

DIVINE LOVE

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**DIVINE LOVE
AND
DIVINE COMMANDMENT**

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

❖ **Preamble**

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Preamble

God, as the church calls Him “Lover of mankind” and “the Beneficent,” loved man before he existed, and furnished goodness for him when He prepared the Garden of Eden for him to meet his physical needs, and also when He offered Himself a paradise to meet his deep needs which lead to his comfort!

But other questions remained puzzling the mind of many, for example:

If God was to be the lover of mankind, and the beneficent, why did He give the man a commandment?

Wasn't God capable not to give him a commandment, so that Adam and his sons would remain in the paradise forever without falling?

Didn't He know the weakness of the man and the potential of his falling?

After preparing the people that were attributed to Him, why did He give them the Law with its strict commandments, and legislations?

Wasn't the ordinary Law that He gave to all mankind adequate?

Even after fulfilling the salvation by the cross, and after resurrection, why did the divine commandment, which seems to be harder than the Law, remained bound to the believers?

May the Lord give us understanding in order to recognize the concept of the commandment, and its significance? And to find out if it was part of God's works that are full of love?

And what are the natural Law and Law of Moses, and how both of them represent God's love?

And what are Christ's commandments or Law of Christ in the New Testament?

How do we practice freedom, as the sons of God, under the commandment of the New Testament?

1

Concept of the Divine Commandment

The divine commandment and the man being united with God, his beloved

The commandment was to honor the significance of the man, for it brings to light his free will. God wanted to deal with the man on a high level, so that He gave him the commandment to open the door of practical dialogue with him, and as a result, Adam's obedience to God won't be instinctive regular obedience which is controlled by the laws of nature as with the rest of the beings, but to be based on his sacred will and his love to the truth that is within him, in full freedom. The commandment is not to deprive the man, but it is a way to enjoy the blessing of the free will.

In fact, the divine commandment is a sign of God's love and appreciation toward the man, His beloved. It is like a covenant that God granted to Adam. So, remaining sincere in his promise, will lead him to continue to be united with God, the source of his life, and he won't detach himself and return to his origin: the dust!

The divine commandment is a precious gift presented by the hands of a loving God who seeks to be tied with His beloved, so the human will, would be in harmony with the infinite divine will. The man won't lose his identity or his freedom, but with his respect to the covenant and by abiding to it, he will gain dignity that no other beings can obtain.

The commandment, in its hidden meaning, was not a burden or a load that the man may fall under its weight, as some people may believe now, after the falling. But truly it came from a loving divine bosom which intends to keep the man within it, so that the man would enjoy all the reflections of God's nature on his image forever. So the commandment was not to humiliate him.

The profound love of God is manifested in His commandment to Adam, for it was the easiest possible commandment, and it was the first and to be the last commandment, if he did not disobey it! The article of the covenant was a tree (Genesis 2:16-17) in the midst of a paradise that was full of trees, that tree was not any different than other trees around it. God's Law was composed of one article which was "do not eat" (Genesis 2:17). It was easier for Adam surround this tree with other trees, if he was honest, loving, and jealous to be tied with God the source of his life.

Some deem that God gave the man great gifts, but even after living in the paradise, God wanted to exalt the man and honor him with greater gifts – perhaps through eating from the tree of life – if he was to live in obedience with the divine commandment, showing his practical love to his creator and his greatest companion.

❖ God wanted him to be sacred by being surrendered to the commandment, and at the same time, He wanted the man to remain as a child in his simplicity and sincerity for longer time.

Saint Theophilus of Antioch

❖ Jesus Christ is hidden in the commandment, he, who enters to the depth of the commandment, and lives spiritually with it; will meet with the Divine Word Himself.

Saint Mark the Hermit

- ❖ **He, who follows God's commandments, his soul will be connected to God, but he, who breaks it, his soul will be attached to dust itself, he will become unclean, and will find himself plunging in worldly stuff.** Therefore, it says in the Book of Deuteronomy: "You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast" (Deuteronomy 10:20).

