become a young man, but I have never forgotten the old scene of his blessed mother and her three children kneeling together with all respect before the altar..." Undoubtedly, bringing up children in a spiritual environment has a very favourable effect on them especially in a Christian home where love, peace, and good example reign.

BODILY AND NON SPIRITUAL COMPASSION!

A common parental mistake is showing compassion towards bodily matters and not towards spiritual matters.

For example When fasting period comes, the children hear their parents say: "Never mind fasting lest you feel weak" but what about their spiritual health? The latter doesn't seem to matter a bit in the bringing up of children! What is important to the parents appears to be the desire to see their children get fatter and bigger as if their primary goal is to build bodies or as if they are parents of bodies only and not of whole persons having body and spirit.

Would it not be nice when fast begins to hear the mother tell her children: "It is not appropriate kids to have this fast pass by without making some spiritual gains. We have to subject our bodies so that our spirits may live and grow. For it is not by bread alone that man lives". Here, the children would look to their mother with great respect and say: "Our mother is indeed a saint". But if their mother ordered them not to fast and their father also concurred, then what message would children receive other than the fact that their parents are

far from leading a spiritual life and that their main concern is concentrated on the body, its shape and growth.

It is a terrible sin that a child forms a bad opinion of his parents and does not think high of them in his heart. But, the main reason for this is nothing but the stumbling block he meets in the manner his parents live and think.

Why can't fathers and mothers think spiritually? Would it not be nice if a father sees his child not growing spiritually, to tell him: "Son, I feel that you are not advancing spiritually as you should. Why don't you read this book on the saints which I had previously read and make good use of ", or, "Come son, let us pray together."

It is indeed strange to see many religious youths find their parents obstacles in the way of their spiritual growth and a stumbling block in their way to know God. They interrupt their prayers, their fasts and their desire to attend spiritual gatherings, and moreover they criticise them if they abstain from certain worldly pleasures which do not agree with their conscience.

Apparently these parents think that in as much as these pleasures are harmless to them, they will not affect their children as well, thus forgetting the differences in age and way of life.

I do not know then how will these parents give (on the last day) an account before God of the spiritual lives of their children?!

PARENTS AND CONSECRATION

Whenever a child wishes to consecrate him or herself to serve the Lord, they will find the parents the first to stand in the way as if consecration is a passage to prison or capital punishment. For example, **all the mother wants to see is her daughter getting married and settled in a nice home. But if she wanted to consecrate herself to the Lord, it would be like a disaster.** The mother would then start pressing on her by reasoning or by tears or threats as by saying: "Your mother would die if you did that, my blood pressure is already up, please be kind to your mother. This way you will kill me etc." All this happens because of a blessed spiritual tendency which needs wisdom and not a fight to settle. Matters will usually get worse if a man proposes to the young lady, at which point she will have to suffer patiently by playing the good host to please her mother.

In this circumstance, **the only rejected fiance is Christ Himself** about whom the apostle Paul said *for I have betrothed you... that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ .*" (2 Cor. 11:2).

LOVE AND GENTLE TREATMENT

Fathers and mothers should lead spiritual lives to gain the due respect of their children, earning their confidence and appreciation through spiritual behaviour and not through authoritative power.

Do not believe that parenthood is a sheer authority. Not at all. Instead, it is love and compassion, it is patience and it is a big heart to which the child moves and takes refuge. It is giving up oneself. And so if it lacks compassion, it becomes a lifeless title. And if a parent chooses to rule and subdue and satisfy themselves with orders of do and don't just for the sake of affirming authority and the acknowledgment of position, then they become rulers and masters and not parents.

The kindness and compassion of fatherhood is best illustrated by the Lord as He asks us to call Him "our Father". In this the apostle John said: *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"* (1 John 3:1).

The same meaning was mentioned by David the Prophet in Psalm 103:13 as he said: *"As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him .*

The signs of your love to your children include abstaining from pressing on them, asking of them what is within their capacity and reasoning with them to carry out orders that seem odd to them. And rest reassured that by doing this, you do not lose any respect, but rather you make their obedience stem from within, from the heart, not from without by force. Look why children obey their spiritual mentors more often than their parents:

1. They trust the spirituality of their mentors and they feel that their words represent the voice of the Lord. This is the type of confidence I urge you to gain.

2. These spiritual mentors talk to them as friends with love and not with force. They do not address them in such a manner as: "This is what I demand, and that's that!"

3. They reason with them. They do not just give orders but explain ideas so they may understand the point and carry it out and a convincing word is always strong and to be obeyed regardless of its source.

4. They respect your children and the way they think. Here it is wise to remember the Egyptian saying: "Be a brother to your grown up child" that is to say, treat him as brother.

A sign of your love to your children is to give them freedom with some direction; for God Himself gives us the freedom of choice. Finally, do not force your children in matters concerning their marriage but rather advise them. It is imperative that they approve of the other person with whom they will spend the rest of their lives.

Do not force them in matters concerning their career but simply offer the advice; for each one of them has his/her tendencies which conform to his/her psychology, mentality and gifts. Give your children the freedom in their religious practices and be sure that religion is good for them and good for you, on earth and in heaven. And, do not be a stumbling block in the way of their spiritual life so as not to lose them.

CHAPTER V

THE LIMITS OF HONOURING PARENTS

To what extent should a person honour his parents? And if there are limits, what are they? To answer this question, we say: A person must honour and love his parents to the best of his ability. But his love to his parents should not conflict with other sacred matters. Therefore, his love to his parents:

1. Should not be stronger than his love to God:

In this matter the Lord spoke quite frankly and said, ***"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."*** (Matt. 10:37). Therefore, you love your father and your mother but if this love conflicts with your love to God, then you listen to the Lord's saying, ***"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."*** (Luke 14:26). This, of course, would be the case if your parents tried to get you away from the Lord's path or if they are against God or God's work. So, for God's sake and His love, you must put aside all other love. You may leave your father, your mother and your relatives all together. About this the Lord says, ***"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."*** (Mark 10:29-30).

The love of God should be placed over and above any other love. And loving the parents should be contained in the love of God. It is inappropriate to put the love of a father above that of God or to break one of God's Commandments just to be nice to a father nor is it appropriate to be an accomplice in his wrong doing. About this we shall give examples from the Holy Bible and from the history of the Church:

The righteous Jonathan reprimands his father Saul:

We know that Jonathan loved David and that Saul the King was jealous of David and wanted to kill him and get rid of him. And to this end he had tried more than once. But Jonathan did his best to save David.

He simply saw that the truth was on one side and that his father was on the opposite side. He then stood by the truth and against his father. He refused to flatter his father but reprimanded him and fought hard to disrupt his evil plans.

Once " ... Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, disobeyed the order and did not join his father in his opinion or in his plot. On the contrary, Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant, David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?" 1 Sam. 19:1-7).

And, so did Jonathan reveal to his father his sin against David and indeed praised David before him, without fear, thus convincing him to back off his plans and thus David lived.

And Jonathan made a covenant with David (knowing that his father hated him) and agreed with him on a secret plan to save him from his father and defended David before his father. Then Saul's anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him, *"You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"* (1 Sam. 20:30).

But Jonathan stood unshaken facing his father's anger and attacked his father's decisions another time till he made his father outraged and on the brink of killing him.

About this the Bible says: *"And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, 'Why should he be killed? What has he done?'"* Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David. *So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food."* (1 Sam. 20:32-34).

And Jonathan went to tell David and saved his life *"and they kissed each other and wept together."* (1 Sam. 20:41), and Jonathan told David *"Go in peace"*.

Thus, the righteous Jonathan pointed out to his father his mistakes and reprimanded him for his decisions defending David with great courage exposing himself to Saul's anger

and outrage. He then did his best to spoil his father's plans and saved David's life.

Can we then say that according to the Fifth Commandment, Jonathan should have cooperated with his father in the killing of David, or at least should have kept silent without any opposition?! Absolutely not! For if he did - through misunderstanding of the Commandment - he would have sinned against God, against David, against himself and against Saul, his father.

King Solomon and His Mother:

Another example from the Bible is what happened between King Solomon and his mother. His mother came to him and he received her with all respect. He arose to meet her, bowed before her and made her sit on his right. Then she said: *"I am making one small request of you, do not refuse me"*. And the King said to her: *"Ask my mother, for I will not refuse you"* But, she made a request that was against the law. She wanted Abishag the Shunamite be given to Adonijah his brother as a wife. But Abishag was considered as a wife to their father David.

But despite the great respect which the King showed to his mother, he did not honour her request on Adonijah's behalf, instead he ordered him to be killed. And so said Solomon *"...if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life. Now, therefore, as the Lord lives... surely Adonijah will be put to death today."* (1 Kin. 2:19-24).

SAINT DEMIANA AND HER FATHER:

Marcos, the father of this great Saint, was the Governor of Borollos and Zaafaran in the days of Diocletian the atheist king. Under pressure from the king, the Governor offered incense to idols. When the Governor returned to his state and his daughter learned of his action, she angrily went to him and strongly criticised him and told him he could no longer be her father and that it could have been a lot better if she had heard of his death. Owing to this strong criticism, her father's conscience was awakened and he went right back to Diocletian and confessed of Christ as a King and so died as a martyr thereby joining the multitude of Saints.

And so, Demiana's criticism to her father could not have possibly been breaking of the Fifth Commandment but rather an act of saving her father's eternal life.

And as said before, honouring parents should not contradict with God's love. Another point is:

2. Preservation of marital rights:

The bible says: *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* (Gen. 2:24), (Matt. 19:5) and (Eph. 5:31).

So it is not appropriate that a man neglects his wife to honour his parents. I always advise, for the sake of preserving the new home that all newly wed should live independently and away from friction with the in-laws.

The mother who likes to have her son continue to be with her in her own home after he gets married, is definitely breaking the Commandment which says: "*A man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife*".

It is not right for the mother - whose son decides to live independently - to call her son ungrateful and to accuse him of forgetting about her. A wise mother is one who encourages her children to be attached to their spouses.

If a woman, after a fight with her husband, decides to return to her parent's house to, her wise mother should say: "Your place, my daughter, is not here but there, with your husband - return to him and make up, for the Bible orders you to leave your father and your mother and attach yourself to your husband. The false compassion which mothers show at times to their daughters while receiving them and encouraging them to leave their husbands is but one of the major causes of deterioration of marital relations.

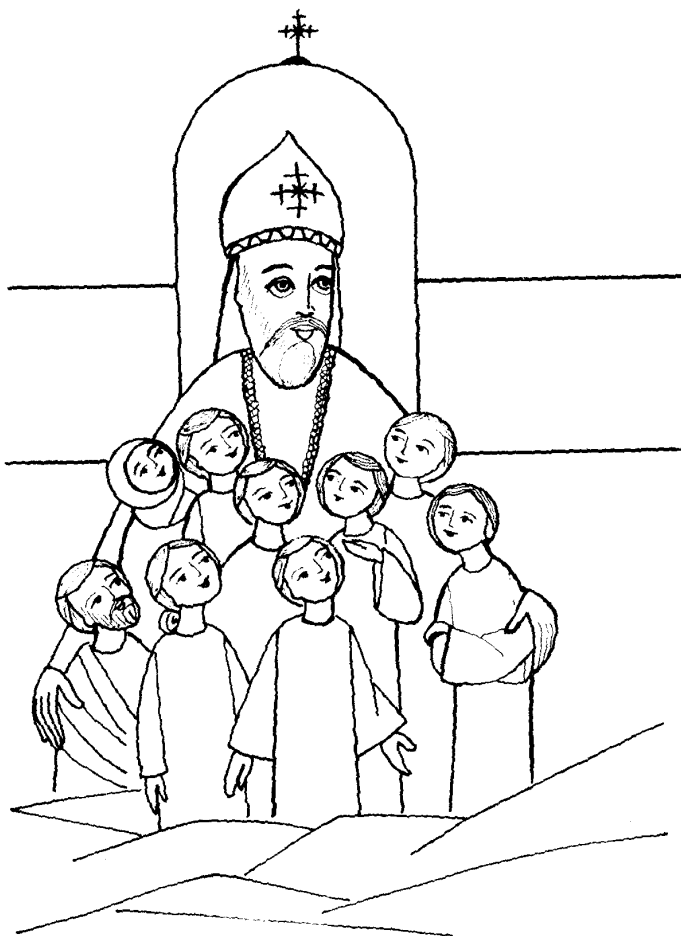
Likewise, if a man loves his mother more than his wife to the point of breaking his own home, he fails to carry out the Commandment that says: "*A man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife*".

This does not mean that the wife takes advantage of this verse in a distorted manner and cause her husband to change his heart toward his parents. A woman who tries to harden the husband's heart toward his parents is not likely to be more loved by him. This is because the love of parents is quite natural and is-so to speak-in one's own blood. The love of a spouse is an acquired one which comes with time and by living

together. Finally, a person who does not honour his parents is less likely to honour his spouse.

As to the Bible's words: "Leave his father and his mother: they apply to leaving their home not abstaining from giving them love, respect and gratitude or from supporting them within one's ability.





CHAPTER VI

OTHER FORMS OF FATHERHOOD

Relatives of the Same Level as Parents:

The Fifth Commandment does not concern parents only but also those who are at the same level as uncles and aunts and of course grandparents because they are the parents' parents. The same applies to mothers in law and fathers in law. Believe me, if every wife treated her mother in law as her own mother and if every mother in law dealt with her daughter in law as her own daughter, we resolve many conflicts

In general, you should treat older relatives and those who are higher in rank as fathers and mothers.

This applies to the older brother and the older sister who should be treated with respect.

Other types of fatherhood excluding the natural one include:

Spiritual Fatherhood and Reverence for Saints and Priests

Just like we have natural fathers and mothers, God has given us a spiritual mother: the Church, and spiritual fathers: the prophets, the apostles, the bishops, the priests and all the saints.

Examples of Spiritual fatherhood:

Abraham the father of fathers was called father to all of us, *"that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised,"* (Rom. 4:11). Despite the fact that we are not his natural offspring, *"... so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."* (Rom. 4:16).

Also when **the prophet Elisha** saw the prophet Elijah ascending to heaven, he cried out loud *"my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen."* (2 Kin. 2:12).

In the same manner, the King addressed Elisha the prophet (2 Kin. 13:14) and both Elisha and Elijah were celibate, but it was a spiritual fatherhood.

About this spiritual fatherhood, St. Paul sent Philemon a message regarding Onesimus: *"I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains,"* (Phil. 1:10). Now Saint Paul was also celibate and his fatherhood to Onesimus was undoubtedly spiritual - the same as his fatherhood to Timothy about whom he said: *"To Timothy, a true son in the faith."* (1 Tim. 1:2) , and also *"to Timothy, my beloved son."* (2 Tim. 1:2).

Regarding spiritual fatherhood, the apostle Paul told the Galatians: *"My little children, for whom I labor in birth again."* (GaL 4:19). He also addressed the Corinthians: *"...but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have*

ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord." (1 Cor. 4:14-17).

And the apostle John - a celibate too - spoke of his spiritual fatherhood and said *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin."* (1 John 2:1]). And also, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."* (3 John 1:4).

Likewise, the Didascalia mentions in the 6th chapter that the bishop is "your father after God". And the Church describes the saints in the liturgy as "our fathers the saints". Also in the Litany of the Departed, we say: "Pray for our fathers and brothers who departed... our fathers the saints and archbishops, our fathers the bishops, our fathers the priests, our fathers the monks ... "

And, because the Church always reveres fatherhood, she addresses its supreme leader the patriarch "Papa" and its bishops "Anba" which means father. This is because, the love inherent in the title is the basis of ministry and pastoral work.

Fatherhood has more profound effect than authority: Even though we acknowledge that a bishop is a master, chief, king and shepherd as mentioned in the "Didascalia", yet we become overwhelmed by another deeper feeling of love and reverence as we address him as "our father the Bishop" "our father the Metropolitan" or "our father the Patriarch". This is very much

like addressing God as "our Father" but without reducing God's authority over us.

You father bishop when you forget that you are chief and master and remember that you are a father gathering your children in your bosom as the chicken gathers her hens under its wings, then you will live in an environment of love which will firmly attach you to your children more than any form of authority.

It is your right, bishop, to order and be obeyed but it is better that you forget your authority and win the people's obedience out of love and not out of fear, seeking your blessing and approval not fearing your punishment and authority.

Through love, the bishop wins a different type of obedience, the one stemming out of confidence and satisfaction of the heart. Listen to the beautiful words of the Bible:

***"If you will be a servant to this people today,
and serve them, and speak good words to them... then
they will be your servants forever" (1 Kin. 12:7).***

The fatherhood of a pastor is not an official title but rather a state of love, caring and kindness readily felt by whoever deals with the pastor even from a distance; for the pastor represents the big heart which attracts all those who seek a solution to their problems or at least compassion in their hardships.

A true pastor enters the school of love before entering the school of service. People therefore will be his children in a

true sense regardless of his title. Even if his gifts are limited, his love will always prevail.

To be truly a master, a pastor should reign with love over the hearts of his children and should avoid taking a worldly appearance deviating to the love of power and supremacy. His objective is to win souls to the Lord and not to win their obedience and submission to his person!

Of course, it is easy for the pastor to justify his actions and say: "I am not seeking a personal honour but rather the honour of priesthood"!! **But this is a mistaken understanding of the honour of priesthood. Christ Himself did not lose any honour when he bowed and washed His disciples' feet, but rather we honoured him more when we saw His humility. Pastor! If subjugating people to your priestly authority, and putting them down under you feet make you happy, you are then a master and not a father. If you are a true father, however, you won't be able to sleep if you subdue your child and put him down and let him retire with a troubled soul! Submission is an easy matter but more superior is love and respect.**

The loving pastor convinces his children of the wisdom of his orders in the same way the Lord used to explain things. And although the road to convincing is long, yet it is stable and productive. **But the road to authority is short, dangerous, and unstable. It may make matters work for a while but it does not satisfy the heart of the subdued nor does it save the soul of the master.**

The pastor may win the submission of people without winning their respect or reverence. He may obtain their respect to his title rather than to his person. Pastors however who will always be remembered are the ones who earn the respect of people and the love of the Lord no matter how small their titles may be.

A reciprocal Love: If a pastor's ministry lost its love, then it has lost its main support. For without the love which binds the spiritual father with his children, he cannot do anything for their salvation or for the benefit of their spirit.

Through love, they open their hearts to him and he knows their spiritual needs and so his service becomes a practical one in a close relationship.

Through love, they accept his suggestions to solve their problems and this makes his service even easier. Through love, it becomes also possible for the spiritual children to accept from their spiritual father rebuke, discipline and even punishment. For they know, that he does not do this out of cruelty but rather for their own good. They then remember the saying of the Holy Bible: *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend."* (Prov. 27:6). And on the contrary, if the father does not win their love, his children will not accept his discipline.

Through love, it is also possible for spiritual children to talk openly with their father, even criticising him, knowing that he will not be upset with the truth and that his big heart is able to deal with their ideas and words and with whatever

doubts the devil may give them about him. And as the disciple said, "... *love casts out fear.*" (1 John 4:18).

Examples from the life history of Saints:

Of this love we see many examples in the lives of saints as evidenced by the continued gathering of the people around their pastors. This was the case with St. Athanasius in all his hardships and every time he was exiled. The love which St. John Chrysostom received and the love which was expressed to St. Ighantius of Antioch when the people of Rome decided to kidnap him to prevent him from being thrown to the lions.

Another example of this amazing love is what St. Paul saw in his children about whom he once said, "... *for I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.*" (Gal. 4:15).

This love was quite manifest in the emotional farewell which occurred in Miletus as the Bible says, "... *Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more.*" (Acts 20:37-38).

How deep are the words of love written in the Espistle to the Romans as St. Paul says: "*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, **who risked their own necks for my life*** " ...*Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia to Christ greet Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord ... and Stachys my beloved ... Greet the beloved Persis, who*

labored much in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." (Rom. 16: 3-16).

Many men and women are mentioned by name with words of love. Look how many times he described them as "my beloved" thanking them for their efforts for the sake of the Lord, and for his sake acknowledging how they were willing to put their necks on the line for his life.

This is the kind of amazing love which tied them together. Similarly, St. Paul used to talk to his beloved children, the bishops, as in the case of Timothy *"my beloved son."* (2 Tim. 1:2).

In the same style of love, John the apostle lived with his children. He starts his second Epistle saying *"THE ELDER, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth."* (2 John).

He starts his third epistle saying: *"The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I pray that in all respect you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers".*

This love toward spiritual children was taught to the apostles by the Lord Himself, the very compassionate and loving Christ who, because of his great love, made it possible for St. John to lean on His chest and be called *"The disciple whom Jesus loved"* and who, because of His great love, let the woman who sinned wet His feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair and about whom the Lord said that her many sins were forgiven for she loved much (Luke 7:47).

This is our beloved God Jesus who loved His own who are in the world and loved them to the very end (John 13:1). Owing to this love, He gave up Himself for their sake and because of it He appeared to them after the resurrection to strengthen and support their faith. This is the love which made the children gather around him and shout as he entered Jerusalem and the women follow him from Galilee (Matt. 27:55). and women who also mourned and lamented Him (Luke 23:27).

The Lord Jesus was quite loved and so also were His disciples and their successors the bishops. This love which binds the spiritual fathers to the children is the corner stone of the pastor's work.

If we then mention the word "father" we should mention side by side all aspects of love. For the word "father" without evident love becomes reduced only to a title without life and without meaning. For people expect from their spiritual fathers to show practical love and compassion.

Therefore, a fatherhood which asks more than gives and blames more than consoles and wounds more than heals needs to reconsider its position and strive to win the love which is not an official job but compassion, kindness, caring and giving up oneself.



Respect and Reverence for Saints

Honour is also due to the saints who slept in the Lord. These include our fathers the martyrs, the heroes who defended the faith, the saints of inner deserts, the monks and our fathers the priests.

We honour them by building churches carrying their names, by celebrating their feasts, by mentioning their names in our praises and prayers, by propagating their sweet aromatic life among people and reading it to the worshippers and by keeping their Icons in our churches and their pictures in our homes.

We also honour them by naming our children, organisations, magazines and institutes after them. We honour them also by continual remembrance of them and asking their intercession on our behalf and by caring for their bodies and bones. We honour them further by following and spreading their teachings and following their footsteps in our lives.

The Fatherhood of "Age" and Respect for the Elderly

There are those relatives who are in the same position as your father whom you have to respect and revere. There are those who are of the same age as your father whom also you have to respect.

In general, you must respect all those who are older than you. We see an example of this in the story of Job, the

righteous man. For Job had three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. There was a fourth one named Elihu. The three kept discussing matters with Job over the course of twenty eight chapters. But Elihu kept silent, hearing without uttering a word for they were older than him. When they failed in their discussion, he had to interfere... and he spoke out and said: *"I am young in years, and you are very old; Therefore I was afraid, And dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, 'Age should speak, And multitude of years should teach wisdom.' "* (Job. 32:6-7).

We can take a lesson from this behaviour, and that is: the young should keep silent in the presence of the old. He sits to listen, understand and learn. This is the case with monks where it is not permissible for the beginners among them to talk in the presence of the elderly.

It has been said: Do not volunteer with words in the presence of the elders. If an older person was asked but didn't know, it becomes necessary out of good manners-that the young does not speak even if he knew the correct answer. It is also inappropriate for the young to raise his voice while conversing with the elders, but rather address them with all respect.

