

**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**

VOLUME I

THE FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS

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

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Author : H. H. Pope Shenouda III.

Translated By : Mrs. Wedad Abbas.

Illustrated By : Sister Sawsan.

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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 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.



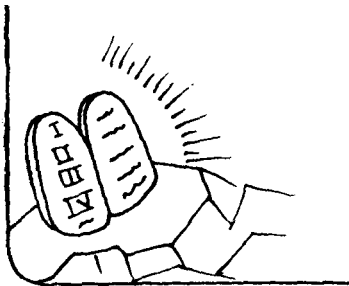


THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

*"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).

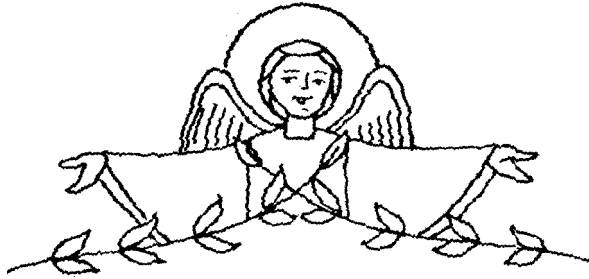
This applies also to whoever uses mysterious powers to fulfil his (or others') purposes by amulets or incantation including mysterious words which no one - even he himself - knows their meaning.

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.

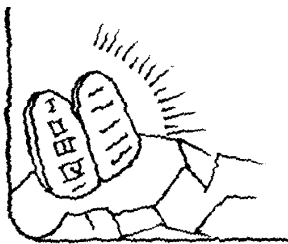




THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"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).

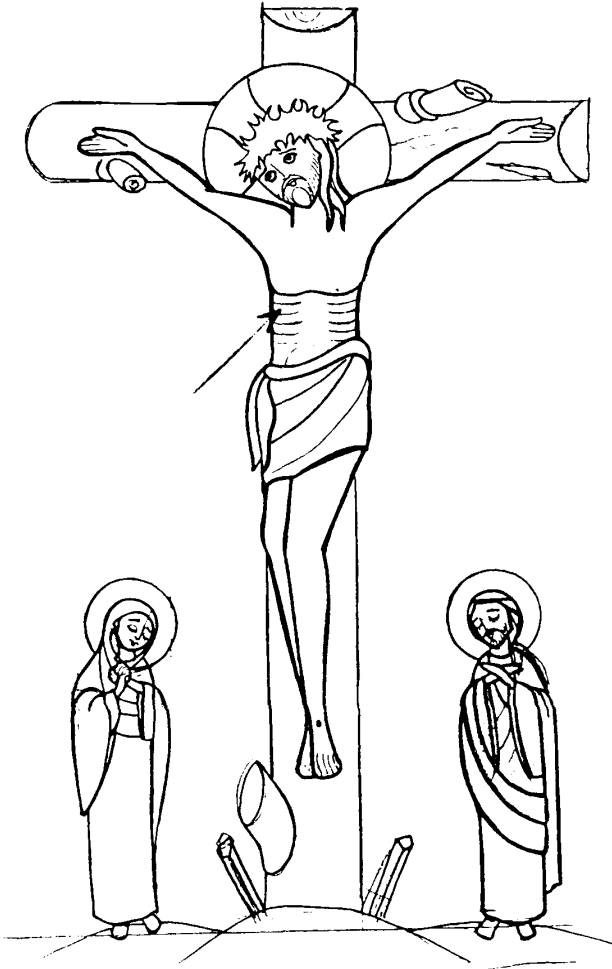
Suppose a person has such a bad temper, he has to resist it to the point of shedding his blood. But he must be confident that all the powers of heaven will support him in his struggle and the Holy Spirit will not forsake him. Grace will visit him and help him change his bad temper; for many people who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

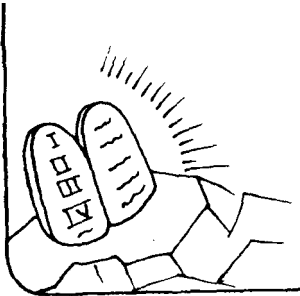




THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"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.*





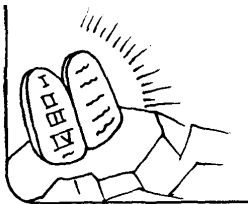
THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"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".

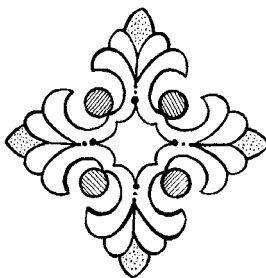
See what St. John the Beloved said in the Revelation, "*I was in the spirit on the Lord's day*" (Rev.1:10). What a beautiful verse to contemplate on and to carry out in your life.


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 exceedingly 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