Onsimos Bishop of Jerusalem

The commandment and participation in love

Adam had a different perception of the commandment, before falling. It was a desire, which without it he cannot taste his participation of God's love toward him.

Imagine with me someone who gives his bride more than she asks or needs; he abundantly gives her all of his immeasurable and unlimited love and kindness, wouldn't the bride wish for her groom to give her room – no matter how small to express her love to him?! The groom who does not leave a room for his bride to respond to his love, even by obeying him with least things, he breaks her heart and causes her to be upset! **Without the commandment, the first Adam would have not been able to taste to partake in love.** With love, God gave Adam the commandment, so that, this beloved, would have the chance to show his love to God, which is a reflection to God's love.

This perspective was explained by our Lord Jesus when He said: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21-4). As much as the man keeps the commandment, it is as much love he shows to God, or to respond to God's love toward him. Consequently, he will be taking a deeper part of participation in the unlimited love of God. This is the work of the commandment and this is its goal!

- ❖ Those are the ones, who receive within them the greatness of the commandment and its priority. They do not only love God, but also they keep in mind three conditions to reach to this love: i.e. with all **their hearts**, they hold fast to the perfection of this love, and to its concept and its works. And with **all their souls**, i.e. they will be ready to give their souls in order to serve God who created everything, when it is required to spread His word, for. God is to be loved from all the soul, and this love will be shown when no parts of the soul is to be given to anyone, unless for the sake of keeping the faith. They love him with **their entire mind**, so that they don't think of anything, or utter with anything except with the theological stuff.
- ❖ It is befitting for us to believe that the delay to implement the commandment is considered as a time spent in disobedience for those who execute the commandment thereafter.

Therefore, we have to remember the saying: "Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day" (Bin Sira 5:7), and the saying: "Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you" (Proverb 3:28).

We need to believe that Martha was to be blamed for the delay of the words that said “**then they took away the stone**” (John 11:41), for it was supposed to be said immediately, right after the words that said: “**Jesus said: Take away the stone**” (John 11:39).

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ He who has (my commandments) in his mind and keeps it in his life, he who has my commandments in his mouth and shows it in his demeanor, who has it in his ears and executes it at work, who has it in works and keeps it by perseverance, he who is like this, he “loves me”. Through work, love is proclaimed, and to apply it without fruits, it is just under the name of (love).
 - ❖ “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Mathew 11:29, 30). If you want to follow me, and you fall in disbelief, would it happen to find my commandment hard and tough? It is not hard on you or heavy, because I am your helper. Love lightens the difficulty of the commandment!
 - ❖ “Love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” is indeed a true virtue, for love is “the purpose of the commandment” (1Timothy 1:5). Truly, it is said “for love is as strong as death” (Song of Solomon 8:6), perhaps because no one can defeat it as no one can defeat death, or because the measurement of love in this life is to lay down yourself till death. The Lord says: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13)...
- Knowledge is the servant of love, that to be useful, because without love “knowledge puffs up” (1Corinthians 8:1).

Saint Augustine

- ❖ The person who truly loves God, he keeps His commandments, and by keeping it, he asserts that he knows the love of God. Our obedience is the fruit of His love.
- ❖ The person, who does not keep the commandments, does not have love toward Lord.

Saint Didymus the Blind

- ❖ The proof of love is shown through the work. This is the reason behind what John said in his epistle: “He who says “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar” (1John 2:4). Our love is true if we keep our will in harmony with His commandments. He, who wanders here and there through his wicked lusts, does not truly love God, because he is contradicting God in His will.
- ❖ Why is he talking about love as if it was a special commandment? That is because every commandment belongs to love, and all the commandments pour in one, because whatever the commandment, it is built on love only. It is, as many branches of the tree come from one root, thus, many of the virtues come from love only. The branch, which is our good works, won’t have that liquid (inside the plants) unless it remains in connection with the root of love.