About this St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy the Bishop and he was young - drawing his attention to the respect of the elderly: *"Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers."* (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

If Timothy the Bishop was supposed to treat the elderly as fathers and mothers would it not be appropriate for a lay person to do the same?!

St. Paul himself demonstrated the same degree of respect to the elderly as he said in his Epistle to the Romans: *"Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. me also."* (Rom. 16:13) and so he called Rufus, mother his mother while in fact she was considered his daughter from the spiritual point of view.

Likewise from the "age" point of view, St. Peter considered St. Mark as his son, as he said, *"... and so does Mark my son."* (1 Pet. 5:13).

The Lord has also asked us to take the last seat in wedding feasts (Luke 14:10). This principle of "the last seat" should be observed with all those who are older than us, for the Bible says *"You shall rise before the grey headed and honour the presence of an old man."* (Lev. 19:32).

It is not proper to sit while an older person stands. When you sit, you should do so in a respectful posture. It is not also proper to sit and give your back to those who are older than you.

If you happened to be walking along with an older person and he/she happened to be carrying a load, you should offer to help carry the load and so forth. You should also speak with older people with respect and also put them ahead of you in all respects.

Having said this about respect, you should also obey your spiritual father and whoever possesses knowledge and wisdom regardless of age. For there may be elders at fault (see examples in 1 Kin 2:6,9 - Job 32:9 - Joh. 8:9 - Ps. 119:100 - Ecc. 4:13), and there may be the young and wise as Joseph and Daniel and St. Athanasius.



Fatherhood of "Rank" and Respect for Teachers

The fatherhood of "Rank" and of the position of responsibility was made clear in the Holy Bible on different occasions. As a caretaker, Job said, "*I was a father to the poor,*" (Job. 29:16)

When the righteous Joseph took on the supervision over the house of Pharaoh, he said, God: "*... has made me a father to Pharaoh.*" (Gen. 45:8).

As Naaman the Syrian got uptight about washing in the river Jordan for healing,. His servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "*My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?*" (2 Kin. 5:13). So they called him 'father' because of his rank.

In the same manner David told Saul the King "*Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand!*" (1 Sam. 24:11). Therefore, expressing both a fatherhood of rank and a fatherhood of age.

In this respect, the Fifth Commandment applies to chiefs and teachers and whoever is a stewards or in the level of responsibility.

A student who does not honour or obey his teacher or is a trouble maker or breaks the school regulations, does indeed

break the Fifth Commandment. The same applies to a citizen who breaks the law of the country.

Now we can clearly see the large sphere covered by the Fifth Commandment *"Honour your father and your mother"* .

As far as the length of the days on earth, one may take this in the literal sense meaning a long life or it could be understood as eternity *"in the land of the living."* (Ps. 27:13).

**Glory be to God, now
and ever and unto the age
of ages,
Amen**



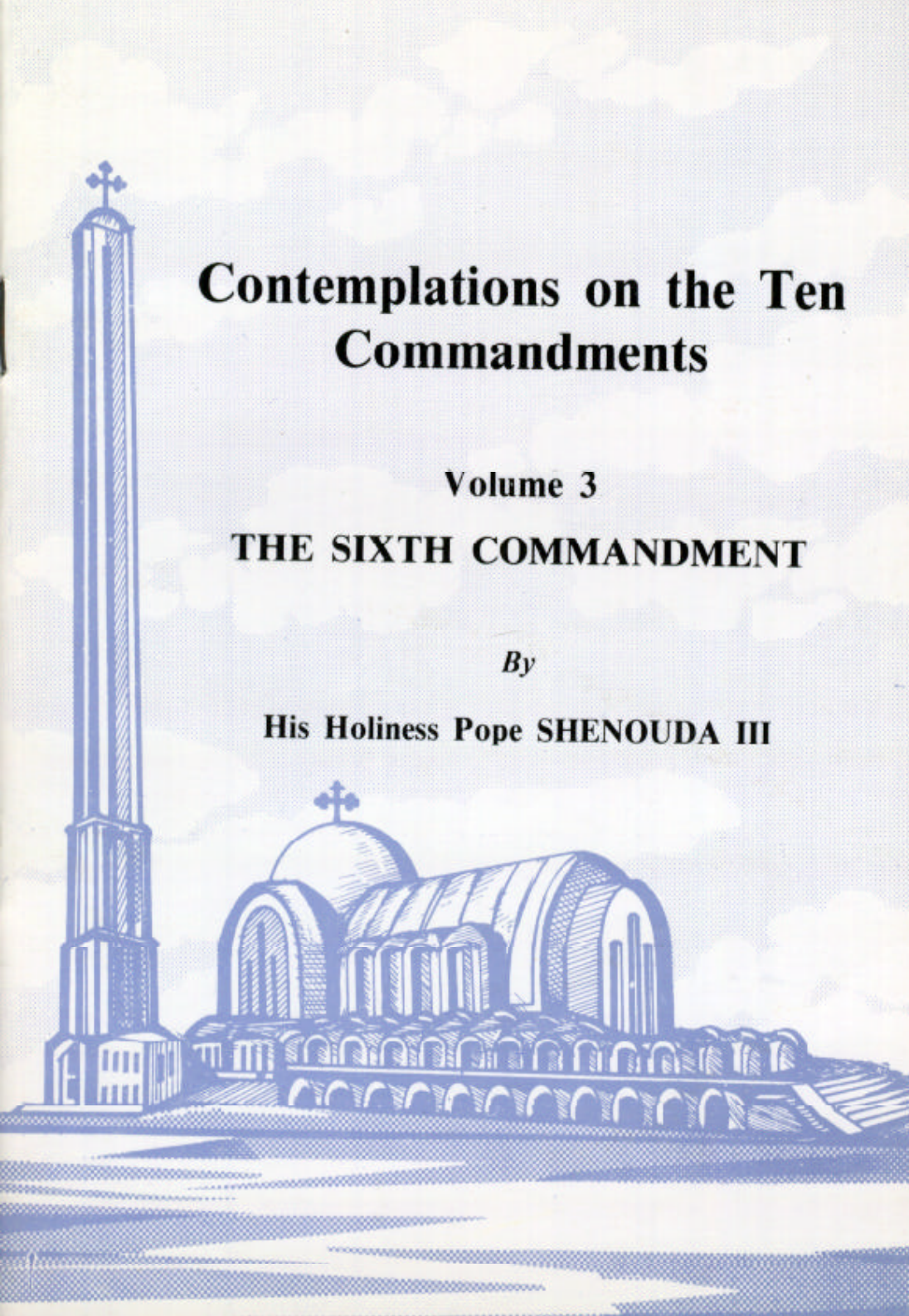
**IN
THIS BOOK**

*In the Name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
One God,
Amen*

*Honor your father and mother:
the first Commandment on
human relations, and the first
Commandment with a promise.
How should we honor our parents?
Is there a limit for that?
What are the conditions of obedience?
How could it be obedience in the Lord?
What are the forms of fatherhood?
The fatherhood of God is first,
then there are natural fatherhood,
fatherhood of the elderly,
fatherhood due to rank...etc.
These are but few of the sub-
jects dealt with in this book.
May the Lord work through it
for the benefit of your life...*

POPE SHENOUDA III





Contemplations on the Ten Commandments

Volume 3

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

By

His Holiness Pope SHENOUDA III



**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**



See of St. Mark

**Contemplations on the Ten
Commandments**

Volume 3

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

BY
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***H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark***

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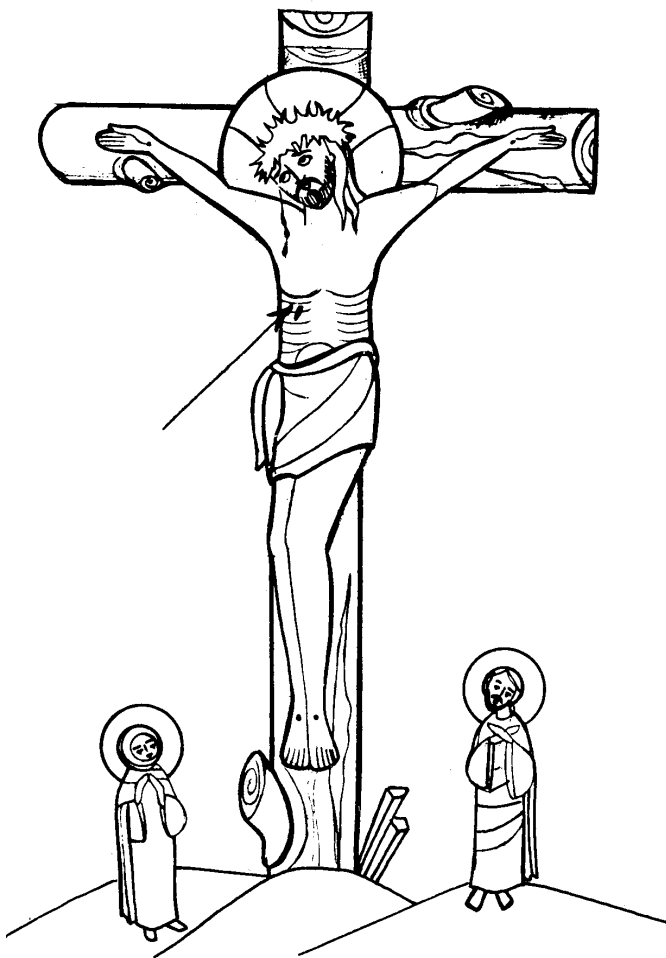
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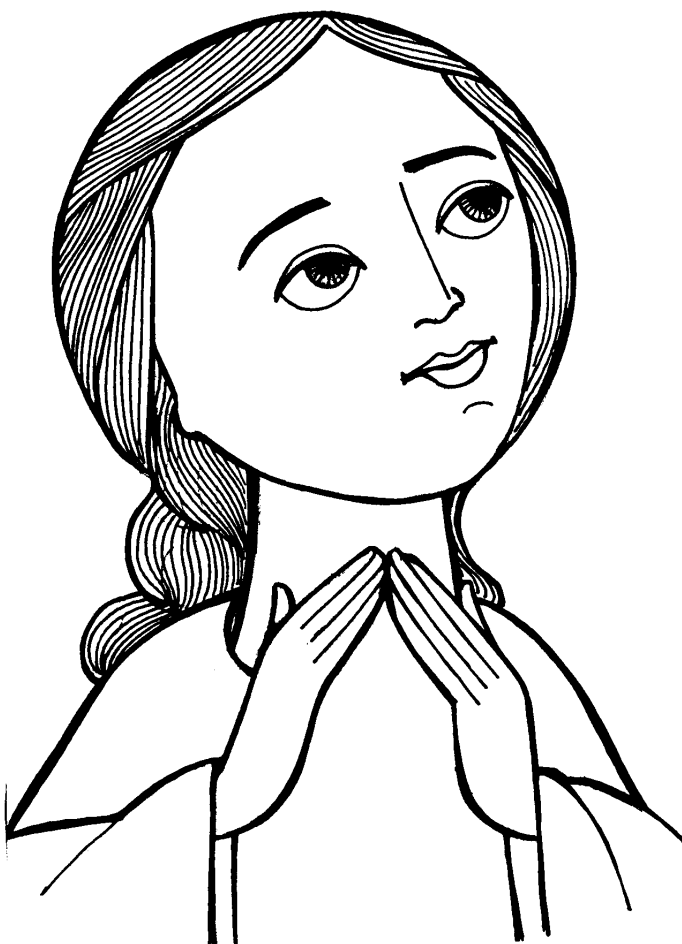
INTRODUCTION

It may well be asked “what have we to do with this commandment that prohibits killing?!”

Such persons might think that this commandment only concerns criminals and murderers while they themselves having nothing to do with it. But, God willing, we would like to point out the importance of this commandment for everyone of us. In this book, we shall examine how this commandment may affect our lives, and whether you have ever violated it since you may have done so unconsciously.

Before we start discussing this topic we would like to explore another issue, that is God completely prohibit killing, or are there certain instances of killing which are not deemed crimes or sins, allowed by God?





CHAPTER ONE

PERMISSIBLE KILLING

God said: "You shall not kill, " and yet He permits killing in certain cases. We can go further to say that God not only permits but necessitates killing in certain cases. He made killing an inevitable punishment for whoever committed any sin. It would not be an exaggeration to say that whoever violated any of the first seven Commandments was punished by being put to death.

For example, someone violating the Seventh Commandment that says: "*You shall not commit adultery*", was to be punished, for the Scripture necessitates that "both adulterer and adulteress shall be put to death. " (*Lev. 20:10-16*).

The scribes and the Pharisees were talking with our Lord Jesus Christ about this commandment when they mentioned the woman who had been found committing adultery and said: "*Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?*" (*John 8:5*).

Moreover, anyone violating the Sixth Commandment that says: "*You shall not kill*" was to be put to death whether he acted "*with premeditation against his neighbour to kill him by*

treachery " (Ex 21:14), or struck a man "so that he dies, " (Ex. 21:12). He was also put to death for indirect killing: "But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death." (Ex. 21:29).

Persons violating the Fifth Commandment was to be put to death as the law set by God says: *"And he who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death... he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. " (Ex. 21:15-17).*

Persons violating the Fourth Commandment prohibiting work on a Sabbath was to be put to death, for the Scripture says: *"Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day that person shall be cut off from among his people. " (Ex. 31:14).*

Persons violating the Third Commandment by blaspheming God's Name was to be put to death too, as the Old Testament says *"And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death." (Lev. 24:16).* Naboth of Jezreel was unjustly accused of this charge when two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, *"Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!" (1 Kin. 21:13).* Caiaphas, the High Priest, unjustly condemned our Lord Jesus Christ to death by the same charge. Then the high priest tore his clothes,

saying, *"He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!"*(Matt. 26:65).

Violating the First and Second Commandments regarding worshipping God alone was also punished by death. God ordered that all idol worshippers be killed and gotten rid of completely. He also said that, *" He who sacrifices to any god, except to the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed."*(Ex. 22:20). Elijah executed all the prophets of Baal. *(1 Kings 18:40). "... But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk"* (Deut. 13:5). Even in the case of a whole city, all its inhabitants were to be put to death since the Scripture says: " you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword; utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword. *"And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the LORD your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again"* (Deut. 13:16).

In the same way, paganism was ended, and those calling for it and practicing it, such as magicians and fortune tellers, were also put to death. We find this in the words: *"You shall not permit sorceress to live. "* (Ex. 22:18), and again in the words: *" 'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.'"* (Lev. 20:27).

Among the laws that dealt with killing was one that stated that: *"He who kidnaps a man ... shall surely be put to death."* (Ex. 21:16).

Putting to death all of those transgressors was neither considered sinful nor covered by the Sixth Commandment. On the contrary, not executing this commandment, by not putting the vicious persons to death, was considered an evil act that would upset God.

The same thing applies to idolatry and evil which the Old Testament looked upon as great dangers which threatened faith. But in Christianity, one committing these offences was neither put to death nor stoned though murderers were haunted by the saying of our Lord Jesus Christ: *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."* (Matt. 26:52).

God's Authority in Putting People to Death:

The Commandment: "You shall not kill" does not imply that God absolutely forbade putting someone to death, for God necessitated the killing of the aforementioned offenders, together with all idol worshippers, in order to protect religion itself. God allowed war in order to get rid of those idol worshippers though He Himself has to authorise it. Thus, if people started war on their own without receiving God's orders or directions to do so, that war would not to be considered in accordance with God's will.

The principle behind this is that God is the real owner of all our souls. He has the right to terminate a person's life at any time and in whatever manner He likes. If He wills them to die a natural death, or after a disease, or by fire He brings down from Heaven, or in a flood, or killed by their enemies, then He has full power to end their lives in whichever way He desires.

The State's Authority in Sentencing to Death:

The Commandment "You shall not kill" concerns individual dealings. The faithful community at that time had the right to put people to death within the framework of the law. At present, the State has the authority to execute any murderer sentenced to death without anyone saying that it has violated the Sixth Commandment, for God commands that a murderer is to be put to death by saying: *"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.(Gen. 9:6).* Our Lord Jesus Christ said to Peter: *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."* (Matt. 26:52). By putting to death those who kill, we do not contradict the Sixth Commandment, for, on the contrary, we will be executing God's commandment regarding them. Paul says: *"he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil .(Rom. 13:4).*

This is true of the authority of the State, but it does not apply to personal dealings.

Killing Animals and Insects:

Some sensitive persons applied the Sixth Commandment even to insects and animals!! Up till now there are many Brahmans in India whose conscience tortures them if they tread on any insect in the street and kill it. Yet, the Commandment: "You shall not kill" does not say that you should not kill insects, for there are some harmful insects such as scorpions which may kill man himself, and which God gave us the power to step on. Moreover, there are some insects, such as cotton worms, that destroy man's essential requirements. Man's life is more precious to God and to people than that of insects. Therefore, it is not only right but even mandatory for us to kill insects in order to protect man whom God created in His own image.

No one should feel bad about killing an insect and there are even signboards set up by medical care centers to urge people to kill flies before they themselves may get killed by them. The life of an insect is not as important as that of man who bears the image of God, and for whom our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross.

Thus, we should kill insects and savage animals, not only to protect ourselves from any harm they may cause us, but also to benefit by such an act in a scientific way. At the faculties of Medicine, - Pharmacology, and Science, frogs, rabbits and other living creatures are dissected for educational and scientific purposes. This is done for the benefit of all humanity without it being considered wrong.

Besides benefiting by the slaughter of animals in a scientific way, God allowed us to slaughter them after the Flood when He

said: *"Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. (Gen. 9:3).*

Animal Welfare:

I would like to warn you that, although God gave us power over animals, and although He authorised us to kill them to defend ourselves against any harm they might cause us, it would be a fatal mistake to use this authority in a wrong way. We should not kill animals, especially harmless pets, torture them for any reason, nor show them any cruelty. When a little kid plays with a cat and enjoys torturing it, our behaviour should be to teach him that it is wrong to do so and that there is no reason for him to behave so cruelly. That is why Animal Welfare Societies are founded to call for mercy on animals, and to take care of them at times of illness and discomfort. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine even has the responsibility of treating animals when they are sick and of taking care of them.

God Himself advises us to take care of animals and to have mercy on them the reason being that any person showing mercy to animals and causing them no harm would end up showing mercy to his fellow man. A person with a sensitive and kind heart cannot hurt any man nor any animal. The Bible says: *"A righteous man regards the life of his animal. (Prov. 12:10).*

There are many commandments urging people to take care of animals. In Deuteronomy, God says: *" You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." (Deut. 22:10).* By saying this, God means that we should be merciful to a donkey whose strength is less than that of an ox. Regarding the insistence of

the Pharisees on keeping the Sabbath, He wonders, saying: "*What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? (Matt. 12:11).* Jacob's mercy for his flocks and herds is shown in his order not to overdrive them on the road. (*Gen. 33:13*). God also says: "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.* " (*Deut. 25:4*).

One instance of our Lord Jesus Christ's mercy towards animals was evident during his journey to Jerusalem when He alternately rode on a female ass and a male ass in order to give each a rest while on 'the road'. That is our merciful God who feeds little doves that fly in the sky and brings them their food without having to gather or to harvest it; and who "*...gives to the beast its food and to the young ravens that cry.* " (*Ps. 147:9*). He is our All-knowing God who said about the two sparrows that: "*Not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.* " (*Matt. 10:29*). God's mercy towards animals is also evident in His commandment to release animals on the Sabbath: "*...you shall do no work: you, nor your son, ...nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle.* " (*Deut. 5:14*).

You must release your animal and not kill it by making it do too much work with no rest, for if you kill it, you will be a loser, and you will prove that you are far from mercy. If the Commandment, "You shall not kill" is to be applied to animals and insects, it must be wisely applied.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT

In every sin we commit, we hurt someone in a certain way. But if we kill a man, we destroy him completely and put an end to his existence on earth. Killing is a sin that affects man's life, and its danger lies in the fact that man's life is not his own, but it is owned by God who is the only One who controls people's destinies. Nobody may replace Him in this regard nor control people's destinies. It is God alone who holds the keys of life and death.

Besides, the sin of murder is grave because it is an irreversible act. One may probably compensate any man for a loss one has caused him. One may also apologise to someone for any insult one has dealt him thus restoring him his dignity. But killing can never be rectified since one cannot restore the life one takes away. The sin of murder becomes more grave when one kills a man and ends his life before he repents, for this deprives him of any chance to be prepared for his eternal life. He is killed both spiritually and physically, now and forever, and consequently he will be thrown into hell. What an evil act one would have done?! Moreover, the killer becomes a self-killer since the sin he commits is liable to lead him to his own perdition.

All this is true of killing evil people. How about killing a good person?! It is also considered to be very grave because it means a loss of benefits likely to be obtained from him as a member of society. Therefore, the more useful the person killed, the greater the responsibility the killer bears. Killing a man is a one crime and depriving his society of any benefit such a person could render it, is another crime. The weight of this crime depends upon the number of people benefiting from him and how great the benefit is. Killing prophets and messengers is a great crime and that is why our Lord Jesus Christ blamed Jerusalem as it: *"kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her, "* (Matt. 23:37), and: *"On you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zachariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar."* (Matt. 23:35). The words "all the blood of the righteous" show us the danger of shedding the blood of just men. When Abel was killed, God said to Cain: *"What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."* (Gen. 4:10). Abel never complained, but heavenly justice claimed its rights because God takes revenge on those who shed blood.

How just the Lord God is! He not only avenged Abel, but when the malicious Cain said to God: *"You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground... and anyone who finds me will kill me, "* God answered him, saying: *"Whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."* and the Lord set a mark on Cain lest anyone finding him should kill him. (Gen. 4:14&15). This must be considered deeply so that no one may kill an evil person and think that he has committed no crime by doing so. Killing in general is a very grave crime whether the person who is killed is righteous or evil. However,

killing a righteous person is even worse for there is no reason for killing him. Besides, we not only have here a crime of murder but also one of injustice, for it deprives society of the benefits that could be obtained from him. In addition there is also the crime of disrespect towards saints and that of not fearing God ... etc.

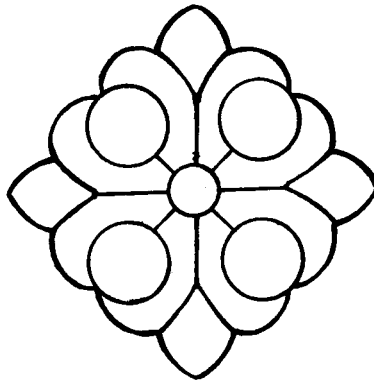
God does not leave blood shed without avenging it. Even in the case of righteous persons who killed others, God took revenge on them. David was not pardoned by God for the murder he had committed but God punished him by forbidding him to build the Temple, and by taking away this great honour from him because his hands had previously been smeared with blood. David mentioned this when he said: *" but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight.' (1 Chr. 22:8).*

God did this with David whom He loved. He said: "I tested David's heart, and found it in accordance with Mine. " The sage Solomon prayed in David's name saying: "For the sake of David, Your slave, do not turn Your face away from me, " and God would perform many good deeds saying every time: "For the sake of David My slave. " Yet because of killing, David himself was prevented from building the temple which was built later on by Solomon who reigned in peace. God not only did this, but He also let blood be shed in David's own home, when a great war sprang between him and his son Absalom. Many were killed during that war and God avenged them.

Thus, those who take revenge for their murdered ones are only hurrying things up, and burdening themselves with an unnecessary task.