Pope Gregory the (Great)

The entry of the man in the commandment (or the Law), not under the commandment

God's Law for Adam before falling, is the same for the man after being granted the forgiveness of sins, it is the subject of his delight and joy.

Therefore when the psalmist talked about "the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1), he said: "But **his delight is in the law of the Lord**, and in His law he meditates day and night".

He did not say "**under the law**," but "**in the law of the Lord**," because the law was not a heavy burden to fall "under" it, except by falling in the sin. Before falling we were **in** the law, not **under** it, and it was the subject of our delight.

But after all has sinned (Roman 3:28) "And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good... For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Roman 7:10-14)

In the Book of Proverbs we hear the fatherly voice delivering the commandment to the son saying: "**Keep them in the midst of your heart, for they are life to those who find them**" (Proverbs 4:21). It is a precious gift to be placed in the heart to enjoy its sweetness, its delight, and its significant effectiveness. Therefore, the Psalmist says: "Your word I have hidden in my **heart**... Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, **I shall observe it with my whole heart**...Incline my **heart** to Your testimonies" ((Psalm 119:11, 34, 36).

The believer hides the commandment of God – his precious treasure – in his heart, which is the most valuable thing in his life, it is the center of love and life, and it is the secure place where the enemy has no access to attack it or to rob it. We hide the commandment of God so that no other sins might find its way to the heart or to infiltrate to it, for it is not possible for darkness to be in the same place where the light is.

Perhaps the psalmist hid the commandment in his heart to think seriously about it and to keep it, so that it would be digested through his spiritual stomach. It is like the food, if it is not digested, it would not be useful to the body, thus, he who hears the commandment and does not take it seriously and keep it, he will not benefit from it.

This youngster hides God's commandments in his heart, for it is God's unspeakable mysteries, realizing that it is his treasure and his spiritual richness. Therefore, he does not cease thinking and meditating of it, for he says: "**I will meditate on your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word**" (Psalm 119:15*16).

- ❖ Saint Onsimus Bishop of Jerusalem says: {he hides God's precepts in his heart lest the birds of the sky come and snatch it, with which I mean the demons that are falling from the sky so that they won't be able to snatch God's precepts by skepticism and pride, or by a wicked thought. }
- ❖ If we don't hide God's precepts in our hearts as when we hide a jewel, the wicked one comes and snatches it away (Mathew 13:19).

Saint Athanasius the Apostle

Saint Jerome talks about *Marsella*, to her close friend Principia, and says:

- ❖ Her delight in the divine books is unbelievable; she was perpetually singing and saying: **“Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!”**, also the words that describe the perfect man: “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night”(Psalm 1:2). This meditation in the law, she did not understand it as it was written words as the Jews and Pharisees do, but she understands it as action, as the apostle says: “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)... Certainly, she realized that when she implements these precepts, she will be ready to understand the holy books.

Saint Jerome

- ❖ Give me understanding in order to be able to examine Your law, in a practical way and with full attention that fit with it. Thus, from this law, I will learn the practical practice.
Give me the understanding that is pertaining to work and meditation, so I can **“keep it with all my heart”** and draw near it without hesitation.
If the wisdom is needed to understand the law, so, what kind of understanding should the Lord give to the Psalmist to learn its goal and purpose?

Saint Origen the Scholar

I enjoy Your commandments, Which I love.

The Psalmist praises, saying: “And I will delight myself in Your commandments, Which I love. My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, Which I love, And I will meditate on Your statutes” (Psalm 119:47-48).

- ❖ To reach the purpose to be in joy with the commandments of God is to put it in action....
He who enjoys the truth first, saying: “I delight myself in Your commandments, which I love” he says afterward: **“My hands also I will lift to Your commandments, which I love”** (psalm 119:47-48). How lovely it is to enjoy the commandments and understand its meanings, then, we lift our hands to the works that fit with the commandments.
Do not fulfill the commandments grudgingly or of necessity (2 Corinthians 9:7), but cheerfully.
When we are delighted in the commandments and try to execute it, we find ourselves committed to talk about it (Deuteronomy 6:7), so that he adds: **“I meditate in Your statutes,”** which means, it is because of my love to Your commandments I cannot cease talking about it, and I meditate happily with all what is pertinent to Your statutes.

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ God in tenderness of His love has given us commandments that purify us, so that if we have the will, it is by following the commandments, we can be purified not only from the sins, but also from the lusts, because sins are different than lusts.
Lusts are the anger, pride, love of pleasures, hatred, impure lusts, and etc. but **sins are the actual implementation of these lusts**, i.e. the man through his body, he executes the doings that are stirred by his lusts. It is possible for the man to have lusts, but he does not take it out to the level of implementation.

The law (in the Old Testament) aimed to teach us not to do what we don't desire for ourselves, so, even the actual implementation of evil was forbidden.

But now (in the New Testament), we are required to expel the lust itself that pushes us toward evil. So we are required to drive out the anger itself, love of pleasures, love of dignity, and other lusts.

Saint Dorotheous

- ❖ **“Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to covetousness”** (Psalm 119:36), because our hearts and thoughts are not under our control. When you become afflicted with blindness suddenly, this will drive the mind and the soul to confusion and lead them to another direction that differs than your intent. This blindness will call the mind and the soul to materialistic world and take them in to the temporal stuff, present them to the pleasures, and mix them with temptations.

At the time in which we are getting ready to lift up our minds, worthless thoughts swoop into our minds, and we are more likely to slip toward the earthly stuff.

Saint Augustine

The change of our perception toward the commandment

We have received the commandment the way it is and as the Lord permitted it, but by falling we lost the proper perception. The commandment has become nothing but just dos and don'ts. We started to see God difficult and harsh in His commandments; asking us for what is more than our ability. We started to think that He wants to deprive us from the pleasures and to humiliate us, to live without pleasure and fun in the world.

This is the result of the man's self reliance, and of his separation from God. His heart is hardened, and his perception and conceptions have been distorted. “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). And as the psalmist says: “The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3), and Paul the Apostle assures “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, **because of the ignorance** that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts” (Ephesians 4:18).

This is what the sin has done; it had corrupted our understanding toward God's works. This was clear in the life of the Pharisees, who were able, through their knowledge of the Holy Bible that was in their hands, to acknowledge our Lord Jesus, and to recognize His message and His works. We thought that they were to be the pioneers to witness Him, to believe in Him, and to recognize His love. But because of the sin, their eyes were blind and were not able to meet with the divine love. They viewed Jesus as a mighty one who came to take their jobs, to waste their dignity, and to let them lose their power. The sin had blocked them from understanding the truth. The Lord has clarified it to them saying: “Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do” (John 8:43-44).

Through breaking the commandment, Adam lost the concept of the commandment, and also by breaking it; the Pharisees lost their ability to recognize God and His love.

The commandment itself has the power to disclose its significance if we admit it and be connected with it. For it is, through the Holy Spirit, able to lead us to true reprimand, as in case of repentance and confession, we perceive the depth of God's love who forgives our sins through His precious blood.

God has assured it when He said: "**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" (John 8:31-32), "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). "For the word of God is living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12)

❖ God is hidden in His commandments, whoever calls Him, will find Him there (i.e. by executing the commandments).

Don't say "I have fulfilled the commandments and cannot find the Lord," because who actually seeks to find Him, will find peace!

❖ Also, we have to understand, whether we listen to Him, voluntarily, for He said: "if you love me, keep my commandments... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:15, 21)

Don't you see **how is He using His commandments as a hiding place to declare Himself?** The greatest commandment is to love God and the neighbor, and this commandment takes place after we reject all the temporal matters and, when our minds become stable.