" 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. (Rom. 12:19). God never leaves anybody killed without taking revenge. Even those who had been slain for the love of God's word and for the truth they upheld were promised by the holy Lord that He would sit in judgment, and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"(Rev. 6.-10).

There are some miserable persons who try to give themselves excuses for any blood they have shed. People like Pilate kept washing their hands over and over again from blood, but it never came off them despite all the excuses they gave to themselves. Pilate himself took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying: "I am not responsible for the death of this man!" Yet the blood of that Man haunted him till the end of his life and forever.



CHAPTER THREE

KINDS OF MURDER

The commandment "You shall not kill" can be interpreted in various ways. When God says: "You shall not kill" He means that you should neither kill others nor kill yourself. What applies to yourself applies also to others. And He means by that all kinds of murder. A person may sin by deed, by thought, through his senses, or verbally, and all this can be applied to the crime of murder. There is murder by thought, by intention, and by a whim of the heart. Celestial law is broader than civil law. Crime legislation punish for an actual crime and for a murder attempt, but they do not punish for a mere idea haunting one's mind, or for a whim of the heart. A man harbouring these ideas cannot be judged on earth, but God will definitely judge him.

There is partial and impartial killing, physical and spiritual killing, character defamation, direct and indirect killing, killing by one person, and killing in collaboration. There is also killing of the spirit that throws it into hell although the body may seem unaffected.

War and Killing:

Does war come under the Sixth commandment which forbids killing? We hereby answer by saying that if God prohibited

killing individuals, then it is more logical to prohibit killing groups. Therefore, the use of destructive weapons is against the Sixth Commandment. Indeed, it is a shame that man uses his talents, knowledge, brain, and intelligence for the destruction, killing, and hurt of his fellow man, whereas, if those millions and millions of dollars spent on wars otherwise would be spent for the welfare of humanity, this could result in great benefits.

If war is looked upon as something bad that God forbids except when He Himself commands, authorises or calls for it, how much more aggressive war is when domination and injustice are its goals.

God allows man to defend himself, and if war is merely for self-defence, or to protect the whole community, God agrees to it as a protection for individuals in a community. Generally speaking, war is detested by God who wishes love and peace to prevail amongst His people. No doubt, hostile war comes under the Sixth Commandment. That is why international courts were formed after World War II in order to try "war criminals" because people found out that some leaders were unjust to all humanity since they were responsible for the war that caused the death of a great number of people thus ignoring God's commandment: "You shall not kill. "

For all that, governments have issued regulations and laws in order to decrease the danger of killing individuals and to do away with the savagery and cruelty of war. There are inhumane, fatal, distorting, and destructive weapons in wars. There are also other laws prohibiting any attacks on hospitals, civilians, and humanitarian institutions, as well as laws for the

preservation and protection of civilian hostages. A humanitarian principle during wars is not to harm children, women, places of worship , priests, monks, and sick and old people.

This is all done to relieve the world of some of the bad results of war which is nothing but a murderous process that everyone wishes to avoid. Duels that were so frequent during the Middle Ages and which lasted until a recent time in some countries are also considered a sort of war. Two rivals would stand to fence with swords or pistols, and most likely one of them would be killed by his adversary while witnesses watched the whole encounter. What looks strange here is that the one who killed was looked upon by the community as a chivalrous, strong, respectable, and fearful man, while in fact he was nothing but a villain who killed his brother in public and violated the Sixth Commandment in front of some witnesses.

Killing by Sterilisation:

Sterilisation is an operation which prevents man from having any future offspring and consequently it signifies the inherent termination of his reproduction. This operation was sometimes performed on Negros and slaves in some countries in order to put an end to their reproductive ability. Sometimes, castration was used instead of sterilisation and it led to the same results. This is an example of the civilised nations unjust treatment of the uncivilised ones and how they tried to conquer them by means of war, killing, sterilisation or castration which are against what the Sixth Commandment calls for. We are also

aware that through this same process the Australian aborigines were gradually terminated by the end of the last century.

Abortion:

Abortion is a form of murdering a living creature which, although not yet born, has a soul that we do not have the authority to dispose of. There are two kinds of abortion: intentional, and unintentional. Intentional abortion is performed when a woman or her family or friends decide to get rid of the foetus by medical methods. The doctor who does it, is partially responsible for it and is deemed an essential partner in this incidence of killing. Abortion may also be executed by other methods very well known to women. In this case the responsibility falls very clearly on the woman who does it. Yet, the aim behind abortion determines the weight of responsibility, for it may be considered a crime committed to hide another crime.

Those helping in the performance of abortion may think they have done something proper, such as preventing a scandal, but actually they just participate in a crime of murder. A woman may have an abortion because she is not willing to give birth to children, but this does not make her innocent of the crime of murder. Abortion may also be done to protect the mother if delivery threatens her life. Doctors may kill the foetus to rescue the mother, and they excuse themselves for doing so by saying that they sacrifice one soul to save another. Thus, the question here is being discussed to show how great the responsibility may be.

An unintentional miscarriage may happen when a mother is so negligent that she loses her baby through exhausting herself. An employer may make a pregnant employee work so much that she ends up having a miscarriage. Such an employer will be responsible and will have violated the Sixth Commandment in this respect. A husband may bear this same responsibility if he does not care about the health of his pregnant wife thus causing her to miscarry.

Killing by Intention and by Thought:

Someone may not actually kill, but may think of killing. He may meditate on how to kill someone, or how to urge others to kill him. He may end up imagining that person already killed in front of him which makes him feel happy and satisfied. This is killing by intention and has its spiritual responsibility, exactly like committing adultery by mere thought, or imagining stealing ... etc.

Man is liable for the mere thought of killing, even if he never actually intends to perform the act of killing. Mere thinking of killing does not go along with love, tolerance and good wishes for other fellow men. A man may not think of killing another man, but nevertheless, he may wish to see him dead and may be happy if he dies, for he really wishes to see him dead whether through him or by others, or he may wish that God deprive him of his life. By doing so, he is considered to have sinned in his heart through intention.

Hatred is a kind of murder. The disciple John says: *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. "* (1 John 3:15). Would we

dare after that to say that we have nothing to do with the Sixth Commandment, or that it concerns only criminals, and killers? Our Lord Jesus Christ considered anger as a part of the crime of killing when He said in His teaching on the mountainside: *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. "* (Matt. 5:21&22).

Anyway, anger and hatred are two negative sides, while the commandment of "You shall not kill" is a positive thing that can lead a person to love. Thus if you love your brother, you neither can kill nor think of killing, hurting, or even offending him.

Moral Killing:

Killing is not only that of a physical nature, but there is moral killing that affects man's name. If one ruins a man's reputation, slanders him or discredits him amidst people, this is called moral killing. If one criticised the personality of someone with the intention of slandering him in public and with the result that he was disgraced before people, this simply would be killing that person morally. We even have a colloquial expression which says that a person's personality has been put an end to if someone damages his reputation. Unfair criticism is one kind of this form of killing.

There is also killing or destruction of personality such as when a cruel father ruins his son's personality to the extent that he

grows up so helpless and weak that he cannot confront important issues. Such behaviour may also be shown by a cruel husband who treats his wife in this same way, or an employer who treats his employees in a similar way. This takes place through ill-treatment, frustration, or discouragement, or through giving someone the feeling that one is good for nothing, that one is helpless and a failure in all fields. Those people holding this authority never give others the chance to develop their personality, but, on the contrary, make them have such a low morale that they end up as failures and collapse. All this is moral killing.

Partial Killing:

Under partial killing we may list bodily or physical aggression, beating, hurting, and torture. Thus, someone may hit someone else causing him a permanent deformity. He may cause him to lose an eye, may break one of his legs, or may disfigure his face. This is all partial killing since one part of the human being is put an end.

Generally speaking, beating is considered a form of killing. In Upper Egypt, when someone says: "so and so killed" he means: "so and so beat me." Even in Arabic we say: "They killed each other" meaning "They fought, or hit each other." So, beating is included in this commandment whether it is severe beating that leads to death or to a deformity, or just mere and simple beating. The Bible forbids such beating. We normally conclude that every aggression has something to do with the Sixth Commandment, even if it were simply just hurting someone's feelings. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ, in His

sermon on the mount, when He was discussing the commandment of *"You shall not kill"* said that *"Whoever says to his brother. , 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council "* (Matt. 5:22).

Practically speaking, anyone offending another is just causing him to be indirectly killed through a destructive operation to his body cells and blood corpuscles.



CHAPTER FOUR

INDIRECT KILLING

Annoyance:

There is a sort of indirect murder such as that of nerve-wrecking and teasing. For instance you may disturb and tease someone to the extent that you wreck his nerves, and make him lose control and become very upset. He may thus have bad thoughts which may lead to deep sorrow, pain, vexation, irritation, sickness, high blood pressure, or any other disease. He may stay in bed and may even die as a result of what people have done to him. You may pretend to sympathise with him or even attend his funeral and console his family while actually you are the one who killed him and are responsible for his death.

Do you think, brother, that killing is just when you stab someone with a knife, or shoot him with a pistol. No, for mere deadly words, or destructive behaviour that is full of contempt and despising, or an action combining insult and humiliation, may make someone very emotionally disturbed. Although such a one person may not be killed immediately, this would happen after a while, for such words would slowly but surely kill him though the cause may not be known to man but is well known to God. This too is considered a violation of the Sixth

Commandment because from the exclusive scientific point of view, bad, humiliating and teasing words cause the destruction of a human body and are a sort of indirect killing. Look deep, brother, inside yourself how many persons you have indirectly killed in such a way, how many persons you have teased, humiliated, mocked or made subject to laughter, mockery and fun, and how many persons you upset, or caused to blush while talking with you. You are being accused of violating the Sixth Commandment because of doing all this.

One of the phrases mentioned in the Old Testament shows that severe words are a form of killing. Thus it says: *"Their tongue is an arrow shot out. " (Jer. 9:8); and also " The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords." (Ps. 55:21).*

Injustice is listed under this kind of killing, because the one who wrongs others forgets that "God gives justice to the wronged." This includes all kinds of cruelty that someone treats others with. The first effect of injustice and cruelty is lowering the morale of a person. They degenerate his psychological status as well as his ideals.

Exploitation of Employees as Murder:

The Sixth Commandment also applies to a rich individual who exploits workers and gives them very little wages, not sufficient for their food. Such an individual kills the persons he hires because he knows very well that the wages he pays

them are not sufficient for them and, consequently, they starve, while he himself cares nothing and has no mercy on them.

The Bible says: *"Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."* (James 5:4). The worker or employee whose rights you deny or postpone and whose salary increase, promotion, or award you ignore, thus making him unable to meet the essential requirements of his life, that person is simply killed by you, and you will end up being accused by God for all this. The Holy Bible blames the person who does not pay his employees on time saying: *"The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. "* (Lev. 19:13), and also: *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it,, lest he cry out to the Lord, and it be sin to you. "* (Deut. 24:14&15). Also, taking employment from anybody without serious reasons is a form of indirect killing. Hindering the hiring of someone applying for a job is also considered killing, for if you stand in the way of anyone trying to earn a living in order to support himself and his family, you practically kill him, or force him to commit a crime. This is a form of killing his soul, or pushing him to death as it is an act of killing his body.

Loans, Usury, and Pledges:

Another kind of indirect killing prohibited by heavenly laws is depriving people of their essential living requirements. God prohibits usury when dealing with the poor and says: *"If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a money lender to him; you shall not charge him interest."* (Ex. 22:25), and also: *"You shall not ... take a widow's garment as a pledge."* (Deut. 24:17).

Regarding those requirements, God also says: *"No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes one's living in pledge. "* (Deut. 24:6). The words "takes one's living in pledge" are quite a proof that this is a form of killing. Therefore one should never take in pledge the tools and instruments of any worker because if he does, he would be hindering him from earning his living, and would thus be taking his life in pledge.

Refrain From Giving Help:

Killing is not only putting an end to someone else's life, but if a man faces death, and you do not give him a hand to save him you are practically killing him, and so you fall under the judgment of the Sixth Commandment. The fine words of the Holy Bible in this regard say: *"Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard. "* (Prov. 21:13). For example, when some countries have an abundance of wheat yet do not help poor countries like India where the inhabitants die of hunger or eat tree leaves, doubtlessly, we feel that those rich countries actually help the killing of a group of

human beings by not offering them the support they need, and the Holy Bible says: *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. "* (James 4:17).

What we previously said about denying giving food to those who need it, can also be said about denying them medicine and medical treatment. Likewise, not giving an ear to the voice of the hungry and the sick until they die, is a clear crime of killing. Neglecting them until they get acute or dangerous disease is a form of partial killing.

Therefore, to refrain from giving charity to those in bad need is a clear violation of the Sixth Commandment. An example of this is the rich man who had no mercy on the beggar called Lazarus. (*Luke 16:19-22*).

The same applies to the priest and the Levite mentioned in the parable of the good Samaritan, for both passed by the wounded man thrown on the road giving him no assistance and leaving him to die. Perhaps they gave themselves excuses such as lack of time since their religious services, worshipping, and offering sacrifices were more important to them. But our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice. "* (*Matt. 9:13*), indicated that both the priest and the Levite did not do what they were supposed to do.

Although the wounded did not die, as the good Samaritan was sent by God to save his life, both the priest and the Levite were culpable under the Sixth Commandment. One may wonder: If the good Samaritan had not shown up to save that man, he

would have died, and God would have avenged his death, not only by penalising those who had wounded him, but also the priest and the Levite who never tried to rescue him!!

Killing by Responsibility:

One may not try to kill someone else, but he may still be accused of doing so if he is found to be the cause or the instigator of the actual killing. The Old Testament explains this in the story of the ox when it says: " If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. *"But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death."* (Ex. 21:28&29).

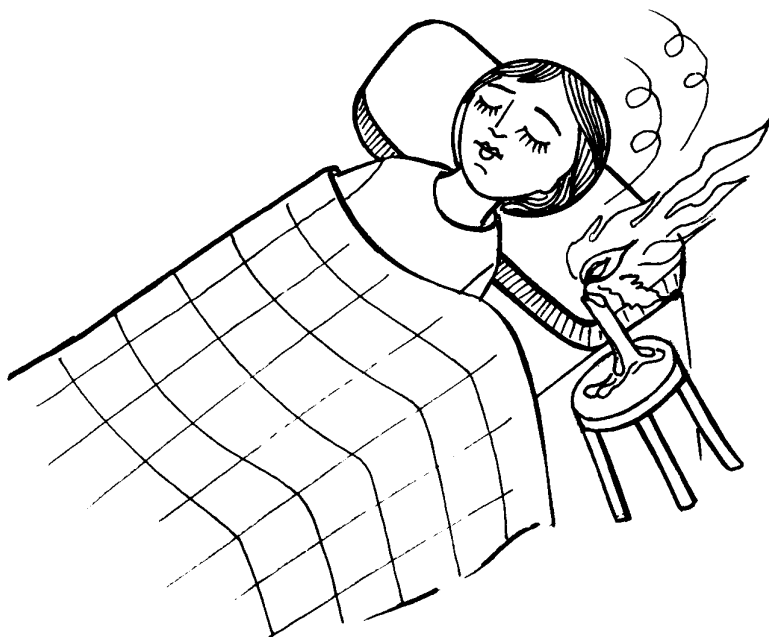
The same thing may be said about a man who owns a mad dog and leaves it loose without chaining it to prevent it from hurting or biting people. That person is deemed responsible for any harm caused by his dog or by any other similar animal. The same is true when one removes the cover of a well, or digs a well and leaves it uncovered; then *"if an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the well shall make it good. "* (Ex. 21:33&34). Moreover, if a man falls into it and dies, the owner of that well shall be accused of the loss of that man's life.

What we say of the well is also true of walls and similar items. The Holy Bible says: *"When you build a new house, then you*

shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it." (Deut. 22:8). This verse of the Bible condemns the architect who designs a bad construction that leads to the death of a human being, or who does not estimate the appropriate quantity of cement required to construct a house. If such a house falls down and some inhabitants die, he is to be condemned. Likewise, the contractor who reduces the quantity required to build a block of flats, resulting in a fragile building that falls down on the heads of the residents is also liable. If such a thing is done on purpose, then it is considered as another crime to be added to the first.

The same is true of the driver of a car who does not make sure whether his car is working properly or not. If the brakes are faulty and he hits a man, he will be considered responsible. If the car is working properly, but its owner uses a drunken, insane, short-sighted, or overworked person to drive it half asleep, an accident may take place and someone may get hurt. If the owner is fully aware of the behaviour of his driver, then certainly he is to be condemned per the Sixth Commandment. What is said about a rash driver can also be applied to a child who is not well brought up and may be aggressive to people, yet his father leaves him without punishment and guidance. The same is also true of an employer who hires a rowdy employee. The latter may hurt those around him or cause them mischief. He may end up causing them to be fired from their work or be hurt in any way. An employer is supposed to be responsible for the attitude and performance of all his employees. He therefore may direct or punish them in case they made any mistake.

The responsibility of killing others also lies with you if you have in your house a butane stove that is not working properly, for it may cause the suffocation of others if you do not repair it. The same is also true if you do not warn people that have a certain device that may kill them if they do not use it properly. So, you must explain to everybody around you how to use and operate it properly so that nobody around may get hurt. You may also keep it away from the reach of children and of those who do not really know how to use it.



CHAPTER FIVE

KILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Examples of killing the Spirit:

It may be killed by separating it from God thus throwing it into hell. This expression of killing the spirit and casting it away is mentioned in the Bible when God refers to sin, saying: *"For she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. "* (Prov. 7:26).

In his discussion with the Jews about Satan, Jesus says in John: *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.(John 8:44).* We never heard that Satan killed a man in the proper sense of killing, but the words: "He, from the first, was a murderer," means that Satan inflicts death on people's souls and throws them into eternal hell. The same meaning is clear in: *"The letter kills."* (2 Cor. 3:6). So, what does "to kill" mean here? It means that whoever interprets God's commandments literally is just killing himself or inflicting death upon his spirit. So, it is spiritual murder as opposed to physical murder. An example of spiritual death is when a person is kept away from understanding the true faith, when he is neglected and not brought up sensibly, when he is given a bad example to follow, or when he causes others to fall or to be unjustly excommunicated.

Religious Inventions and Heresies:

Those who teach wrong beliefs, or guide people along a wrong path which spoils their spiritual lives are spiritually inflicting death upon those people. By so doing, they throw them into hell. For example, heretics and innovators inflicted death upon the thousands they misled and millions whom they killed in a way that is even worse than physical death, for in the case of physical death, the soul may be rescued, but heresy spoils man's belief and religion and leads him to eternal death. So, Arius, Makdonius, Nestor, Luther, the Jehovah's Witness, and those calling for the Sabbath, come at the top of the list of killers. Therefore, you have to be very careful when teaching not to present your own personal points of view as true facts, especially those contradicting the Fathers' sayings. It is not appropriate at all that you get fascinated by something new or by developments and start propagating new principles lest you should inflict death upon others, and do away with their faith. The Holy Bible says: *"Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set. " (Prov. 22:28)*. We have to say this because many heresies started so easily when someone, through meditation, suddenly reached a new conclusion or an idea he liked. Thinking that people would admire the novelty of his idea, and looking upon himself as a pioneer, regardless of whether his idea contradicted the public opinion or the prevailing traditions or not, he introduced new heresies into religion.

One has to be careful not to bring new ideas into religion and not try to become a hero by doing so. In James 3:1&2 there is the following warning: *"Let not many of you become teachers,*

knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. " We are all betrayed into committing faults, therefore we should be careful lest we should spoil people's beliefs. Therefore, you have to read in the Bible about heretics who called for innovations in religion thus bringing about disasters and inflicting death. God will accuse them of wasting the lives of people who deviate from true religion as a result of their heresies. Also, literal interpretations of the words of the Holy Bible is a way of inflicting death upon people because the Bible says: "The letter kills." (2 Cor. 3:6). Those who cannot reach into the spiritual meaning behind the words, and just interpret them literally inflict spiritual death upon others. Therefore: "Do not be too eager, brethren, to impart instruction to others; be sure that if we do, we shall be called to account all the more strictly."

Negligence of Pastoral Work:

Another example of inflicting spiritual death is manifested by those fathers who do not exert the efforts required of them thus leaving people to the enemy. Those men of God are warned by Him in the following words: *"At the end of seven days the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Son of man, I have made you a watchman ... ; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand." (Ezek. 3:17&18).* Look, brethren, how the Bible considers the sinners spiritually dead and condemns men of God for not trying to help them when it says: *"Yet, if you warn*

the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul." (Ezek. 3:19). So, if a priest neglects the people he is responsible for, he is considered a killer of their spiritual life and God will accuse him of being the main reason for their failure since it is all due to the priests negligence in teaching them, caring for them and following up on every one of them.

A priest may say: "But I am a kind person who never inflicts death upon anybody!" This is all quite fine, but you are not here just to be a kind man, since God wants you to save people's souls, to exert an effort for them, to exhaust yourself day and night to save their souls, and to sacrifice yourself for your people's benefit. You are in a position to save the souls of those people by exerting a great effort, by shedding tears, sweating, spending nights awake, and fasting. Therefore, if you sit idle as a kind person and do not take care of your people, you are responsible in the sight of God.

The accusation of a clergyman who does not save the souls of the people he is responsible for, is even more grave if he is surrounded by a group of heretics, innovators, or strange sectarians who try to deviate people from their true faith without any attempt on the part of that clergyman to prevent this through his care, attention and correct teaching. The poet says: "Whoever leaves his sheep posturing among lions, and falls into a slumber, will end up having lions take care of them!!" Negligence in caring for people is a sort of inflicting death upon them. On Judgment Day, God will charge some of those responsible for people's souls with neglecting their

responsibilities and letting people lose their eternal life because of their negligence. So, our saints used to flee from holding any position of responsibility knowing how weighty it is. Therefore, we must pay great attention to choosing and electing priests and clergymen in order to prevent various crimes inflicting death. A priest who neglects directing his congregation simply kills them, and the Holy Bible says: *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. "* (Hos. 4:6).

Such a priest will have to answer for this, and so he should do his utmost to educate, instruct and warn them in order to help them follow the right way. As a result of ignoring to warn his children, Eli the Priest was punished by God. (1 Sam. 2:29-34).

Unjust Excommunication

As far as clergymen are concerned any unjust excommunication of a member of their congregation is considered a crime of murder. The teachings of the church indicate that any clergyman who simply excommunicates someone for no good reason is just inflicting death upon the latter's soul instead of rescuing it. Such excommunication may lead to the disbandment of those made religious through the great effort, fatigue, sweating and tears of the early disciples. Thus the saying goes: "Whoever judges someone unjustly that sentence of injustice, from his own mouth will come onto himself".¹

Priests should not excommunicate people carelessly without thorough investigation and without considering the dangerous

outcome which may result from this. This is a spiritual crime of murder before God because it means that spiritual support is kept away from someone's soul thus making him liable to die for lack of observing the church sacraments. The church's responsibility is to save and not kill the members of its congregation. Even if there is someone who has to be excommunicated, it is the duty of the church to visit him outside the church in order to try to bring him back once again.

But if you do not hold clerical responsibilities, so how can you inflict spiritual death? If you neither bring up your children in the right way nor teach them to fear God, but instead allow them to lose their way, then you inflict death upon their souls.

Negligence in Bringing up Children:

Just as pastors are responsible for the education of their congregation, everyone of you parents are similarly responsible for the education of your children. So, if your child is not brought up properly, and his soul goes to hell because of your negligence, God will condemn you on Judgment Day and say to you: *"He will die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand."* (Ezek. 3:18).

Sometimes the husband takes good care of his wife to the extent that he neglects his children's needs. He thinks that marriage is a mere relation between him and his wife, thus forgetting his responsibility towards his children, a responsibility which he will have to account for before God look what the Bible says regarding bringing up children: *"And*

these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house..." (Deut. 6:6&7). Every responsible father should fear God and should bring up his children with great care. Moreover, he is responsible for his wife's spiritual life after marrying her, for man is the head of a woman. If he does not pay attention to the spiritual life of his household, especially that of his wife and children, and does not always repeat the words of the Holy Bible: *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," (Josh. 24:15),* God will hold him responsible for killing all those people. Some may think that marriage is just a social function! No, before anything else, it is a spiritual function through which the family beget children for God and for the church. Thus, it is with great esteem and pride that we look upon those mothers and fathers who brought up their pious offspring in such a way as to make of them religious leaders and upholders of the Faith. Those parents were well aware of the sacred and spiritual role they were supposed to play in their marriage.

A vicious and corrupt man should not get married for if he does, it is not possible for him to bring up good children! One has to be well-brought up, well-behaved and fearing God in order to bring up children who also fear God. After all, marriage is a spiritual function. Such a vicious man may think that he would like to please his children so that he provides them with various means of amusement and fun, making his home a place of hell. If one of his children wanted to walk in the way of God, he would have to face many obstacles and hindrances! There is no doubt that such a father kills his children spiritually. He is a real killer, whether he desires it or

not. On Judgment Day, you are going to account for the life of your corrupt son. If you have not done your best towards him, God is going to ask you: "What have you done for him? Your child could have easily been formed any way you wanted. How did you bring him up?"

By attending Sunday School, just for an hour once a week, your child's teacher, with God's help, will bring him up spiritually and teach him God's commandments to make of him a good member of the Church. But what do you personally do for him as a father who spends with him the remaining 168 hours? When you bring your child up, you do not only feed his body to grow, but you take care of his soul so as to make of it a sacred and pure soul, devoted to God. There is a difference between bringing up your children, and breeding sheep to obtain meat, for you bring up good individuals as gifts to God, to society, and to the Church.

The Setting of Ungodly Examples by the Parents:

Parents may kill the spiritual life of their children not by leaving them to corrupting elements, but by giving them a bad example to follow.

A child may be brought up in an environment of quarrel, fighting, disputes and dirty language exchanged between the parents. The child just picks up this bad way of dealing with others, or he may prefer to quit that tiresome house and go out into the street, or join bad company.

After all this, can the father say that he has not killed his child? He has actually inflicted death upon some spiritual elements in his son's character. He has put an end to principles, noble values and ideals that may have been part of his character. Instead, he has set the child a bad example. He has carved out in his sub-conscious deep images of a life that bears no harmony with God's commandments. These are factors that are sure to destroy the soul and spiritual life of a son.

A girl may find herself in a bad environment such as having a mother who wears improper clothes, who uses vulgar make up and who is playful, paying no attention whatsoever to anything. So, the poor girl is made to think that life is just like that. She may join her mother in her playful life, share her carelessness and laughter, and imitate her way of dressing and make-up. This poor girl is bound to walk in darkness that some people prefer to light. Doesn't this mother thus inflict death upon the spiritual life of her daughter?!!

What is much worse is that such a mother is not only satisfied with the bad example she sets for her daughter, but she may also fight her in all possible ways if she ever finds out that she holds fast to piety and to respectable and noble principles. She starts mocking her and making her a target of humiliation. She may also call her names and keep her from upholding religious and respectable ideas. She thus kills all the spiritual aspects of her character. The poor little girl may not be able to resist this current, may thus give up to the point at which she finally becomes lost. God hears the voice of her blood, screaming from the earth, in complaint of that murdering mother.

So, brethren, do not think killing is merely the act of terminating the existence of the physical body, or that it is a human being putting an end to another person's life on earth with a knife or a pistol. No, for there is also the infliction of spiritual death where someone's soul is eternally lost, and principles and ideals evaporate.

What we have already said about the example set by parents can also be applied to teachers, instructors, and those who influence man's soul and set a good example for others to follow. All these people are responsible since if they misbehave, others may be lost through imitating them. The matter should be handled in a positive way and we should give our offspring a very good example for them to follow.

The Stumbling Block

Inflicting death upon one's soul may result from our facilitating for others the commission of a sin. Someone may fall because of you and you would have inflicted death upon his soul. God will then hold you responsible for that. Our Lord Jesus Christ says: *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offences! For offences must come but woe to that man by whom the offence come!"* (Matt. 18:6&7). But God, why do You blame that person who goes against his conscience, and why would it be better for that man to have a large millstone tied round his neck and be drowned in

a deep sea? Because he causes others to lose their faith in Jesus. Woe to him who causes the downfall of another person. So, brethren, beware of making others lose their faith lest they should stumble on their path and consequently, you would be questioned by God on Judgment Day.

The Apostle Paul gave us an example of someone causing others to lose faith by meat originally slaughtered as a sacrifice for idols. He said; *"Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat lest I make my brother stumble. " (1 Cor. 8:13).* He explained the seriousness lying behind this by saying: *"If anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. " (1 Cor. 8:10-12).* Here Paul gives us a marvellous example of how dangerous it is to cause others to fall and the ways to do so. Even if the action itself is not harmful, yet still it makes the weak stumble. So we should not start it in the first place in order not to hurt the conscience of those weak and to prevent their misunderstanding, their doing the same, and their downfall afterwards.

What can we say then about such blatant instances as that of a girl who causes others to fall by her indecent way of dressing, by her way of talking, and by her tempting others? Wouldn't she be inflicting death upon a man's soul by so doing, and so stand guilty before God for violating the Sixth Commandment? What can we say about a corrupt person who insists upon

dragging his friends into the same ungodly path, converting them into sinners? What can we say about someone offering an employee a bribe, encouraging a passenger to smuggle, or explaining new ways of breaking the law to a new unsuspecting friend? What can we say about a man who tempts his friend to commit new sins thus corrupting his innocence with lustful ideas he was unaware of before? We cannot but say that such people inflict death upon others' spirits, even though they may never have touched a knife in all their lives.

Therefore go deep into yourself and ask if you have ever been the cause of someone's stumble or sinfulness in any way. Causing others to fall is serious and should be severely punished. If killing is punished by death, causing others to fall should also be punished the same way, and God insists upon this punishment, saying: *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. "* (Matt. 18:6). God blames whoever is the cause of a stumble, saying: *"Woe to the world because of offences! for offences must come but woe to the man by whom the offence comes!"* (Matt. 18:7).

As for punishment on Judgment Day, God mentions those causing others to fall before He refers to those committing sins. Thus He says regarding His Second Coming: *" The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt. 13:41&42).

Thus, the charge against Balaam and Jeroboam was serious because Balaam caused people to sin (*Rev. 2:14*), and Jeroboam's son Alijah brought guilt upon his own house (*1 Kin. 13:34*). How dangerous it is to cause others to sin especially if it is a great person who causes many to fall.

Spiritual Suicide:

Man may be spiritually killed or may spiritually kill others. The first thing one may inflict upon his soul is death through sinfulness, for sin is death, and Paul says: "*We were dead in trespasses.*" (*Eph. 2:5*). Also "*The wages of sin is death.*" (*Rom. 6:23*), and: "*For to be carnally minded is death.*" (*Rom. 8:6*). By committing sins man kills himself spiritually since he isolates his soul from God and throws it into hell. Therefore, sin is actually spiritual suicide by means of which man ruins himself. Also, man kills himself, from the spiritual point of view, when he ignores the spiritual media, i.e. by stopping prayer, meditation, spiritual readings, confession, having the Holy Communion and other means of obtaining grace. The soul then becomes weak, dissolves and becomes lost. The man himself is 'lost'. A man who follows the whims of his body, and indulges in the lusts of the world violates the Sixth Commandment. God says: "He who secures his own life will lose it." Man who accustoms himself to ungodly ways is just destroying both his soul and his will. So, keep away from destructive customs.



CHAPTER SIX

COMMITTING SUICIDE

Killing oneself, or committing suicide, is the same as killing others. There is direct suicide which means the immediate death of a person, and indirect or gradual suicide, where a person dies bit by bit over a long period of time, as we will explain.

Committing Suicide:

Suicide is a form of murder. Man does not own his own life nor does he have the liberty to do anything he likes with it. It is owned by Christ, for when He redeemed our lives by His own Blood, He bought man's life which then became His. He created it from nowhere. It is a gift that cannot be thrown away, but should be used for the glory of God's name. That is why the Church does not conduct a funerary mass for an individual who commits suicide, simply because death takes place after the commission of a crime of murder. Such a person dies after committing a sin which he does not give himself a chance to repent for. Still, we can make an exception to this rule in the case of a person who proves to be completely insane when committing suicide, since an insane person should be absolved from whatever wrongdoing he does. In addition to

the crime of committing suicide, we also have other crimes such as losing hope and getting filled with despair as did Judas. Hope is one of the three major virtues mentioned by St Paul in: *"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."* (1 Cor. 13:13). A pious man should never lose hope for God's mercy. So, if ever one commits suicide, this means one has lost all hope and has fallen to the pit of despair which in itself is a sin. It also signifies that one has lost hope for God's mercy and for His power to interfere and to dispose of desperate situations. All this is nothing but lack of faith in God's love, care and attention.

Committing suicide also signifies lack of endurance. It also signifies disbelief in life after death. A person committing suicide believes that death is going to help him put an end to all his trouble, which is not true, for if he ever believed in life after death, he would be aware that by killing himself he would go to hell where he is liable to find endless torture. Therefore, committing suicide does not end one's problems, but rather brings up worse problems and more complicated dilemmas. It is as if one came out of a pit to fall into a deep well! The one who commits suicide never thinks of life after death, for if he knew about it he would be afraid to kill himself.

Committing suicide is neither a spiritual nor a practical solution for problems. A person who commits suicide often has a nervous or mental health problem and is unable to think properly. His mind may get perplexed or stagnate before a problem. He is unable to think but gets confused and incapable of finding a way out. Thus, he commits suicide. Suicide is an actual destruction of the soul.

Gradual or Indirect Suicide:

There is a great diversity of ways for people to commit suicide without them being aware that such things are included under the term of committing suicide. Negligence of health care is one of these ways. There is no need for us to explain this point any further except that we should be fully aware that our human body is a gift granted us by God. A person is supposed to take care of it and to keep it safe and sound as much as possible in order to be able to perform the required spiritual tasks in the best of ways. Christianity does not call for killing the human body but for overcoming physical lusts through observing the sacraments set by its true teachings. Christianity calls for austerity, piety, and humility but not killing the human body itself. Paul says: *"For Your sake we are killed all day long."* (Rom. 8:36), and: *"So then death is working in us."* (2 Cor. 4:12). God says: *"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."* (John 12:24), and we say in the Nine o'clock prayer, "Mortify our physical senses, our Lord Jesus Christ, and rescue us." We do not kill our human body at all, but only kill its lusts. When we say, "Mortify our physical senses," *we mean preventing those senses from conflicting with the spirit. The Apostle Paul says: "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection,"* (1 Cor. 9:27), which means force my body to abide by the regulations set forth by the soul. He also says that man *"nourishes and cherishes it (his body)."* (Eph. 5:29). For the sake of the body's safety, God gave us the 'Sabbath law' in order to give our body some rest so that we may be able to accomplish what is required of us by God. Our Lord Jesus Christ paid attention to people's bodies and cured every disease and weakness in them. God wishes us to have healthy bodies

by means of which we may serve His name. A healthy body enables one to stand up while praying, to kneel before God, to stay awake late at night in order to pray, to go on serving people, and to fast and be able to perform all our spiritual and physical obligations. A weak and unhealthy body often disrupts the tranquillity of the mind. Therefore, for the sake of glorifying God's name one should take care of one's own body in order to make of it a shrine for His presence since our bodies are owned by Him (*1 Cor. 6:20*). We should not kill our bodies through carelessness and negligence.

It is indeed a pity when people ruin their own bodies through unhealthy customs such as overeating which is liable to expose them to many diseases, weaken them and bring about an early death. People are apt to ruin their health through complicated ways of cooking, and through eating various kinds of desserts and sweets which exhaust their bodies during the process of digestion. In the past, nobody did this which is why our ancestors used to have healthy bodies. Similarly, monks are healthy due to the simple, uncomplicated and raw food they eat. The human body gets tired when one eats quickly, does not follow a well balanced diet and eats between meals. In such cases the human body has to deal with half-digested food or food that is not digested at all. In this way, the stomach is made to suffer as a result of man's greed and gluttony. Excessive amounts of fat hurts one's body because it is difficult to digest. Yet, many people think that the more fat they eat the better their health becomes. But this is contrary to what all doctors and nutritionists say that non-fat meat is better digested

than fatty meat. Overeating also exhausts the liver, gall-bladder and the stomach and puts a heavy burden on the body making it suffer and develop high blood pressure.

Adultery is a sin that damages the body and physical indulgence spoils it and causes it to develop many serious diseases. People may also damage their own bodies by too much exhaustion without giving them the required rest they need. Because God knows the nature and requirements of our bodies, He gave us one day a week to rest, saying: *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. "* (Mark 2:27). So, if you happen to exhaust you own body more than it can stand, and do not pay attention to its weak nature, you will, no doubt, be partially killing it. Too many people have suddenly passed away or have heart attacks as a result of too much exhaustion beyond their endurance. In 1948, a colleague of mine suffered so much from cancer and from severe pain that he could not sleep at all despite the care given him. Even injections relieving his pain ceased to have any effect and could not put him to sleep. I visited him at Qasr-el-Einy hospital and asked the specialist doctor, who was a colleague of mine at Sunday school, about his condition. The doctor said to me: he has only a few more days left on this earth, and if cancer does not kill him, exhaustion will, due to his lack of sleep. His heart was not able to stand all that wakefulness and inability to rest. This is exactly what happened to this friend of mine who died of exhaustion and terrible pain.

Smoking:

Cigarettes contain poisonous materials such as nicotine, hydrogen sulphate, and carbon sulphate. It has been said that the quantity of nicotine in twenty cigarettes can kill a man if he takes it at one time. However, it will not kill him if he takes it at intervals, but this does not stop its gradual destructive effect on his body. Smoking causes many diseases to the throat, teeth, mouth, lungs, oesophagus, besides its bad effect on the blood, heart and nerves. It has been found that many cases of mouth, gum, and lung cancer result from smoking. Actually, smoking has such a bad effect on the respiratory tract and the lungs, that smokers often develop a dry cough. I know a brilliant swimmer who used to dive and remain under water for more than a minute, holding his breath. But, after becoming addicted to smoking, his health deteriorated so much that he neither swims nor dives any more. There are other sportsmen who used to run very well, but who have lost this ability after becoming addicted to smoking. Thus it is that smokers are no doubt self-killers. I remember that twenty three years ago I gave a piece of advice to one of my colleagues to stop smoking. I kept explaining to him its drawbacks. He told me that he was more aware of the harsh effects than I was. When I asked how, he explained: "Once I smoked a cigarette and then examined its filter to find that it had turned black. I knew then that all that smoke affected my lungs, windpipe, throat and teeth." Although that young man knew the bad effects of smoking, yet he could not give up that bad habit although it ruined his health as well as his will-power. Actually I had never before been aware that smokers swallowed the smoke of

their cigarettes. I had always thought that they took the smoke into their mouths and then blew it out. Then, later on I was told that smokers actually swallowed the smoke letting it into their windpipe and lungs thus damaging everything in its way.

There is a funny story about the first man who started smoking in the United Kingdom. He was once sitting at home smoking when his servant came into the room and saw smoke coming out of his master's mouth. He thought that something had happened to his master. So he ran fast, brought in a pot full of water and poured it onto the head of his master whom he thought was on fire. Today, this scene has become so normal that nobody gets excited about it. This hot flow of smoke which goes into the lungs has such a great effect on the blood and the red corpuscles that it raises the blood pressure. It is said that during smoking, blood pressure goes up to 200 or more thus badly affecting the heart. Some diseases, such as angina pectoris, result from smoking. In addition, smoking has a bad effect upon the stomach and the intestines. It is well known that smoking causes one to lose one's appetite and many smokers eat very little which, no doubt, damages their health and weakens their bodies. In poor districts, many people use their scanty money to buy cigarettes instead of food with the result of damaging their health. Regarding the low standard classes, we regretfully mention those young boys who collect cigarette stubs thrown in the streets to sell them to people who, trade in them. It is known that cigarette stubs are the most dangerous part of cigarettes, for there poisonous elements become concentrated. Besides, they carry the smokers' diseases and the dirt of streets and of those collecting them. Those who collect them, empty the tobacco in them and roll it up into new

cigarettes or add new material to the tobacco and sell it under the name of Meassel. This poisonous stuff kills people who buy and smoke it.

So, if you meet a victim of smoking, advise him to keep away from it. One must also not forget the effects of smoking on the financial aspect of man's life. With each burning cigarette, man burns his own money and his family's food. Can you imagine that \$3000 million a year are spent on cigarettes in the USA?! It is a huge sum that can be the budget of a whole country. However, it is burnt to become smoke polluting the air!! In Egypt, we consume 12 million kilos of tobacco a year, which is ridiculous. Thousands of acres are used to cultivate tobacco in the world, and millions of pounds are spent on smoking with the result that people's health and economic condition deteriorate in a most regrettable way.

Reciprocal Killing:

Most smokers not only kill themselves, but also share in killing others. This crime is not limited to those who trade in this poison, advertise it, encourage it and tempt people to smoke, but it also includes those who offer cigarettes to their friends. When you offer someone a cigarette, you will be doing something wrong and you will be violating the Sixth Commandment, for you will be helping your friend kill himself, although you may think that you are just being hospitable and generous!! Generosity may further tempt you to insist on your guest or friend accepting a cigarette. If he insists upon refusing, you get upset, but why should you? You are

only killing him if you so insist. You would actually be like a pedestrian who falls in the mud and wishes everybody else to fall like him.

I recall that when I was young, some people tried to make me smoke, but I absolutely refused. One of my professors at the University was a very good friend of mine, and I had a very close relationship with him. I used to pay him frequent visits at his home. Once, this teacher offered me a cigarette, but I refused. Yet he insisted and offered it again but I said with a loving smile: "Don't you wish to stop smoking?" He answered: "Of course." Then I replied: "If so, why do you want me to do something you don't want do?" He replied: "As you like," and kept silent and never offered me any more cigarettes.

Don't think that when you offer someone a cigarette, you will be a generous and hospitable man and so boast about it or think highly of yourself. That very cigarette you offer your friend is apt to kill him and ruin his health. It will rob him of his money and damage all his life. It is a kind of slow and indirect killing over time. Once, somebody said to me: "Smokers curse the person who offered them their first cigarette." Of course we don't like anybody cursing someone else, but this at least shows how poorly smokers consider those who taught them to commit the sin of smoking.

Someone may acquire the habit of smoking from his parents through imitating them either in secret or openly.

The father may happen to know that his son smokes, yet be cannot ask him to give it up while he himself cannot do it. Such

a father will be accused before God on Judgment Day. If smoking on men's part is not acceptable it is much more so on the part of women. It is actually a disgusting scene that does not go well with women's shyness and decency. A woman who smokes cannot bring up good children and will thus be accused before God of shunning her responsibilities.

Alcoholic Beverages and Addicts:

Alcoholic beverages hurt the body with the alcohol it contains. Its harmful effect increases with the increase of the quantity of alcohol in it. If we put a snake in alcohol, it is liable to die. If alcohol can kill a whole snake that is full of poison, what can it then do to man's body?!

Alcoholic beverages damage the liver, the stomach and the intestines. Too much drinking leads to alcoholism. This renders a person dizzy and nauseated. It also has a bad effect on the brain and the nerves. Too much drinking may cause one to lose one's consciousness, fall motionless on the ground, utter bad words, and behave in an indecent way. This state is called "drunkenness" and the person is described as "drunk". A drunkard may lose his balance as well as the respect of people. His will and self-control are spiritually, socially, and mentally killed by alcohol. In addition, such a person ends up losing his money and decreasing the quantity of food required for his children. The Bible condemns drinking alcohol by saying: "*Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup... At the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper.*" (Prov. 23:31&32).

Also: *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."* (Prov. 20:1).

The Bible forbade the drinking of wine *"in which is dissipation."* (Eph. 5:18), and: *"Do not be deceived... drunkards... will (not) inherit the kingdom of God."* (1 Cor. 6:9&10). and said to us: *"... not to keep company with... a drunkard."* (1 Cor. 5:11).

Drugs:

Drugs are poisonous to their users. They spoil man's nerves, weaken his body and exhaust it, make him lose his mind, will and self control. Since the whole world started realising their danger, all countries and governments have prohibited them and passed laws to arrest all those who take them, trade in or even possess them. This is a clear point that needs no further explanation. There remains for us to say that all those who kill themselves by taking drugs, drinking or smoking give birth to weak and fragile children who inherit their parents' weaknesses and poor health. So they not only kill themselves, but hurt others as well.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Answers to Questions Related to the Subject

QUESTION: Can we include fasting in the subject of self-killing? My father and mother force me to have breakfast during exams. So what can I do?

ANSWER: In fact, fasting is not self-killing. On the contrary, it helps us become healthier if we fast in the right way. Fasting relieves the liver, the stomach, the intestines and the whole digestive system. By fasting, a person releases his body from the great effort it exerts during non-fasting periods. Vegetable food is useful and beneficial and many vegetarians lead a long life and have healthy bodies. Man remained vegetarian and lived to be over 900 year of age until after Noah's time (*Gen. 9&5*). So, do not be afraid of fasting and of eating vegetables. Parents who force their children to have breakfast prove that their love revolves around the physical but not the spiritual side of their life. By doing so, instead of teaching them how to be true and pious persons, they make them suffer. They just bewilder, confuse, and make them unsure whether to obey them or obey God. So, they make them suffer instead of providing them with the tranquillity and comfort they require especially during the time they are required to prepare for their exams. We know that during

exams, one gets closer to God by praying to Him, for one feels the need for His assistance. If a student is sinful, he normally abandons his specific sins during his exams, so that God may be merciful to him. But does this go with breaking one's fast during that period? Impossible. You, my son, don't break your fast during the time of your exams especially when you remember the story of Daniel the prophet who, after fasting, enjoyed better health (*Dan. 1:9-16*).

Fasting is not harmful to one's health, but too much eating, especially of fatty food, eating in between meals, as well as quick eating, affect people's health. On the contrary, those who fast and eat simple food improve their health and I would like to inform you, brethren, that health goes always "hand in hand" with everything that is spiritual...

Monks and hermits are usually healthy and many of them live a long life. The great Makarius lived to be ninety years old despite the austere life he led. Who among those who eat meat can live that long? Makarius AI-Askandary lived to be about 93 years old and used to eat a cabbage leaf once a week during Lent. St. Anthony, father of all monks, lived to be 105 years old and was a man of prayer and fasting. St. Paula, the pioneer anchorite, lived to be 100 years old and used to eat half a loaf of bread every day.

St. Shenouda, like Moses, lived to be about 120 years old despite his repeated and lengthy fasting and strict monasticism. There is not enough time to list all the details of this matter, therefore, we will leave it to your own meditations on the lives of saints. The same can be said about vegetarians, and their

long lives. For example, Bernard Shaw who lived to more than 90 years of age was a vegetarian. Of course our lives are in God's hands, but what I mean to show you by this is that vegetarian food does not spoil health as you may suppose. So, why do you feel afraid? This is fear placed on an unsolid base.

We say all this from the scientific and realistic point of view, but we must not forget the spiritual aspect of it all, i.e. God's assistance during a fasting period, and the effects of having a peace-loving heart and the exaltation of the spirit beyond the health of the body.

Believe me, many modern day diseases come from a psychological reason, and religion in itself is a sound treatment for them. Religion helps those who live by the spirit, without any worries, but only with love, joy and peace of mind and heart which are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Such fruits have always proved to be more beneficial to man than fat, meat, vitamins, minerals, ...etc. If a doctor succeeds in making his patient feel he is in a better psychological state, then he has succeeded in treating him.

Therefore, don't worry, for fasting does not kill people but the is for man's benefit since it gives health and strength.

QUESTION: Let us suppose that man's physical fitness is not in harmony with the well-being of his spirit. What should he do then, and which of the two natures should he prefer to the other?

ANSWER: Sometimes, man forces himself to do certain things for the sake of the spirit. The aim of our life here is not to entertain the body. No, we must put the spirit first before the body. Therefore, refined persons suppress the needs of their bodies in order to achieve their noble goals, and the poet says if people have great goals, their bodies have a difficult task achieving them.

For example, a clever student who studies hard exhausts his body and does what he can in order to achieve success and attain spiritual comfort. So, if he exhausts his body, we do not say or think that he is harming it, for he can easily regain his strength by resting his body later on and regaining what he has lost during his studies. Many are those who managed to regain all their strength after suffering severely from serious illnesses. Also, a devoted person who does his utmost to develop his spiritual status, or who exerts great efforts in serving God's name, may possibly exhaust his body and develop weak health; but by doing so, he offers his life as a sacrifice to God in much the same way as a candle which burns and melts away in order to provide us with light.

The term "gradual suicide" is applied to a person who wastes his health away through the adoption of certain faulty habits such as smoking. What benefit does society get out of his smoking? On the contrary, the smoke which he blows out of his mouth hurts others while he himself loses both his health and money. Wasting his health and money in this way makes his attitude similar to that of the Prodigal Son who spent all his money on luxury. This is actually true of everybody who spends his money in such a way. Contrary to this is the person

who tires himself by serving God and who sacrifices his life for the sake of others. What a great difference there is between killing and sacrifice!! Therefore, when we see some priests tiring themselves in the service of God's name, we should not say they are killing themselves, but that they are martyrs who sacrifice themselves for others.

A great saint like Paul says: *"Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?"* (2 Cor. 11:29). *"I am more in labours more abundant, in prisons more frequently."* (2 Cor. 11:23). Such a saint endured sickness and fatigue that we might have said to him: "You are killing yourself," but the truth is that he was a saint and a martyr. The same is true of every man who exhausts himself in order to achieve his ideal principles.

Men of principle exert and sacrifice themselves for their principles and when they die they rest in peace and their hard work follows them. Likewise, those hermits who exhaust their bodies in deserts and isolated areas, spend whole nights awake, fast a lot, and struggle in their prayers and kneeling, do not in fact kill themselves, but rather elevate themselves to a higher state where the spirit is placed before the body, so that the latter may become sacred and noble.

Paul says: *"always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."* (2 Cor. 4:10&11). He also says: *"For Your sake we are killed all day long."* (Rom. 8:36), and also: *"So then death is working in us."* (2 Cor. 4:12). So, one who sacrifices

his body for the sake of God and His Province cannot be called self-murderer, but self-sacrificer for the sake of God.

This is exactly like one putting a handful of incense into the censer, and burning it to produce a fragrant smell for God. When we look at those grains of incense in the censer, we do not find any trace of them. Did they burn? Yes, they did in order that God might smell a scent of satisfaction out of them. So, the lives of some people are like that incense, for those people exhaust their bodies and sacrifice themselves and God accepts their act as a pure and noble sacrifice.

My dear brethren, our body is liable to decay and we wish it does so for the sake of achieving good deeds.

Many people waste their bodies away for materialistic and not spiritual purposes although the apostle Paul says: "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" (Rom. 12:1).

Hermits and worshippers become extremely thin and meagre, yet their poor and weak bodies are combining with strong spiritual capacities and their spirits with the utmost of strength.

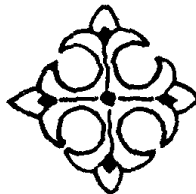
Some people feed themselves so much that they become like sheep ready to be slaughtered. What do they gain out of that? Actually nothing, for their bodies are bound to become rotten after death despite the perfumes that are applied to cover their rotten smell.

As for you, present your bodies as a sacred sacrament to God and always remember the saying of Paul: *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."* (2 Cor. 4:16).

We should differentiate between suicide and martyrdom. A person who commits suicide commits a crime which is not acceptable before God but the other person who becomes a martyr becomes glorious.

Therefore, a person may sacrifice himself for the sake of God or for others and his body may suffer greatly, but his spirit is highly elevated. Paul consoles us in all of this, saying: *".... if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* (2 Cor. 5:1).

Therefore, you must care more for your spirit, put it first and foremost before anything else and make your body a mere agent for achieving its goals. In this way the spirit is enlightened, exerts great efforts, and endures. You should not give great comfort to your body in order not to kill your soul. A quiet and moderate way of life is the wisest of all and the one you should pursue.



**YOU SHALL
NOT KILL**

*In the name of the father,
and of the Son, and of the
Holy Spirit, the One God.
Amen.*

If one thinks that such a commandment as: "*You shall not kill*" is for someone else other than oneself, and if one thinks that one has never violated this commandment, then one has better read this book!

There are various kinds of killing such as killing the soul, killing the body, spiritual killing, committing suicide, intentional killing, intellectual killing, killing by responsibility, killing in collaboration with others, incomplete murder, partial or indirect murder,... etc.

After some meditation on the meaning of this commandment, please note that any commandment mentioned in the Bible is for everyone.

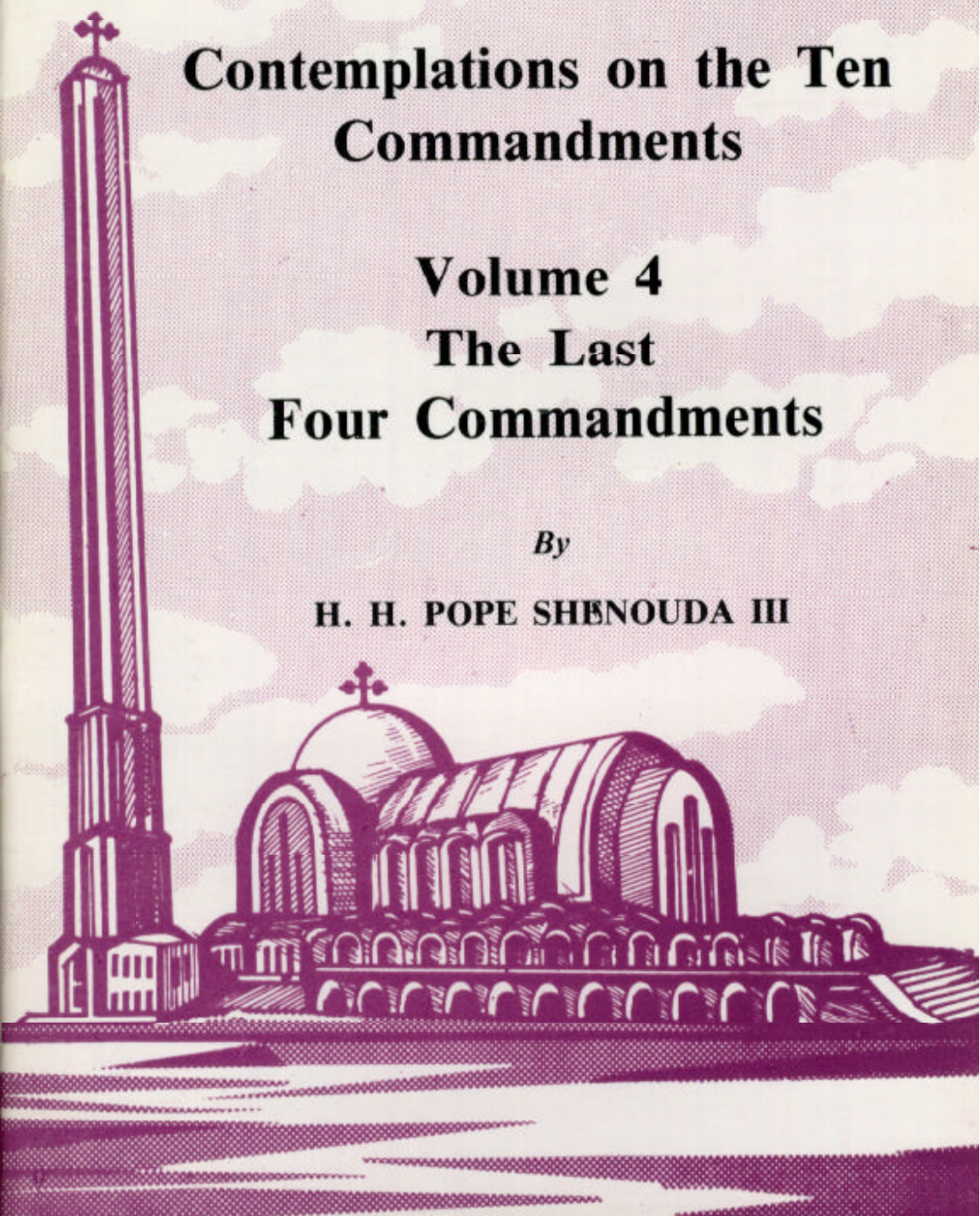
Pope Shenouda III

Contemplations on the Ten Commandments

Volume 4 The Last Four Commandments

By

H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III





**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**

**Contemplations on the Ten
Commandments**

**Volume 4
The Last
Four Commandments**

By

H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III

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***H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark***

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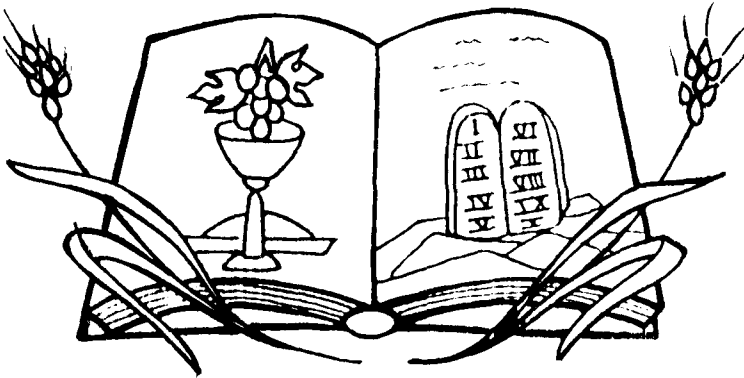
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INTRODUCTION

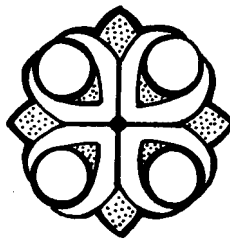
Dear reader, I present you with these lectures which I delivered in 1967.

There are three other books on the Ten Commandments, this one deals with the last four. Each Commandment needs in fact a whole book, but I preferred to present them in such a concentrated way.

They are perhaps expounded in more detail in my series on "Spiritual Warfare" and in the series of "So Many Years with the Problems of the People".

I pray God may give us power that we may behave according to His commandments, written by His finger due to their great importance.

Pope Shenouda III





THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

*"You shall not commit adultery."
(Ex. 20:14), (Deut. 5:18)*

*"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy
Spirit.. therefore glorify God in your body."
(1 Cor. 6:19-20).*

THE HIDEOUSNESS OF THIS SIN

The apostle says: *"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body; but he that commits sexual immorality sins against his own body."* (1 Cor. 6:18).

What is the seriousness of man's sinning against his body?

According to the apostle, this seriousness focuses upon two reasons:

1. *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot?"* (1 Cor. 6:15).
2. *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit... and you are not your own?... therefore, glorify God in your body..."* (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

"You are the temple of the living God ..." (2 Cor. 6:16). "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Therefore, whoever commits adultery, sins against the members of Christ. And he defiles the temple of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit!

How terrible it is!

And what else is there about the seriousness of this commandment?

So hideous is this sin that it is called "uncleanliness"...

Peter, the apostle, says that God *"... reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment: And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanliness."* (2 Pet. 2:9- 10).

Thus he used the expression: "The lust of uncleanliness" instead of saying: "The lust of adultery".

When Shechem committed adultery with Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, the Bible says: *"And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter.."* (Gen. 34:5). As for Jacob's sons, they grew extremely angry and worked out a plot through which they killed Shechem and the men of his city, *"... because he had defiled Dinah their sister."* (Gen. 34:13-27).

Ezekiel, the prophet, says about the man who commits adultery that he *"... defiled his neighbour's wife."* (Ezek. 18:11).

Jude, the apostle, says that wet dreamers, *"...defile the flesh."* (Jude 8).

John, the apostle, explains in the Book of Revelation, *"...the judgment of the great harlot (is) for... abominations and the filthiness of her fornication."* (Rev. 17:1-4).

This great saint explained to us the magnanimity of the "hundred forty and four thousand, " who sang the new hymn which no one else could sing. He said: *"These are the ones who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes."* (Rev. 14:4).

God communicated this same meaning to the angel of the church in Sardis, saying: *"You have a few names even in Sardis ... who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me ... for they are worthy."* (Rev. 3:4).

The above clearly demonstrates that the sin of adultery has been called uncleanness, that adulterers defile their bodies, defile their clothes, defile women, and are themselves defiled with them, and that they follow the flesh in their lust for uncleanness.

God says through the prophet Jeremiah that with that affair "... *Would not that land be greatly polluted..*," and says to the sinning woman, "... *You have polluted the land with your harlotries..* " (Jer. 3:1-2). Thus, adultery does not defile the adulterers only, but it also defiles the land.. Isn't that terrible!

Calling this sin uncleanness and the like occurs in the epistles of Saint Paul, the apostle, where he says:

"... the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness..." (Gal. 5:19). He said in his epistle to the Colossians: *"Put to death your members*

which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion... " (Col. 3:5), and in this epistle to the Ephesians, he said: *"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints... for because of these the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."* (Eph. 5:3-6).

All these descriptions have been applied to the sin of adultery. Thus it has been described as uncleanness, whoredom, fornication, seduction, lust.. And what else?

In view of its hideousness, idolatry was called adultery.

When the children of Israel worshipped idols in the period of Judges, the Bible said about them: *"And yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them."* (Judg. 2:17).

This expression became a familiar one in the Holy Bible. Thus when the kingdom of Israel, followed by the Kingdom of Judah, indulged into idol-worshipping, God said through the prophet Jeremiah: *"Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot....yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. "So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.* (Jer. 3:6-9).

In keeping with the same meaning, God said through the prophet Hosea: *"... there is the harlotry of Ephraim, Israel is defiled."* (Hos. 6:10).

We would not have enough time if we tried to quote all the holy texts where the term "adultery" is applied to idol worshipping. However, we should go further to say that sin in general was called "adultery" since no other term could describe how hideous it is.

What else is there about the hideousness of this sin?

God's harshest punishments were inflicted upon the world.

1. What was the harshest punishment that God inflicted upon the world in the Old Testament? Undoubtedly, it was the flood, since the Lord said: *"I will destroy man whom I have created... The end of all flesh is come before Me... My Spirit shall not strive with man forever..."* (Gen. 6:7,13,3). This was the mighty punishment of annihilation, the like of which had never happened before. And what was the cause of it? It was adultery. The Bible says: *"Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful."* (Gen. 6:1,2).

2 Balaam, who had been hired by Balac to curse Israel, knew what Saint Paul, the apostle, said later on that: *"Because of these things God's wrath comes upon the sinners."* Therefore, he decided that the best way to destroy them was for them: *"... to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."* (Rev. 2:14). And this actually happened, and Balaam's deviation took place, for the Bible says: *"Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the woman of Moab."* (Num. 25:1).

Thus God's wrath befell the people, and He smote them with pestilence from which they were not rescued except through Phinehas who, motivated by sacred zeal, killed the Israeli man and the woman he was fornicating with: *"So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. And those who died in the plague were twenty four thousand."* (Num. 25:8-9). The Lord praised Phinehas because he stayed off His anger against the people. Otherwise He would have annihilated them.

3 Owing to adultery, God burnt Sodom and Gomorrah: *"Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of heaven: and He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground."* (Gen 19:24-25) Saint Jude, the apostle, recalled that terrible incident and said: *"As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."* (Jude 7). We know that before these two cities were burnt down, and also because of adultery, the two angels smote many of the inhabitants of Sodom with blindness (Gen. 19:11), and later, these blind adulterers were also burnt.

4. Because of adultery also, all the tribe of Benjamin was about to be annihilated, (Judg. 20).

And because of it God destroyed many when they committed adultery with the daughters of Moab.. In this

connection, the apostle said: *"Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty three thousand fell."* (1 Cor. 10:8).

5. Because of adultery, the apostle Paul passed a serious judgment on the Corinthian sinner, a judgment which made him about to be swallowed up in utter grief. Thus he said, *"To deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."* (1 Cor. 5:5).

6. In addition to these examples of severe earthly punishments, there is also a heavenly penalty which is eternal perdition. In this connection, the apostle says: *"Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God."* (1 Cor. 6:9-10). We should notice here that Saint Paul placed fornicators before idolaters, a fact which indicates the seriousness and hideousness of this sin.

As a consequence of this sin the holy bond of marriage is dissolved.

This great sacrament, which has been likened to the reunion between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-32), which the Lord God referred to as: *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate, "* (Matt. 19:6), and which no reason has the power to dissolve... this holy bond may be dissolved by

virtue of this one reason, namely, adultery. The Lord knows that a person can endure anything that their partner does, and can forgive any offence they commit, except adultery, which is unbearable and following which a person cannot live with their partner. Adultery leads to a dissolution of the "one body" bond, and following it, the couple become "two", as they were before their marriage, and no longer one.

Other indications as to the hideousness of this sin.

1. Saint Paul orders us *"... not to keep company with sexually immoral people... not even to eat with such a person... put away from yourselves that evil person."* (1 Cor. 5:9,11,13). Therefore, an adulterer is isolated by the Christian community which shuns him as an unclean and wicked person who carries the germs of an epidemic. How severe that is! When the Corinthian sinner was exposed to this, he was about to be *"swallowed up with too much sorrow."* (2 Cor. 2:7).

2. The sin of adultery is a complex one: It is not confined only to man's sin against another whom he covets, defiles, trips, or tempts, but it also includes man's sinning against his own self since he loses his own chastity and purity, defiles himself, and destroys his health. Moreover, he sins against God, because he turns Christ's members into adulterers, and defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit which is his own body. Thus when the prophet David committed adultery with the wife of Oria the Hittite, he turned to God, screaming out: *"Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight ..."* (Ps. 51:4).

Adultery may develop and produce other serious consequences: such as loss of virginity, pregnancy, abortion, divorce, or a change of religion to avoid the consequences of sinning or to pursue a lust that has taken hold of one!... Most regretfully, most of those who nowadays abandon their religion, do so for this reason. They fall into the sin of adultery and are unable to avoid the consequences! This sets up for us an example of the extent sin may lead us to.

3. The sin of adultery encompasses the whole person, for every part of him sins when he commits it: his thoughts, his senses, his heart, his body, and his soul. Sin pervades his whole being and polarises it. Sins of lust and passion, in particular, are participated in by the person as a whole. Conversely, other sins are contributed to by one part only of a person. Thus, for instance, suspicion may be a sin restricted to man's thoughts, and some sins concerning spoken words may be restricted to man's tongue.

4. Adultery is so hideous that people sometimes find it expressive enough to just call it "the sin." Thus, in her confession to a priest, a girl may just say: "I have sinned." The priest then understands that it is that sin in particular.

5. Adultery is such a hideous sin that it is regarded as enmity to God and love of the world. The apostle, Saint James, says in this connection: "*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*" (James 4:4).

6. This commandment is of such importance that, when the apostles studied the question of those Gentiles converted into the Faith, and wanted to facilitate matters for them without burdening them with too many commandments, they confined their prohibitions to the few most hideous things committed by the Gentiles. One of these was adultery. Thus, James, the apostle, said: *"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."* (Acts 15:19-20).

7. By reason of the hideousness of the sin of adultery, some people think that it was Adam's and Eve's sin which incurred woe upon the whole world. However, I am totally in disagreement with this view for many reasons.

8. This sin is so serious that it has brought about the downfall of many mighty people, including prophets such as David. Thus, Solomon the Wise, based upon experience, referred to it, saying: *"For she has cast down many wounded, and many strong (men) have been slain by her."* (Prov. 7:26). The devil of adultery is a violent one which requires great caution and a strong support from the Holy Spirit.

Man's sin becomes more hideous if he forces a woman to commit adultery with him and rapes her, for then he behaves like a monster and not a human being. In this case he bears the blame for his, as well as her sin, especially if she resists with all her strength, cries out for help to no avail, and disapproves of the sin deep in her heart. The law says: *"... only the man who*

lay with her shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbour and kills him, even so is this matter." (Deut. 22:25-26).

If adultery is committed with someone who is unaware or ignorant of the act, as with an unknowing youngster, then it lies within the scope of enforced adultery.

The sin of adultery becomes more hideous if it is committed incestuously or unnaturally in accordance with the explanation of the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans (1:26,27), or if it is committed in ways devised to satiate lust.



TYPES OF ADULTERY

It is not my intention to discuss this topic in detail since it will then require whole books to cover it. I only intend here to say some meaningful words about the whole subject in summary.

Names:

Adultery is of many types and carries several names that comprise many vocabulary words. Thus it is called adultery when committed by married individuals, fornication, as a general term, when committed by addicts and perverts, and sodomy, or sexual perversion, when committed by homosexuals and sodomites.

Types:

Adultery, which is known as sexual lust, may be committed through thinking, the senses, the heart, the body, or through dreams. It may evolve into attempts aimed at attaining satisfaction in a variety of ways. It may also be committed by the tongue, the ears, or through writing. There is also the adultery of intention, as well as total adultery.

Drawing other people into adultery may take place through seduction, temptation, tripping, deceit, or association. It may

also happen by consent and response, or through coercion and rape.

Adultery through the senses:

1. A man may fall into adultery through his sight. Thus the Lord God said, "... *Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matt. 5:28). This was also realised by Job, the righteous, in the Old Testament, hence his beautiful statement: "*I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman.*" (Job. 31:1).

Therefore, shyness and a "bashful look" are signs of virtue, but he who feasts his eyes on physical beauty or an exciting sight reveals an indication that his heart is impure.

However, this does not mean that every look is sinful. The first look may not be a sin, for man cannot live with his eyes closed. His eyes may unconsciously or involuntarily fall upon a sexual or an exciting scene. Up to this point, he has not committed a mistake. However, if this unintentional look excites him and makes him willingly cast another look, it then becomes a sin, since it is a form of seeking satisfaction. The commission of a sin may not take place in a second look, for perhaps the man is outwardly in control of himself and does not cast a second look. However, the sin lies in his inner self, which was affected by the first look of lust, and in his heart.

2. One may commit adultery through hearing. This takes place when he experiences a sense of enjoyment at listening to

sexual matters and getting excited in the process, or keeping them in his subconscious to be excited by them at a later time.

3. Man may commit adultery through the sense of touch, or through the sense of smell when a certain smell excites him and satisfies his sense. That is why perfumes are sometimes used in a way intended for temptation.

Adultery through thinking:

The senses work externally, but when thought is defiled, adultery starts working internally. Thought then turns into lust in the heart. Sinning may start with a lust in the heart which generates ideas. These ideas then excite the senses which look for satisfaction. However, this satisfaction may be confined to thinking where wakeful dreams and a lot of imagining take place.

Thinking about sex may be generated through reading, watching, listening to, or getting mixed up in any type of exciting events.

We should, however differentiate between the war of thoughts and sinning through thinking, for the devil may fight against man using adulterous thoughts. Thus, if the fight is external and persistent, and if man rejects and shun it, he has not yet sinned, but is merely struggling against it. Sinning through thinking is the acceptance of sinful thoughts, negotiating them enjoying them and inventing new ones to satisfy the heart's lust.

Adultery through the heart (through lust):

If the struggle takes place in thinking and not in the heart, then it is only mild. However, it becomes more raging if it mixes up with emotion, and it increases with the increase of whatever control desire has over man. At this point, the case becomes serious and may develop into actual adultery, namely through the body. However, adultery through the heart may be a mere intention in it, which circumstances do not help to get fulfilled, or may be man disposes of it in a spiritual way, thus getting himself rid of it.

Adultery through the tongue or the written word:

This form of adultery comprises all forms of exciting sexual talk including jesting, flirting, sexual jokes, love stories, wicked songs, as well as soft and lustful talk. All these fall under the title of sin where man sins against himself and his listeners.

It may happen that such expressions are put down in writing, in which case they also lead to the same sins whether the expression occurs in novels, stories, poems or letters.

Offences:

An offence may arise in an early age through the parents' method of upbringing their children.

The head of a family may accompany his children to the movies to please and entertain them, yet the show may include offensive things that will open the children's eyes and make

them lose their spiritual naivete. The father may argue that the show has nothing harmful and that it has not produced any bad influence upon him. In saying this he overlooks the difference in age between him and his children, for after all he is mature and controlled by his intellect while his children are at an age controlled by their senses and instincts. He also overlooks the difference between them in social status, for, unlike his children, he's married and does not suffer any form of suppression. Moreover, he overlooks the fact that an offence may not produce any effect at present, but may do so later on when the scenes follow his children into their future.

Another type of father may want his home to be a high class one in accordance with his own concept of high-class. Thus he furnishes his residence with all the means of entertainment, such as a television, or a home movie, before which the wife and the children sit at all times. The father may claim that the members of his family will be in control of what they hear and see. *"Offences should come: but woe to him through whom they do come!"* (Luke 17:1).

The father's responsibility increases if he forces his children into sinfulness when he confronts their religiousness and carefulness with irritating mockery.

A further example of sinfulness is the mother who wants to marry off her daughter. She may force her daughter into using make-up and certain clothes so as to attract the people's attention. Such an attitude makes her, as well as those looking at her daughter, fall into sinfulness.

A sin may be brought about through friends and bad company: According to the Bible: "*..evil company Corrupts good habits.*" (1 Cor. 15:33). These communications comprise sinful conversations, faulty meetings and excursions, and wrong directives picturing manhood and happiness as lying in corruption.

A sin may be brought about through a permissive society and the temptation of the opposite sex. We are in a generation that is disintegrating as far as clothing, adornment and permissiveness are concerned. If clothing is not in keeping with bashfulness, and if people put on such clothes regardless of religion and conscience, they may be doing so because they are permissive, because they want to keep up with the modern trends, or just out of fear of being criticised.

Many a time, a girl finds enchantment in the admiration of people and the flattery of the vile. Thus she adorns herself, not for those at home but for outsiders. Often, too, does a woman find pleasure in entrapping men. This act fills her with confidence in herself and her influence regardless of her responsibility for this sin before her own conscience. She herself may not fall into lustfulness; however she falls into a form of awareness of her personality which is of a worldly type.

This girl may argue that she has not fallen into adultery. However, God will hold her accountable for the blood of those who fell because of her, and she will bear the burden of their sins on Judgment Day. In this connection, the Lord Jesus said, "*.. woe to that man by whom the offence comes it would be*

better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. 18:7-6). Do you think that the statement: *"We reap blood O Lord, "* in Psalm fifty, that we repeat, is intended only for the blood of the murdered? No, for it refers also to every person whose sin we caused and whose blood God will ask us to account for on Judgment Day.

What has been said here about a woman applies also to a man if he is the cause of sinfulness.

Adulterous relationships protected by the law:

There are certain social relationships that Christianity condemns as adulterous no matter how hard their attempts are to shelter them behind worldly laws that religion does not approve of. The best known of these adulterous relationships are:

1. Marriage following a wrongful divorce:

The Lord Jesus says about the law of divorce: *"Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."* (Matt. 19:9).

"Whoever divorces his wife, and marries another, commits adultery." (Luke 16:18), (Mark 10: 11).

Therefore whoever divorces his wife for any other reason, no matter what judgments he has obtained, has his divorce considered null and void from the Christian point of view, and is still regarded as a married man. If he then marries another, it

will be as if he had taken another wife beside his own. This is what God has meant by His words, "*..commits adultery against her.*" (Mark 10:11).

Many people resort to several ways to obtain divorce. Thus they change their denomination in order to appeal to the law which rules that if a couple belong to different denominations, then the Islamic law is applied to them. In this case, the court of vital statistics will grant a divorce as per the Islamic law. However, in the eyes of Christianity, such a man is still tied to his first wife, for God says, "*Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.*" (Matt. 19:6).

If the man, who obtains such a divorce, marries another woman, he will be committing adultery as per God's words in the Bible. He may try to defend himself saying that it was the church that performed the wedding. Our answer to this is either that he deceived the church, or the priest who performed the wedding made a mistake. In both cases the marriage is considered null and void in the eyes of religion, and the relationship adulterous.

Priests should refrain from marrying divorced people and follow the bible rules. They may refer the matter to the Ecclesiastical Council for review.

2. Marrying a divorcee:

One of the things prohibited by Christianity is marrying divorcees. God says in the Bible:

"Whoever marries a woman who is divorced, commits adultery." (Matt. 5:32,19:9).

"Whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband, commits adultery." (Luke 16:18),

"And if a woman divorces her husband, and marries another, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:12).

In this type of marriage both man and woman commit adultery. Why? The reason is that divorce must have taken place either for adultery or for some other reason.

If divorce took place for any other reason but adultery, it would then be null and void and the first marriage would still be considered valid. The woman in this case would be married to two men at the same time; hence she would be an adulteress.

However, if the woman was divorced for adultery on her part, her punishment would be that she remain single and not get married, since she would not be trusted in a new marriage. In case some people protested that the Lord Jesus had forgiven the adulteress, we would say that this forgiveness would save her from eternal condemnation, but it would not be right for her to remarry in this life, which saying is in keeping with the commandment of Jesus Christ Himself who established this law.

3. **Consanguineous marriage:**

It is considered a form of adultery when a man marries a woman who is unlawful for him to marry. An example of this was set by John the Baptist when he confronted Herod saying, *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."* (Mark 6:18). A list of those near of kin is included in the Book of Leviticus (18:6-18). The laws concerning consanguineous marriages are kept at the church.

4. **Concubinage and polygamy:**

This practice is prohibited in Christianity which considers it as a form of adultery. We have already discussed this subject in detail in the book entitled "The law of monogamy in Christianity."



METHODS OF TREATMENT

Methods of treatment concerning this sin centre around two aspects: negative and positive ones.

The negative aspects are an escape from sin, by staying away from all things that excite and lead to sinfulness, and an escape from idleness.

The positive aspects are the exploitation of man's energy and emotions in the field of spirituality through love of God that expels love of sinfulness, and through love of people that helps one stay away from sinful love.

Avoiding all that may excite and lead to sinfulness:

Escape is the best method of treatment from the sin of adultery. In this connection, the sage exclaims in wonder: *"Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbour's wife. "* (Prov. 6:27-29).

Do not assume that getting exposed to sinfulness is a form of courage. No, it is not, for it rather is a form of dangerous risk, and any such desire indicates that the heart is impure. He who is virtuous escapes from sins and does not respond to them.

You have to escape from all that strains you and causes your downfall, remembering in so doing the words of the Bible: *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen and repent."* (Rev. 2:5). Escape from sinful sights, hearings, readings, visits, and meetings that may attract you towards sinfulness. Escape from wicked friendships and relationships. Your true friend is the one who draws you closer to God.

If at night you are attacked by sinful dreams, do not go back to them by reviewing them in your thoughts during the day. Otherwise, it will be counted as a fall.

Beware of letting sinful thoughts come to you through your rebuking yourself by reviewing your sins. However, in case you want to place your sin before your eyes at all times, recall it in a general way, but be absolutely careful not to delve into recalling details, for lustful sins in particular may come back through remembering their details. This is what is meant by the words in the Reconciliation Prayer: "Recollection of evil that brings about death".

Escape from the substance of sinfulness. Saints have said that he who is close to the substance of sinfulness has two wars to wage: one on the inside and one on the outside. He who is close to the substance of sinfulness is easy to fall, for he will be like a person standing close to a well into which his enemy is capable of pushing him. If this person is far away from the well, God will send someone to save him before his enemy, whose intention is to throw him into it, succeeds in dragging him to it.

Escape also from your own self if being alone with it may end up in your fall. You should know that seclusion is not merely that, for it should be a sitting with God and being alone with Him. Therefore, your sitting with people is better than being by yourself with the Devil and his defiling thoughts.

Escape from sinful thoughts:

First, escape from all that may bring about your sinful thinking.

If sinful thoughts come your way, resist and do not give in to them, and set the words of the Apostle before your eyes: *"..bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."* (2 Cor. 10:5).

You may resist sinful thinking by occupying your mind with some other form of thought, such as prayer, meditation, reading, studying, or thinking about any financial or social problem, or about some useful project. The more profound, powerful, and concentrated the new thought is, the more capable it is of chasing away the first defiling thought.

If you are unable to chase one thought by resorting to another, occupy yourself with manual work or with a harmless means of entertainment.

This will dispel your thoughts and prevent them from being alone with you.

If thoughts go on bothering you, occupy yourself by talking with people, for you cannot talk with them and have sinful thoughts at the same time.

Escape from drifting away with the current:

It is not purposeless that the church asks us to include the following Psalm in the early morning prayer: *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful."* (Ps. 1:1). Therefore, escape from the evil environment lest you should slip into it.

You may have some frivolous companions who may invite you to have fun with them. If you refuse, they will mock you. However, do not go along with them, and do not drift away with their current.

Keep your spiritual principles and let the people say about you whatever they want to say. Do not tread the path of sinfulness driven by your fear of what people may say. People's talk does not stand for the perfection you are seeking, and is not an excuse to save you on Judgment Day. Moreover, a person, whose personality is strong, leads and is not led.

It is not right for us to follow the world in its form of entertainment, its fashions, its frivolity, its jesting, and its permissiveness, for the Apostle tells us: *"And do not be conformed to this world."* (Rom. 12:2), which means do not be like it as we are in the image of God and His likeness.

Beware of giving in:

Beware of the first step, for every step in sinfulness may lead to another. If, however, you slip into taking one of the steps of sinfulness, do not despair, and do not give in to another. Do

not say to yourself, "it's useless, now that I have fallen." Despair will weaken your will-power and will make you surrender. Beware of it!!

Sin does not rest until it has become complete. Therefore, do not give it the chance to accomplish this. If you commit adultery through sight or hearing, repent and do not move on to adultery through thinking. If you have already arrived at committing adultery through thinking, escape and do not move on to adultery through the heart and lust. If you fall into lust, do not complete it through action. Struggle and resist remembering the Apostle's admonition to us, *"You have not yet resisted bloodshed, striving against sin."* (Heb. 12:4).

Saint Isaac said: "The victorious soldiers are not the only ones that are crowned, for so also are the soldiers whom the enemy have beaten and broken their limbs, since they did struggle and fight bravely on without surrendering." So be like them.

Escape from idleness:

Leisure and idleness are the greatest enemies of youth. Conversely, a busy person is not free to think of sexual matters. He does not also have the time to participate in futile and shameless meetings. Therefore, the majority of those who are occupied are not attacked by sins.

A hard-working student, who is persistent in his studies and mindful of his future, in no way speculates about sin. Moreover, since his mind is at rest from these sinful thoughts, he is mostly devoted to his studies, for one strengthens the other.

Therefore, be a productive person. Be one who knows the value of his time and life and who invests every minute in what is of benefit. Fill your time with work, prayers, spiritual meetings, service, reading, and acquiring knowledge. All these will not afford you the chance to think about sin. Moreover, extensive work uses up that extra energy that the youth possess and does not allow it to wage a sexual war against them. This extra energy may have its source in the natural heat of the young or in the amount of rich food that the young consume in their years of growth.

This leads us to a discussion of the positive treatment of this sin through the love of God and of the people.

Love of God:

If God's love takes over man's heart, it drives out his love of sin. Rather, it makes him hate it, shrink from it, and remain unaffected by it. Spiritual feelings take him over giving him strength to resist sin.

In order for a person to avoid adultery, it is not enough for him to escape from its causes: he has also to fortify the inside of his heart with God's love. This is attained through the means that bring about God's grace i.e. prayer, meditation, reading the Holy Bible, spiritual books and biographies of saints, regular attendance of church mass and spiritual meetings, self-judgment, confession, communion, fasting, invocation, service, benefiting by spiritual friendships and good examples.

Through these spiritual means, his heart is purified, and he becomes inherently strong. If he is faced with war, he struggles and does not stumble. If, however he falls, it will be a light one, and he soon stands up and repents.

Energy and Emotion:

The whole problem of sex centres around the wrong or physical orientation of two aspects: energy and emotion.

Energy, which is an extra bodily heat, is one of the characteristics of the youthful age. If it is not well-oriented it becomes easy for it to destroy the young. Leaders and educators of young people try to have this energy consumed through physical education, trips and various activities in both the intellectual and bodily fields. On the other hand, men of the spirit are interested in exploiting this energy in the field of worship, service, integrity in work, and activities within the church.

As for emotion, young age is one of emotion and rashness, especially if the person in question is naturally emotional and rash. In addition, some young person may be deprived of this emotion at home or within his environment. It may also happen, for some particular reasons, that he is deprived of love, kindness, compassion and emotional interchange. Hence, his problem becomes one of compensating all these in a wrong way.

On the other hand, a person who is emotionally satisfied is less liable to fall from the sexual point of view. Therefore, it is

mandatory that the youth's emotions are satisfied in a sound spiritual way.

The best way to accomplish this is through God's love, a more profound one does not exist. It is a love that when people encountered, they gave up their families, friends, money, position, and everything else, driven by their love for the King, Jesus Christ. Related to the love of God is love for the church, enthusiasm for it, and zeal for the salvation of people's souls, their reaching up for God, and their adherence to Him. Hence the service become a principal factor in the emotional satisfaction of people on a spiritual level that is higher and deeper than the bodily one.

Generally speaking, those who pursue the means of grace, who adhere to God's love, and who are active in the service are the least indulgent in the sexual aspect.

When man's spirituality weakens, sin starts waging its war against him. A mere visit to a patient, sympathising with a grieving person, sitting with children in a class for church education, or sitting with children in an orphanage is enough to fill the heart with sublime feelings that are capable of erasing all thought related to sexual matters. However, it is mandatory that man should continue to do this service in depth and love, and in a spiritual way.

What remains after that?

The life of purity and chastity requires the special assistance of the Holy Spirit. This assistance is acquired through the spiritual way of living and through the constant prayer.

This life requires that man refrain from condemning others, for this condemnation of anyone else causes God's grace to gradually abandon him until he falls and feels that he is too weak to condemn anyone.

Our kind and righteous God, who bestowed chastity upon Augustine, Pelagia, Miriam the Copt and many of the other fallen ones, is capable of bestowing it upon all His people, especially the strugglers and the humbled among them.





THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not steal."
(Ex. 20:15, Deut. 5:19).

"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God."
(1 Cor. 6:10)

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS THEFT?

FROM WHOM DO YOU STEAL?

What is Theft?

Theft is not, in its general sense, the acquisition of someone else's belongings. Thus, when the Lord's disciples felt hungry and plucked some corn in the field, He did not rebuke them. The criticism of the Pharisees centred around one point: that they did that on the Sabbath, (Matt. 12:1-2), which means that it was permitted for a hungry person to pick up some corn on the way and eat it. The law states *"when you come into your neighbour's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure; but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbour's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand; but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbour's standing grain."* (Deut. 23:24-25).

Therefore, theft is not partaking of the belongings of the others, but stealing them; for if you partake of them with the owner's consent and permission, or through his generosity, then your act is not theft.

Theft may take place in camera without the knowledge of the robbed one, such as what embezzlers do, what Judas did when

he used to help himself from the box without the disciples' knowledge (John 12:6), and what robbers do when they break in and steal (Matt. 6:19) while the owners are absent or asleep.

However, if great love, companionship, and friendship exist between you and a friend, and if you need and help yourself to something that belongs to him knowing that he would not object even if he was present at the time, then your act is not considered theft, on condition that you inform him of what you have done and seek his forgiveness.

Other forms of theft are those committed in secret. These thefts take the form of deceit, fraud, forgery, and the like. In all these forms, the robbed one is unaware of what is taken from him. To all these forms of theft another sin is added: the sin of lying.

Theft may also take place openly before the robbed one's eyes and in his hearing, yet without his consent. Such is the case when someone's money is stolen from him by force, by coercion, or by extortion in what is called "armed robbery" performed by kidnappers, highway robbers, and pirates. These acts may sometimes also be accompanied with injuries to the victims.

Theft is not only confined to "stealing" something, but it also includes "damage". He who damages something that belongs to another is actually causing him some loss of his belongings. This is included under the headline of theft

especially when it is performed on purpose. In this case the sin of theft is coupled with that of "non-loving". In general, he who causes damage to someone should repair it or compensate him for it.

A worse case is that of causing deliberate damage. A thief may benefit by stealing in a material way, but he who deliberately damages another's possessions aims at nothing else but to satisfy his hatred.

Included in the above item also is the damage someone causes to public property, as in the case of demonstrations where street lamps, trees, or public transport vehicles are destroyed. This is considered a form of theft of the country's funds or the people's property.

In general, theft is a form of disrespect for other people's rights and property.

Theft denotes that the thief is vile and dishonest. It destroys his character in the people's eyes, and calls upon them to beware of him, to despise him, and not to mix up with him. It even makes the thief himself look despicable in his own eyes.

However, we should not cast the same look at it when the matter concerns young children who do not differentiate between personal possessions and the rights of others. They see everything before them as common and simply lying there to be picked up without any sense of committing evil. A child may even help itself to something that does not belong to it, doing it secretly, not because of any feeling on its part of committing theft, but rather out of fear it may be taken away from it.

Through the passage of time and the factor of development, intellectually, psychologically, and educationally, the child starts to comprehend the meaning of private property, to respect the rights of others , and to understand that taking whatever belongs to others will cause him remorse and arouse in him feeling of wrong doing. Then, their act is considered theft.

Theft may sometimes also be regarded as a form of sickness - a mere psychological sickness that requires treatment, not punishment. When having this sickness, a thief steals things that he neither needs nor knows how to benefit by. However, he experiences satisfaction in keeping them and taking them away from others. He may be driven to steal by internal motives that are beyond his will-power, he may sometimes cry for committing such a deed, but he is just unable to resist such an impulse.

Such a person is in need of treatment and an investigation of the causes of his sickness and its roots that lie buried in his life-history, in his environment, and his upbringing.

The illicit money acquired by a thief is capable of dissipating the good money that he already has. As the saying goes: "Illicit things take the good ones and dissipate them." Theft is a fire that burns away what the thief himself has. In this situation he resembles someone who has eaten rotten food: as soon as this food reaches his stomach, he throws up the good and bad food together that are inside him.

How beautiful it would be for people to live together in honesty and in mutual trust and confidence, then one would have anything anywhere to find it later where one had left it. One would let the door of one's house open without anyone else helping himself to anything in it. If one forgot his mail or confidential papers somewhere, he would be confident that no one will go through them.

Theft was regarded as a mean act, despised and hated by people, even before the holy law where God said: "You shall not steal " This indicates that, by his nature and conscience man has an aversion to it.

When Laban went up to Jacob and accused him saying: "Why did you steal my gods?" (meaning his idols), Jacob felt the repulsiveness of the accusation and answered saying *"With whoever you find your gods, do not let him live."* (Gen. 31:30-32). Thus he condemned the thief to death being undeserved to stay alive. This incident took place before the holy law. The same condemnation may also be found in the story of Joseph and his brothers. When the latter were accused of stealing his cup, they became immensely upset and answered haughtily and loftily, *"Why does my Lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing... With whomever of your servants it is found... let him die."* (Gen. 44:7-9).

Theft is a sin that is so ashamed of itself that it works in the dark, and a sinner becomes disgusted with it, repudiates it,

and tries to cast it away from him. Thus it is said:

"If the theft demon treads a road, the lying demon will say: take me along with you."

It is hard to find a thief who does not lie to cover up his crime, though he may also lie to be able to accomplish it. He may lie during or before the theft in order to deceive the victim and be able to rob him. Such is the case with cheating in trade. He may also lie to whoever is watching or suspecting him.

Since theft resorts to lying, confessors should pay close attention to this point. Thus whoever confesses a sin of theft should also be asked about its relation to lying.

Two factors add to the burden of the sin of theft:

1. The degree of harm done to the victim.
2. The identity of the victim himself, especially if he is poor and needy, or if the stolen article is a sacred one.

Therefore we have to pose the question:

From whom do you steal?:

The poorer and more needy the victim is, the greater the sin is. It is therefore an immensely horrible sin for someone, for instance, to steal an orphan's or a widow's money. That is what led Jesus Christ to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees, saying: *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses. Therefore you shall receive greater condemnation."* (Matt. 23:14, Mark 12:40).

The degree of seriousness of a theft is not measured by the value of the stolen article but by its value to the person from whom it has been stolen. For instance, if someone stole a tailor's needle or a painter's brush, these two objects might not in themselves be worth anything. However, they are of vital importance to their owners whose work and means of earning a living might be crippled by the theft.

The stolen object may, in itself, have no value, but, to its owner, it may represent a dear memory or be of special importance, thus, losing it inflicts a profound pain upon his heart as it may be irreplaceable .

Stealing from a needy person denotes the non-existence of any sensitivity in the heart of the thief. For instance, usury and pawning applied to a person, who finds it hard even to acquire his daily bread, would be like stealing his own and his children's food. This needy person would not have resorted to borrowing or pawning but for his poverty. Would it be appropriate to apply usury to this person instead of assisting him with a spirit of love?

Usury is a form of theft that is devoid of mercy, which is the reason why God prohibited it as He also prohibited pawning the necessities of life. Thus He said, *If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbour's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down: For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in?*

And it shall come to pass, when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious." (Ex. 22:25-27).

He also said, "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger, or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no usury or interest from him, but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit." (Lev. 25:35-37).

He also said, "You shall not charge interest to your brother, interest on money, or food or anything that is lent out at interest." (Deut. 23:19).

The excess money that a usurer takes from a poor person is an act of stealing his necessary requirements. It is different from the interest paid by banks and financial institutions, which invest the money of depositors, set up projects, and make a profit, for these banks and institutions regard the depositors as partners in their capital and pay them their share of the profit.

If this usury, that is applied to the poor, is regarded as a form of theft, regardless of what the merciless say that it is legal, then what should we say about the obviously horrible theft where a thief breaks into the house of a widow or a poor needy person?!

Despite the fact that we talked much about the wickedness of stealing from the poor, it should not mean that robbing the rich is permissible or of no consequence! No, if robbing the rich

who possess more than they need is a mean crime, then it should even be more so if someone should rob the poor and needy or do them an injustice that would affect their means of living!!

If robbing common people is a horrible matter, then what about robbing a church or a priest?

Stealing of sacred things is a serious matter, and robbing altars and churches is unimaginable. That is why churches all over Europe are constantly open and unguarded despite what they contain. Nobody can expect or even imagine that a human being would find it in himself to break into the house of the Lord and steal something. Everything inside there, in God's house, is sacred, and everyone entering it is overcome with humility, awe, and a desire for repentance.

What should we say about those who steal a candle, a book, a parcel, or the like in a church? They have no excuse even if they say that they did it for a blessing! A blessing is not attained through stealing.

And what should we say about someone who steals from the church funds, endowments, or homes, and uses what he steals for himself and his home? It is God's money, the poor's money, and sacred money.

What should we say about those who steal the saints' bodies, bones, and treasures to transfer them stealthily to their churches or countries protesting that it is a blessing?! The body of St. Mark was stolen in the ninth century, and the thieves justified their act before their conscience saying that they took it as a

blessing! How many manuscripts were stolen from monasteries and churches in the name of love of knowledge and understanding! All these are excuses that cannot be justified.

The most horrible thing of all is: What should we say about a person who steals from God Himself?

A person steals from God when he refrains from paying tithes, first fruits, and offerings. This matter is expounded in the epistle of Malachi the prophet where it is said, *"Return to Me and I will return to you, " says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings... Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, " says the Lord of hosts."* (Mal. 3:7-10).

This money that we steal from God, that belongs to the poor yet we keep to ourselves and not give to its rightful owners, the needy ones, is unrighteous money about which the Lord says: *"Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon."* (Luke 16:9). The reference here is to the money that we keep to ourselves though we do not own. It belongs to the poor whom we have done injustice to by not giving them that which is due to them. Therefore, it is unrighteous money that we should return to its owners who are then won over as our friends who pray for us.

In the same way that we steal from God, the Church's and the poor people's money, so we do steal also time from Him.

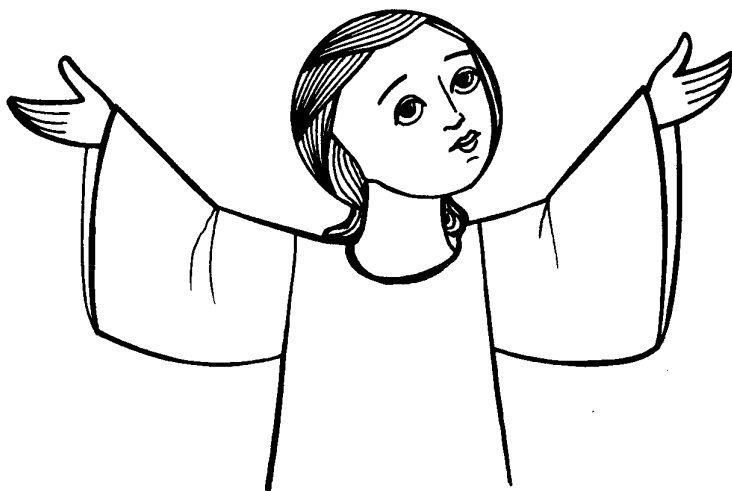
There is for God, in our lives, a certain time that we steal from Him and which we spend in other pursuits. For Example:

(a) The day of the Lord: The Lord has a certain day of the week that belongs to Him and not to us. We do not have the right to use it in any way we wish, for it should be devoted to God's sincerity and worship. If we spent it otherwise, we would be stealing God's day from Him.

Another point is that, in Egypt, Christians employees are given two hours off every Sunday morning (from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.) in order to give them the chance to attend mass. If a Christian employee did not go to Church on Sunday morning but spent those two hours at home doing some other business of his choosing, he would be stealing that time kept aside for God.

(b) Worship time: In the same way that God has a day of the week, he also has certain times every day which should be devoted to prayer, meditation, invocations, readings in the Holy Bible and religious books, attending religious meetings, and service. If worldly affairs took over our lives leaving us no chance for worship, we would be robbing God of His time. In the same way that God is entitled to the first fruits of our money, so is He entitled to the first periods of our time. That is what the psalm chanter means when he says: *"O God, You are my God,. early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You."* (Ps. 63:1). God Himself said, *"Those who seek me diligently will find me."* (Prov. 8:17). If we started every morning without God and busied ourselves with things other than His worship, we would be robbing Him of the first periods of that time which due to Him.

(c) **God's seasonal and feast days:** God has other times that should be devoted to Him on certain seasonal days; e.g. Passion Week through which our priests devote themselves to prayers, hymns, and readings in Church; the evenings of the Coptic month of Keyahk which were devoted to glorification and praises; feasts and the other holy days. We should, at all these times, consecrate our time to the Lord and not rob Him of it.



CHAPTER TWO SLIGHT THEFTS

What is a thief?

A thief is not just the person who digs a hole in the wall, breaks into a house in the absence of its owners, or picks people's pockets, for the meaning of the word theft may expand so much as to include a lot of those whose names are honoured, and a lot of acts that go by false names other than theft.

This sin may start with small thefts that seem to be trivial, since, those committing them do not sense their guilt. They may even do so shamelessly before the people.

Thefts within the scope of children and married couples:

A child may take things such as food and toys that belong to someone else without their knowledge. He may not realise in the beginning that it is an act of theft. However, when he grows up, he realises it and may abandon or go on with it fully realising his guilt. This thieving practice then increases gradually when he helps himself stealthily, at play or at school, to things that belong to his friends and colleagues.

This age bracket imposes upon us two things to do:

1. that we do not deprive the child in such a way as to make him steal things in secret, and
2. that we accustom him to be so frank as to always reveal what he takes in secret, without our punishing him for it, or retrieving the stolen thing from him except when necessary, all this while giving him the suitable guidance whenever necessary.

Theft may take place between married couples, and it may be mixed up also with lying. Thus, a husband may conceal or reduce the true amount of his income when telling his wife about it, and the wife may conceal from her husband the true amount of her expenditures, mostly adding to them.

The treatment of this matter requires an atmosphere of frankness, understanding, and cooperation, and a feeling that whatever belongs to the husband belongs also to the wife, and whatever the wife owns is also the property of her husband. This should be accompanied with a mutual understanding of both parties' points of view as regards requirements and capabilities.

Forms of theft that may appear minor:

Many employees may sometimes use the blank stationery that belongs to the business to do their own private work. This stationery, however cheap its price is, is not due to them. This behaviour is inappropriate. The same also applies to using other articles.

Some higher employees use their official cars for their own private transportation. In so doing, they make the State pay for the gas, the car depreciation, and the driver's wages, all of which being inappropriate, since it is they who are using the cars. Some of them even exploit the workers by making them serve them personally. All this may strangely seem so slight that even the "honourable" ones do it without experiencing any sense of guilt.

This same category includes those who board a bus or a tram-car without paying the fare protesting that the conductor was too busy to ask for it. In the same way, a train passenger may occupy a seat in a higher class section of the train without paying the difference.

The stricter the person is in minor matters, the more he/she indicates how sensitive his/her conscience is.

Forgetfulness:

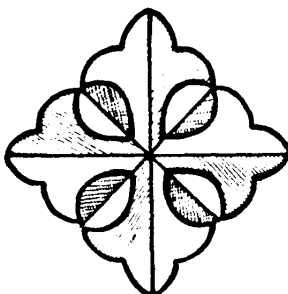
Many trivial thefts occur through forgetfulness, especially when one borrows something and forgets to return it to its owner who in turn forgets to ask for it. This borrowed thing may remain in your constant possession, as if it were yours, though you have no right to it.

You may go into a friend's library, find a book that you like and ask for it that you may read and return it. The book may stay so long in your possession that you forget who it belongs to especially that it may not carry the name of its owner. The latter, in turn, may have forgotten the one who has borrowed the book, thus losing it. In the meantime the book remains in

your unlawful possession. This too is included in the category of unpremeditated thefts. Many people lose their books and pens in this way.

You may want to write something in a rush, but you find that you have no pen. You borrow a pen from someone, write what you want, then unintentionally and by force of habit you put it into your pocket. There it lies forgotten by you and by its owner.

Therefore you should either have a good memory, keep a record of what you take from people, or keep in the book a slip of paper carrying the name of the owner. If you are already in one of those situations, reveal it to your friends and acquaintances telling them that you have a certain book which you do not know the owner of, or that you have taken a pen from someone and that you still have it. Such notifications may reveal the identity of the owner.



CHAPTER THREE

THEFT IN COMMERCE

Many a time one's conscience becomes so loose in commercial dealings that it is said it may swallow a camel. A merchant of this sort imagines that this is a form of skill and art that brings him the utmost profit. The following examples illustrate this theft in commerce:

1. Theft through cheating:

An example of this is selling a damaged object as if it were sound and taking advantage of the buyer not noticing the damage. How noble it would be for a seller to draw the attention of the buyer to the defect or damage in the article. In so doing, he would win respect and confidence of those dealing with him.

Some may say that then he would sell nothing. Not so, for he will sell his goods at a price commensurate with the defect in them. It would be a lesser price, but the money would be legitimate and blessed.

What would you say if a merchant, for instance, sold you fruits or vegetables, then put a large quantity of damaged, Corrupt or unripe products in the bottom of the bag and covered it with a few chosen ones of excellent quality? You would be deceived,

would pay the price, and would not discover the trick until you went home! You would then realise that the merchant was dishonest. This category may include selling of damaged articles as sound ones, selling of used articles as new ones, and agreeing to sell a certain brand but delivering one of a lesser quality or value.

Another form of cheating is selling something under brand name of another. An example of this is when merchant sells you synthetic as natural silk, since you are no expert on silk and its varieties, or a gold coated metal as pure gold and at the price of the latter. False jewellery and antiques are also included in this category. A merchant may also sell you a fountain pen as a Parker pen while it is only an imitation.

All that cheating is a form of theft coupled with lying. In committing it a seller receives a price that his merchandise is not worth, and the difference in price is unlawful money stolen from the buyer. What makes this sin more horrible is that it is accompanied with false propaganda to deceive the buyer.

A clear and obvious type of cheating is the use of incorrect measures, weights and scales.

In this type, cheating does not take place in the kind or quality of the merchandise but in its quantity, since the buyer receives a quantity that is less than what is due to him.

2. Theft through greed and price increase:

Unreasonable price increases are included in theft because it is a form of embezzlement of the buyer's money. God allows a merchant to make a reasonable profit, but an exorbitant profit that is full of greed and void of mercy is not approved by any religion.

This type of theft may occur through monopoly, where a merchant is the sole manufacturer or importer of the merchandise, or the sole agent authorised to sell it. In this case he may impose exorbitant prices, thus exploiting the buyer's need and stealing money from the people who are compelled to buy from him.

This theft may also occur in the form of a black market. A merchant may store the merchandise until it becomes unavailable on the market, or buy it and store it until the other outlets are empty of it, then he offers it for sale at an exorbitant price, exploiting the buyers' need and embezzling their money.

These are forms of theft performed through exploitation. The merchant in this case is the sole seller, the buyer is in need, and time favours the seller who imposes a certain price, forces the buyer to pay it and makes an exorbitant profit which is then a form of theft.

3. Thefts through economic manoeuvring:

There are other practices, such as market manoeuvring, which are considered forms of theft. Thus speculation practiced by

merchants, who raise or lower prices, may lead to the bankruptcy of small traders whose money is embezzled by big speculators: e.g. what used formerly to take place in the cotton market.

Another example of theft in trade is the practice of some banks, Corporations, or individuals of declaring a premeditated and intentional bankruptcy whereby all the investors' money is lost.

Further, the illusory economic projects whereby people's money is amassed through tempting advertisements which prove later on to be a fraudulent means of theft.

4. Thefts committed by buyers:

A thief in sales may be the buyer not the seller. This takes place when the buyer resorts to excessive bargaining, especially with poor sellers.

Sometimes a merchant is poor and in dire need to sell his merchandise at any price in order to get his daily bread, or because he has a sick person at home. When some dire necessity compels him to act in this way, he sells what he has at any price mindless of whether he gains or loses.

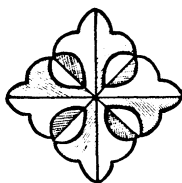
A buyer may exploit a merchant's need and impose upon him a price that does not coincide with the value of what he wants to buy nor with the seller's efforts and his right to a legitimate profit. It is possible that the merchant may accept the transaction out of necessity, which acceptance may put the buyer's conscience to rest. However, this is an injustice done to the merchant who is actually robbed of his earnings.

The theft may not have led to the poor merchant assuming any loss in what he sells, but he may have made a very small amount of profit which is not enough to feed him and his family. This situation is brought about by the instance of the buyer who robs the seller of his profit, and yet who goes away with an untroubled conscience and a happy heart. Thus it is well said in the saying that: "A concealed charity lies in buying & selling."

One of the fathers once said: "When you go to buy something, do not be stringent in setting the price as the laymen do. Whatever is said to you about the article, increase its price a little and take it."

Many of the bargains conducted with poor merchants indicate the cruelty of the buyer's heart.

A poor merchant deserves your charity, even if you do not buy anything from him. Therefore, the least you can do to him is to offer him this charity through buying from him without hurting his feelings. Be assured that the poor merchant's invocation for you is more valuable than the difference in price.



CHAPTER FOUR

INJUSTICE AND UNPAID LABOUR

1. Unpaid labor and low wages:

Unpaid labour is a form of theft.

If someone uses another to do him such unpaid work, he will be stealing his wages. If he hires him and pays him very low wages below the borderline of sustenance, he will be stealing his effort and labor.

For example, if a servant works for you, but you do not pay him enough for his lodging, his food, his children's expenses, you will then be stealing his labor and actually killing him.

God took a stand against unpaid labor during the days of the Pharaohs and said: *"I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters."* (Ex. 3:7).

In the same way, Saint James, the apostle, says about low wages: *"Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you keep back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath ."* (James 5:4).

2. Suspension of rights, or wasting them:

Unpaid wages or delays in paying them are part of unpaid labor and low wages. In this connection God says: *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren, or one of the aliens who are in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor, and has set his heart upon it, lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you."* (Deut 24:14-15).

Included in this category is the director who delays an employee's raise or promotion if the latter deserves it. In this case the director is stealing the employee's earning through depriving him of his rights. It is no excuse for him that he has not pocketed the employee's earnings but has left it for the country's budget. Does the poor employee's heart not scream against the director, saying, "You have done me an injustice. You have eaten up my earnings!!" The same applies in the case of an employee who works some hours more than his regular time, yet his manager denies him the overtime he deserves. This also is robbing him of his earnings.

The same applies to a director who deducts money from an employee's earnings without any justification. It is true that it is a director's right to penalise his employees if they commit something that justifies a deduction from their salaries. However, if the penalty has no justification, the director will then have committed the sin of theft.

Therefore, theft is not only an act of stealing people's money for oneself, but it also includes denying the right of someone, whether it is to keep it for oneself or for someone else.

Hence, an injustice committed in money matters is a form of theft. An illustration of this is what took place with Zacchaeus, the tax collector who said: *"...and if I have taken any thing from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."* (Luke 19:8). Zacchaeus did not openly steal, but through defamation and denouncement, he oppressed the people, who thus lost their rights. Such an act falls within the scope of theft.

The same thing also applies to a tax collector who is not just. If he exaggerates in assessing someone's taxes he will be robbing that person of his money. On the other hand, if he imposes upon him an amount that is less than he should pay, he will be robbing the State of its dues. In both cases, he does not take anything for himself, but he robs one party of a certain amount of money that he hands over to the other. Therefore, such an employee should be very fair in his assessment and should not favour any party at the expense of another.

3. Bribery:

Bribery also is a form of theft, for it is an unmerited embezzlement of people's money. An employee should perform his work without charging the public anything in return for his services for which he receives a salary. If, however, he receives a bribe, then it is clearly committing theft. This is more so if this bribery takes the form of an imposed

tribute where such an employee does not serve anyone without first receiving a certain bribe.

As for the bribery an employee receives to exempt someone from a duty imposed upon him by the State, it means that he is actually committing two thefts: he is stealing that person's money by receiving a bribe from him, and he is stealing the State's money by wasting the rights due to it from that person. The person paying the bribe is also committing an act of theft since he is robbing the State of its dues from which the bribed employee has exempted him.

Bribery is not relieved of its liability when it takes up a name that is different from its disgraceful one. Thus it may assume the form of a gift, which in truth it is not, for gifts are exchanged among lovers and friends without any condition attached that a certain deed be performed in return.

Bribery does not include a tip that is given to a porter or a servant if it takes the form of charity or assistance offered in love to a poor person who is not required to break the law in return.

4. Dishonesty at work:

In the same way as the employer robs an employee or a labourer through corvee, by depriving him of his rights, his raises, or promotion, or by inflicting unjust punishments upon him, the labourer or the employee may rob his employer in several ways, such as:

(a) Stealing time:

Working time does not belong to the employee but to the employer who pays him for it. Therefore, if an employee exploits working time in attending to his/her own personal affairs, in spending it having fun with his/her fellow workers, or in taking illegal casual or sick leaves, he/she will be stealing this working time or the pay he/she receives for it.

(b) Dishonesty:

An employee is paid for the time he spends doing a certain job. If, however, he neglects his work, does not perform it as honestly, diligently and skilfully as he should, does not accomplish the service required of him but evades it in every possible way, postponing it carelessly, or shuns it by referring it to someone else; he will be stealing the pay due to him for performing the job, since, he actually breaks the agreement that requires him to work in return for his pay.

(c) Destruction of tools:

We often notice that a worker who owns a tool takes very good care of it. However, if he is a hired hand who uses his employer's tools, he often neglects them and does not care if they become damaged, though damaging such tools is a form of theft where the employer's money is stolen. This is to be noticed when we compare the case of a taxi driver who owns his own taxi and another who works for a pay on someone else's car.

5. Theft in other forms of injustice:

There are many forms of injustice that fall within the scope of theft. Some of them are:

(a) Wrongful agreements:

An agreement may be concluded between two parties whereby one is wronged and the other is put in a position where he can rob the first. An example of this is what takes place sometimes in contractual work which leads one to be exploited by the other party.

(b) Exploitation of authority:

Someone may sometimes exploit his authority over someone else and compel him to do things that involve injustice and theft, in the same way as King Ahab did when he wanted to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite (1Kin. 21), and tithe-collectors did when they robbed people and coerced them. Under the pressure of authority, and in the presence of the factor of threats, man may accept something despite the fact that it includes an obvious form of robbery and injustice.

(c) Circumventing the law:

Certain people use their intelligence and resourcefulness to circumvent the law. In this way, they amass money for themselves in an unlawful way, or evade their obligations towards the State or towards each other, their conscience being rendered dormant by their worldly delight at acquiring a fleeting gain.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEFT IN DEALINGS AND TRANSACTIONS

Theft is not confined to plunder, robbery, and abduction, for it also becomes apparent in dealings and transactions such as:

1. Denial of a trust, or of something found:

If someone entrusted a friend with something, then the latter denied receiving it or refused to return it, that friend would be a thief. This applies also to a person who refuses to return something he has borrowed, or to repay a loan, a mortgage, or a debt. About such acts the holy law says:

"If a person sins and commits a trespass against the Lord by lying to his neighbour about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbour, or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it.. because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found."(Lev. 6:2-4).

Theft particularly includes, not only denying a trust or something found and not returning it, but also damaging or using it.

2. Letting accounts stand uncorrected:

Included in theft is the case where two people have joint financial dealings. One of them may discover a mistake in his favour increasing his financial share. He accepts it and does not correct it, though he should have returned the extra money which he has unrightfully taken.

For instance, a boy may buy something, hands the seller a bill, and receives his change. How great his honesty would be if he counted the change, discovered that he had received more than was due to him, returned to the seller, and gave him back the extra change he had wrongfully received.

3. Gambling and Betting:

Money won from someone through gambling is illicit as it is unjustly received. So also are all those tricks used to cheat children out of their money.

4. Participating in Theft:

One is regarded as an accomplice in a crime when one joins a thief in the act or "*Whoever is a partner with a thief.*" (Prov. 29:24). The same applies to whoever harbours or directly encourages him, or whoever justifies his act or eases his sense of guilt.

CHAPTER SIX

STEALING IDEAS AND SECRETS

(PLAGIARISM)

Types of thefts:

Stealing ideas means that someone takes the idea of someone else and ascribes it to himself, or quotes something without referring it to its originator as if it belonged to himself.

An example of this is one who steals someone else's piece of music and inserts it within his own composition as if it were all his, or one who steals a plot, the concept of an invention, or the thoughts for a book. In literature, there is a well-known chapter about "poetic plagiarism." Some writings are literally plagiarised, while others are slightly modified.

Some may try to cover up their plagiarism by calling it "adoption" or "learning", though what they are supposed to do is mention the reference quoted.

Hence, laws have been issued to uphold copyrights, and the rights of publishers, printers, inventors, etc.

Cheating in Examinations:

In the same way as one steals an invention that belongs to someone else, one may steal a degree for oneself, or someone else's ideas and attributes them to himself.

Cheating falls under the domain of plagiarism as does helping others to cheat, for an accomplice is the same as the wrong-doer.

It is to no avail that some try to include helping others to cheat within the scope of mercy or cooperation, for the methods and procedures of morality must be as good and moral as it, in itself, is. The means does not justify the end.

If it was said that the act had taken place by the supervisor himself by his permission, we would respond saying that he had not the right to do so, and that he had, through his act, made himself liable to be prosecuted.

Cheating is not a mere act of theft, for it rather includes many other sins.

Stealing Secrets:

One may steal someone else's secrets through spying or eavesdropping where one hears things he has no right to hear. One may also read someone else's letters or notes without the latter's knowledge.

One is supposed to respect the secrets of others and never allow oneself to try to know them. Stealing of secrets is the lowest

form of theft, for they pertain to the person himself and not to his belongings.

It is nobody's right to read, in secret, someone else's letters, even those of one's sons. However, if upbringing sometimes forces one to do it, one has to ask the son's permission beforehand. However, a father may, through love, convince his son to voluntarily tell him his secrets for the purpose of consultation and getting the father's advice. However, it is improper to do it in secret.



CHAPTER SEVEN

OTHER TYPES OF STEALING

There are other types of stealing beyond what we have mentioned, the most important of which are stealing of countries, and stealing of souls. Stealing of countries is done through occupation and colonialism, while stealing of souls is accomplished by heretics and the followers of strange religious sects. Jesus Christ referred to the latter as: *"All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers."* (John 10:8).

About these thieves and robbers, Gamaliel, the doctor of law, said: *"For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed."* (Acts. 5:36-37).

These are the innovators who steal souls..

Such were the followers of Arius and Nestorius, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the other innovators who took away the church

children from their embrace only to lead them astray as they themselves had been led astray before them.

The Bible called upon us to beware of them saying:

"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him not into your house, nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (2 John 10, 11).



CHAPTER EIGHT

MOTIVES FOR STEALING AND THEIR TREATMENT

Motives for Stealing:

Lust, greed, love of money, and possessiveness, as well as lack of love for the others, disrespect for their rights, injustice, cruelty, and mercilessness are all reasons and motives for stealing.

The reason for stealing may be a meanness that has been given rise to, through heredity, imitation, or corrupt upbringing.

Poverty, indigence, and destitution may also lead to stealing.

Stealing may be a sickness, a habit, or a pleasure in a lowly soul. Hence what Solomon said: *"Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."* (Prov. 9:17).

Theft, when committed by the rich who are not in need, is more hideous. It may be a form of sickness, or an insatiable greed, destitution, and love of money. Thus the Wiseman said: *"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full"* (Eccl. 1: 7).

The rich are not innocent of the theft committed by the needy poor, for maybe, it is the miserliness of the rich and the destitution of the poor person that lead the latter to it. Theft also

may be a form of vindictiveness that the poor have against the rich.

However, theft committed by the poor cannot be justified by their need. Thus the Bible says: *"People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore seven fold,. he may have to give up all the substance of his house."* (Prov. 6:30-31).

Treatment:

The first treatment is planting into one's soul love for honesty and elevating it above the low baseness of stealing.

People must also accustom themselves to loving others and respecting their rights. If people loved each other, they would take care of each other's possessions and would never betray each other. Even if one found something that another had lost, one would think with a sense of love and with the spirit of the loser. He would try hard to identify the latter and give him what belonged to him.

People should know that illicit money is a fire that eats up the licit as well.

The poor should get used to a life of contentment, and people should all become accustomed to the pleasure of making an honest profit and to the beauty of earning a living by working hard. Those who enjoy a life of plenty should be generous and lavish and not let others be in dire need.

Young people should stay away from the life of luxury, entertainment, lavishness and frivolity which requires a lot of

spending and, in particular, relationships with women and late parties of drinking, buffoonery, and gambling. They may not afford the expense and may slide into the pit of stealing either by forcing their parents and families into unbearable situations, or by seeking to get unlawful money.

Repentance for Stealing:

It is not enough that a person confesses that he has stolen and has the priest read his absolution, for he has to do his best to return or make up for what he has stolen, though in camera and in secret.

In the Old Testament it was not enough for one to return what one had stolen. In many instances, one had to double it several times.

In the Book of Leviticus we read that a person *"shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted."* (Lev. 6:4)

In the book of Exodus we read that *"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it, or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep."* (Ex. 22: 1)

Refer also to (Exodus 22:7,8) and Proverbs (6:30-31).

In his repentance, Zacchaeus declares, *"If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."* (Luke 19:8).

If a thief cannot return all these doubles, he should at least return the stolen object. If he is ashamed to do so, he has to choose a way that will not reveal his identity.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS

***"You shall not bear false witness against your
neighbour."***

(Ex 20:16 - Deut 5:20)

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."

(Prov. 12:22)

"You shall not steal.. nor lie to one another."

(Lev. 19:11)

***"Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you
speak truth with his neighbour."***

(Eph. 4:25)

TYPES OF LIES

A false witness is a lie, and lying is vile. It indicates fear and a personality weakness. A truthful person, on the other hand, is courageous and clearly shoulders the responsibility of his actions.

Lying is an easy solution resorted to by the weak and non intelligent. Most often it is exposed, leading the liar towards a cover up using another lie. Thus he goes from one lie to another in an endless vicious circle.

Nobody trusts the words of a liar. Even when he tells the truth, people do not believe him. He may resort to swearing to prove the truth of what he says, but people even doubt his oaths, for his words have simply lost their authenticity.

Lying is a double sin that most often hides behind it another sin. It is a cover up for a previous sin, or a ruse of a future one.

Therefore a confessor should ask a penitent, who admits that he has lied, about the other sin that drove him to lying.

The Devil is the first liar. He lied to our first foreparents when he told them through the serpent: *"You will not surely die."*

(Gen. 3:4). His motive for lying was his envy of them and his desire to destroy them. God said about the Devil:

"He is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44). Therefore a liar is actually the devil's son.

Lying may be direct or indirect.

Thus, the bearer of lies is himself a liar and an accomplice who shares in and perpetuates lies. Under the same heading fall those who circulate false rumours. Some simple-minded people believe everything they hear and circulate it as a fact without examining and ascertaining it. We cannot, in truth, call this simple-mindedness in its true sense; for Christian simplicity ought to be wise. Thus Jesus Christ said: *"Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."* (Matt. 10:16), i.e. simple (harmless), and wise.

Therefore, our advice to every one of those people is: "Do not believe everything that is said." Moreover, "Do not judge without investigation." If we were living in an ideal world, we would believe everything said. However, since lying exists in our world, it is our duty to investigate and verify before we believe. That is why the Bible, in both the Old (Deut. 17:6) and the New Testaments (2 Cor. 13:1 and Matt. 18:16), stipulates that there be witnesses to the facts. It keeps repeating and emphasising the following important principle:

"By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

A sole witness to a piece of news, or its sole bearer, should not be taken as a proven source, for he may be ignorant of the truth of the matter, have no sure and certified knowledge of what he says, be an exaggerator, have wrongly heard the news, have doubtful sources from which he got the faulty news, have personal reasons that force him to suppress facts or to plot against and sow dissension among people, or have a personal motive making him wish to hurt someone in particular. Thus the Bible says: *"Let the lying lips be put to silence. which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous."* (Ps. 31:18). The speaker may not be an enemy, for he may be a joker who loves to say things as a joke in order to see how it will affect others.

It is not right for someone to suspect the behaviour of a friend, or of an enemy at that, just because of what he has heard about them, without careful investigation into it.

Some may say that they have heard the same stories, not from one source only but from many. My answer to this is that we should not pass judgments just by listening and without investigation even if the sources were many, for many a time, the words of the many had the same mistaken source. Many a time also, a large number of people would conspire to tell a joint lie, as did Joseph's brothers who untruthfully informed their father that *"a wild beast has devoured him."* (Gen. 37:33).

Therefore it is not right to be content with the words of several witnesses, for they have to be righteous and sure of what they say.

The reason for what I am saying is that many witnessed falsely against saints, in the same way as the chief priests "*sought false testimony against Jesus.*" (Matt. 26:59).

False Witnesses Against Saints:

Many people witnessed falsely against Saint Stephen, the archdeacon, when the Jews wanted to kill him:

"They set up false witnesses who said.. This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place. (Acts 6:13).

Queen Jezebel brought forward false witnesses against Naboth the Jezreelite to say: "*Nabath has blasphemed God and the King!*" Thus, by using this device "*they took him outside the city and stoned him.*" (1Kin. 21:13).

Two elders witnesses falsely using bad words against the chaste Susanna, and Paul, the apostle, had many people witnessing falsely against him to the extent that he described his own service as done "*by evil report and good report.*" (2 Cor 6:8). He meant by his that "evil report" had sometimes been rumoured about him.

Time does not permit us here to cite all the false witnesses against the saints: The apostolic Saint Athanasius who was falsely accused of adultery and murder, Saints Ephram the Syrian, Maccarius the Great, and Marina who were accused of adultery, and Saint George who was accused of being a sorcerer when he drank poison without being hurt by it.

Therefore, it is not right for a person to lend his ear to false accusations as is the case referred to by the poet who said:

Lies influenced him, and falsehood engulfed him.

What a parrot he is, his mind lying in his ears.

The commandment stating that "You shall not bear false witness..." applies to the listener as well as to the speaker, for he who listens to and accepts lies encourages the liar to continue lying and the insincere evil-doers to surround him. Two people participate in such a sin: the speaker and the receiver of lies. The Bible says in this connection: *"If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked."* (Prov. 29:12). Church laws have thus made it a condition that a priest should not be "a hearer."

Many are the accusations that are all lies, intrigues, and slander, for the evil ones have left nothing for the virtuous. It so happens that sometimes an evil person may plot an accusation against a saintly one in such a way that the latter cannot escape it or defend himself. This accusation is worked out in such a strange way as befit the "wisdom" of the devil in plotting evil.

How words evolve on their way to the listener:

If word conveyance is a sin and causes problems, the least harmful of those conveying words are those who do it accurately, in the same way as an honest recorder does in conveying everything without adding anything to it.

Yet there are those who take the words, add to them their own opinions, deductions, and claims as to the intention and purpose of the speaker, and present them all to someone else as the direct words spoken by whoever they listened to!!

Look at the Nile water in flood when it is brown in colour because of a large amount of silt it carries. This brown, silt-laden water was once clear water falling from the sky on the mountains of Abyssinia. However, throughout its trip, it eroded silt from the rocks and got mixed up with mud until it reached you in this form. Such are the news that come to you, saturated with mud, after probably being pure and clear at their source. The difference between them and the Nile water is that the mud carried by the latter is useful for the land, while the mud added by people corrupts relationships.

Many of the news that come your way are very different from the actual happenings. The following is an example of this:

One tells another: Haven't you heard? Such and such have happened to Mr. X. The listener responds, saying: It must have made him very angry. The first speaker says: But of course, he must have been very upset. The news is carried to a third party who is told: Mr. X became very upset when such and such happened to him. The third party answers: It is impossible that he should only become upset. He will certainly seek revenge. A fourth party receives the news that Mr. X will avenge himself. He says: As far as I know his true nature, he will certainly be preparing a scheme to avenge himself.

The news reaches a fifth party who says: He may send a letter to his department accusing him of certain things. A sixth party

responds to this, saying: it is not beyond him to say, for instance, that he is a communist. The news reaches party number seven who goes to the person in question to say to him: Beware. So and So sent a letter to your department accusing you of being a communist.

This whole episode may take place though, meantime, the party in question actually became angry, then rid himself of his anger and put an end to the whole matter by forgiving his wrongdoer. On the other hand, he might have taken the matter simply without getting upset by it.

Thus someone may come to you to say, "I am angry with you." When you ask for the reason, you find out that some untruthful statements have reached him. Would that person, instead of getting angry, have firstly come to ask, "Is it true that such and such have taken place?" However this is better than the other who listens to some intriguing words, becomes angry, keeps the matter to himself, and gets worked up without the other party being aware of it.

However, there is that other type of person who is accused, does not defend himself, is innocent, and whose silence is not an indication that he is guilty.

It maybe in someone's nature not to defend oneself, as was the case of Joseph the righteous or it may only be one's modesty or shyness. It may also be that proving one's innocence may lead to the revelation of some secrets that need to be concealed, or may incriminate someone else or reveal one's mistakes, which is something that is undesired. Proving one's innocence may

bring about other problems caused by the spiteful and the accusers. Sometimes evil appears to be cruel, frightening and despotic, and the speechless one may have left the matter of defence in God's hands and not in his own. One may also be unaware of what is being spun against one.

"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. " (Prov. 17:15).

Someone may say that the condemnation of an innocent person is unjust and a lie, but what is the sin committed by the one who "justifies the wicked," and, is not his act, one of love and sympathy? In order to clarify this point I hereby cite the following example:

A young man asks a girl's hand in marriage. You know that he is evil and troublesome. If your opinion is sought and you commend that young man, you will be ruining the poor girl's future, and your behaviour will be subject to the Lord's words: "He that justifies the wicked.. is abomination to the Lord."

In the above case, the one who justifies the wicked is a false witness.

Another example is when you recommend a poor person to fill a vacancy at your friend's business although he is inefficient or dishonest and will definitely disrupt the work.

By justifying and recommending that person to your friend you become a false witness and you betray your friend. Your kindness to a poor person does not absolve you.

This leads us to another branch of the sin of lying:

Flattery and Favouritism:

Excessive and false commendation is outright lying that often hurts and deceives the person concerned. Many upstarts attain their goals in this easy way.

What makes this sin more abominable is the hypocrisy of the upstart who commends a person when facing him and criticises him in his absence.

Some may flatter the family of a dead person thus paying the latter so many compliments that those attending become weary and lose faith in the eulogy.

Other Forms of Lying:

One well-known form of lying is "half-truths." In this case, the speaker conceals the other side of the truth that may reverse the situation. An example of this is the disclosure of persons' weak points and the concealment of his good ones thus presenting a distorted image that is completely opposite to the actual one.

Another example is bad faith and wrong interpretation.

One example of lying is excessive exaggeration, and another is flattery.

I hope to return to these topics in my book about "Silence and Speech."

Factors that Augment the Abomination of Lying:

The greater the personality of the liar and the more he is trustworthy to the point that his words are believed without examination, the more abominable is the sin of lying. Also, the higher the position of the person lied to, the more abominable is the lie. This is the same as happened when Joseph's brothers lied to their father, the same as when someone lies to one's confessor, and the same as Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit and the Lord struck them dead. (Acts 5:3-4).

Of the examples of lying to God are false prophets, fake christs, and false prophets who attribute to God things He has not said to them. God, for example said to such: *"Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken."* (Ezek. 13:7), and about false prophets He said: *"... the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name."* (Jer. 23:25). The Bible also refers to: *"False apostles."* (Rev 2:2), to *"Lying wonders."* (2 Thess. 2:9), and to *"The diviners envision lies."* (Zech. 10:2)

Lying: Reasons and Treatment:

Some think that lying saves, and so they resort to it to conceal a certain sin. Our advice to them is to resort to proper methods since the rope of lying is short and is mostly revealed.

We also say that you should not do that thing which you are afraid may be revealed. If you make up your mind to be truthful you will be spared a lot of sins.

Man may be driven to lie by embarrassment, fear, or the questioner's insistence. Our advice here is that silence is better than lying. Therefore, keep silent, change the course of the conversation, apologise for not answering, tell the truth as far as you can, or speak up frankly and bravely defending your position or apologising for your mistake.

Arrogance may be the cause of lying as a means to conceal one's ignorance. However, we say that there is no harm in someone saying at times, "I don't know."

The reasons for lying may be the exigencies of a certain profession as when a lawyer defends a culprit or a doctor deceives a patient. What we are looking for is an honest lawyer who does not undertake the defence of an accused person unless he is sure of his innocence. However, if the accused is guilty, he explains the extenuating circumstances without resorting to lying.

The doctor is also noted to be taking care of the patient's body and his worldly life, and as such, he may deceive the patient who is at the threshold of eternity and make him lose the chance to repent. However, if frankness may cause some cases to deteriorate, we advise the doctor to be judicious in his attitude, though he should not lie and should not also speak with a killing or upsetting frankness. The situation requires diplomacy, courtesy, optimistic words, and a caution that does not inspire despair. At this point we should deal with the following important question:

Does the concealment of certain facts constitute a form of lying?

No, for man has secrets that he is entitled to conceal, and he is entrusted with some other people's secrets that it is his duty to keep intact. There are certain matters that it is harmful to make public unless those in authority divulge them at the appropriate time. There are confessions that should remain concealed, facts should better remain unknown, and spiritual mysteries that should remain concealed.

Therefore, it is your privilege to conceal certain facts. You may sometimes be frank and say to the inquirer, "Allow me not to answer this question," or just elude the answer.





THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

DO NOT COVET WHAT IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S

"You shall not covet your neighbour's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbour's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's. "

(Deut. 5:21) and (Ex. 20:17).

THE SERIOUSNESS OF LUST AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The statement "You shall not covet." reveals to us an aspect of beauty in the law of the Old Testament. This sublime law was not understood by people because their minds were covered with a veil. Believe me, when Jesus Christ said "*I did not come to destroy, but to fulfil,*" (Matt. 5:17), part of what he intended was to complete people's understanding of the law.

The commandment, that "*whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matt. 5:28), has its roots in the Old Testament law where God said, "Neither shall you desire your neighbour's wife.

Through the commandment "*You shall not covet,*" God penetrated sins to their roots in order to uproot them. Adultery begins with the bodily lust, stealing with the lust to possess or the lust for money, lying with the lust for justification or plotting for something and murder with the lust for revenge or some other lust leading to it. If man fights lust and conquers it, he will have conquered all sins. How beautiful is the sage's statement:

"Rejoice, not for a lust attained, but for a lust subdued. It is an insult calling someone "lustful", for it means that one is led on by one's lusts.

The best way, when you confront lust, is to escape from it instead of engaging it in a struggle where you may be defeated, or where, before scoring a victory, your heart becomes polluted with lust. Profit by the words of the apostle who said, "*Flee also youthful lusts.*" (2 Tim. 2:22).

Since lust does not give up until it is fulfilled, escaping from it is the better way. Why should you engage it in a struggle or discussion? The more space you give it, the more slack you allow it, and the more you communicate with it, the stronger it becomes, and from the communication stage it moves on to excitement, to inflammation and to fulfilment.

You gradually move on from thinking about it, to getting attached to it, to being led by it, to fulfilling it, to repeating it, to getting crazy about it, and to being enslaved by it.

People may resort to wrongful ways to fulfil their lusts: to lying, deceit, trickery, or may be more than that.

Disadvantages of satisfying an insatiable lust:

When a person becomes tired of a lust, he is deceived into saying: It is better to satisfy this lust so that I may quell this longing and get relief!!

Lust is never satisfied. How profound the words of Jesus Christ are when he said: "*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again.*" (John 4:13). When one becomes thirsty, one drinks, only to become more thirsty without end. Whenever a person pursues lust he finds pleasure, and pleasure invites him to another pursuit, and the story never ends.

Satisfying lust does not save a person from it but increases it.

For instance, if a person lusts for money, the more he amasses it the more he longs for more. If a young man looks forward to being promoted he longs for level three when he reaches level four, and when he gets to level three he longs for level two, and so on and so forth (level one is the highest).

In adultery also, when satisfying one stage one longs for the following one.

Adam had all the trees in Paradise except one. He was not satisfied but longed for that one in particular! Ahab who owned a lot was not satisfied with all his possessions and craved for the field of Naboth the Jezreelite! David had seven women, and yet he was not satisfied but lusted for another. Solomon pursued the road of satisfaction to the end and said, *"And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them."* (Eccl. 2:10). And what was the result? He took on a thousand women and left us his experience in his undying statement:

"The eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full." (Eccl. 1:8 -7).

Do not, therefore, think that satisfaction saves you from lust. Nothing will save you except self-control, and the best way is fleeing from it. Joseph, as a bachelor, conquered lust by chastity and escape, and David, the husband of so many, was conquered by lust when he allowed himself to satisfy it.

Types of lust:

There are many types of lust on which the apostle concentrated his statement: *"For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."* (1 John 2:16).

"The flesh lusts against the Spirit." (Gal. 5:17). *"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."* (Gal. 5:24).

The pleasure attained through the crucifixion of the body and its lusts is one where man feels the loftiness of the spirit.

The lust of the flesh might be for adultery, food, or enjoyment of sight, hearing or smell.

By the words, *"Neither shall you desire your neighbour's wife"* God meant adultery. As to the lust of food, it is the sin in which Esau fell when he famished for the lentil stew cooked by Jacob and sold his birthright for it. (Gen. 25:29-34). Likewise was the craving of the Israelites when they wept and said, *"If only we had meat to eat! we remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic "* (Num. 11:4-5). The Lord gave them meat but struck them with a very great plague and many died and *"that place was called 'kibroth hattaavah' because there they buried the people who had the craving "* (Num. 11:34).

There is also the lust for money, for possession or property as king Ahab craved for the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. So the

Lord warned us, *"You shall not covet your neighbour's house..., nor anything that is your neighbour's"*.

Collecting post stamps, works of art or even things of no use may be an object of coveting.

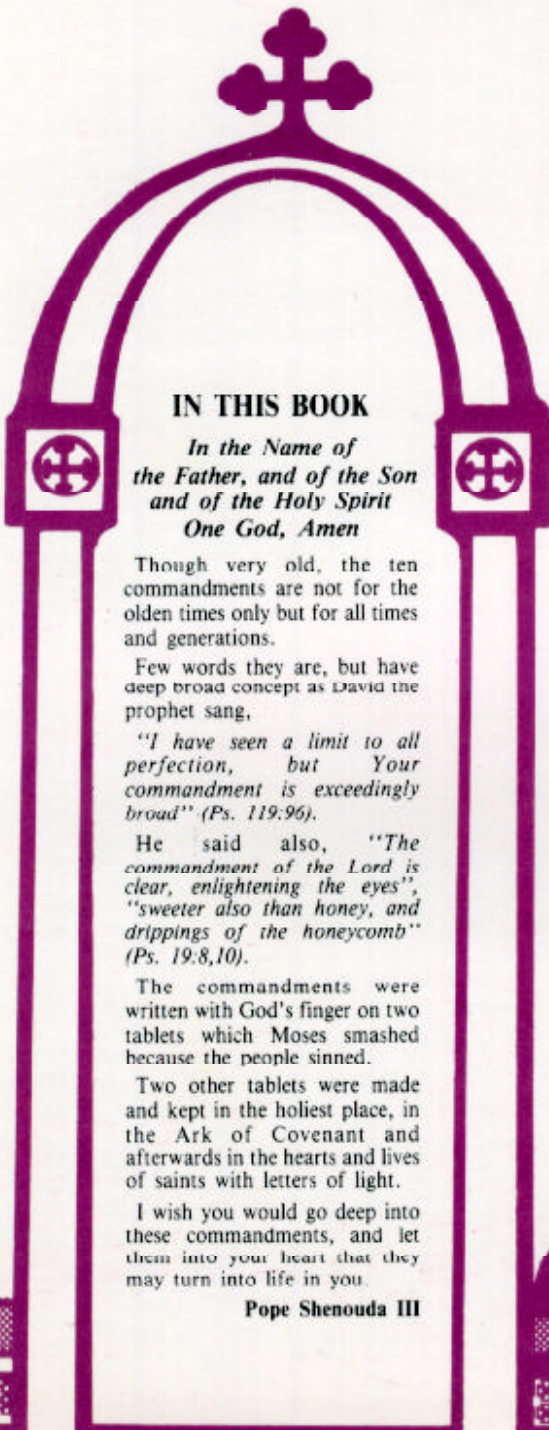
There is also the lust for being honoured or becoming famous, the lust for positions and titles and the lust for greatness in general as well as the for adornment and beauty... All this coveting for greatness might take various forms; such as a person who changes his car every time a new model is produced. Another example is the fall of the devil who said, *"I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. "* (1sa. 14:13-14). The same lust can be traced in the fall of Adam and Eve whom the devil tempted to be *"like God"* (Gen. 3:5).

One of the most dangerous lusts is that of destruction, an example of which is found in the devil against the human beings. His desire was to destroy them, so the Lord said of him *"He was a murderer from the beginning"* (Jn. 8:44). The lust of revenge falls under this same category...

Conclusion:

A person can overcome such lusts by the spirit of renunciation, by feeling that he is a stranger in the world, that *"all is vanity and grasping for the wind"* (Eccl. 1:14), and that *"the world is passing away, and the lust of it"* (1 Jn. 2:17).

Always thinking of the after life, love of fellow human beings and the spirit of giving is of benefit in this regard.



IN THIS BOOK

*In the Name of
the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit
One God, Amen*

Though very old, the ten commandments are not for the olden times only but for all times and generations.

Few words they are, but have deep broad concept as David the prophet sang,

"I have seen a limit to all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad" (Ps. 119:96).

He said also, *"The commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes", "sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:8,10).*

The commandments were written with God's finger on two tablets which Moses smashed because the people sinned.

Two other tablets were made and kept in the holiest place, in the Ark of Covenant and afterwards in the hearts and lives of saints with letters of light.

I wish you would go deep into these commandments, and let them into your heart that they may turn into life in you.

Pope Shenouda III