Saint Mark the Hermit

❖ This way is not subject to be mistaken, I mean Jesus Christ; for He says: "I am the way and the life". This path leads to the Father, for He says: "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

2

Divine commandment and the natural law

The commandment that God had set for Adam in order to practice the love of God or to enjoy the mutual love with God, it turned to be the reason behind his collapse, and that is due to his disobedience and to his tendency to be separated from his creator, the source of his fullness and happiness, now, what did his sons do since they bore inside them the natural law?

Saint Paul the apostle said that God did not neglect the mankind the offspring of Adam, and did not leave them without a witness for Himself, for He manifested Himself through the **invisible nature**, he says: **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”** (Romans 1:20). He did not leave Himself without a witness, for “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handwork” (Psalm 19:1). He shows His eternal power and His Godhead through the excellent works of the nature, which He had set with His word, and He is still looking after it and taking care of it, not in purpose of showing off His capabilities, but because of His deep love for us. We sense the love of God which is unprecedented and invisible through His marvelous care, for He gave us these things that are made, for our comfort.

The apostle says: “for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves” (Romans 2:14). On the other hand, despite this kind of knowledge that was manifested by the natural law, and approved by the visible things, the man could not be saved, but on the contrary, the man was taking a defiant stand in this issue according to the following:

A. instead of worshipping the living God, they worshipped the pagans. “Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Roman 1:21-23).

Saint Augustine believes that those who alleged to be wise and fell in distasteful worships were the Romans, Greece, and the Egyptians who gave glory to themselves under the name of wisdom.

B. They practiced the lusts of their wicked hearts: they renounced God who is manifesting Himself for them through the nature, therefore He also abandoned them in response to the lusts of their hearts, this what the apostle meant when he said: “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves” (Roman 1:24). They voluntarily left Him, but because He respects the human freedom and appreciates it, He gave them what they wished for and, left them, so they followed the lusts of their wicked hearts, for men and women committed what was shameful and against nature (Roman 1:26-27). The man in his wickedness **does what is against nature**, offending the nature, so that he lives with suffering.

Father John Kasian says: {by virtue of the divine justice, good gifts are given to the humble, and are not given to the arrogant and outrageous, those, who the apostle had said about

them that they deserved to be given over to a debased mind (Roman 1:28).}

Saint John the Chrysostom says: [he talks about those in the world who had the natural pleasure, and were able to enjoy it peacefully and with joy, avoiding the shameful works, but they did not... for, they dishonored the nature itself... they brought shame to the nature, and trampled over human laws at the same time.]

C. what is unusual is that the sins and the iniquities devastate the peace of the man and take away his inner joy, but at the mean time **it drives the sinner to arrogance and pride**, therefore they were described in the list as follow: “backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters..... “ (Roman 1:30). **Saint John the Chrysostom** says: {arrogance and sin are a great disaster... if he who is doing good, may lose his labor if he becomes snooty, so how much sin will be found for the one who adds to his sins the sin of arrogance? Because such a person cannot practice repentance }

D. At the time in which the mankind had agreed on rebellion and resisting God, the source of its life, it turned to be a theater for the sins. Every sin distracts the man and throws him into the hands of another sin, and thus, the man becomes like a funny game to sins and evils. When the man violates the simplest of the nature laws, he loses discernment (Roman 1:31), breaks every natural or written covenant, he becomes unloving and unmerciful (Roman 1:31), and thus, he falls under God’s warning: “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Mathew 24:12), and the man becomes worse than the predators which gather together in groups according to its instinct, but the man hates his brother.

Law and nature

The law is not for pride but it is to apply it to work. If the law is there to learn the commandment of God and His will, so those who are under the law are obligated to apply the commandment, otherwise, they will fall under condemnation by the law. They will become not only like the Gentiles who fall in sin without law, but they will be worse than them, because they are involved in the sin while being under the law. As **Saint John the Chrysostom** says: {here, he does not only show the equality between the Jew and the Gentile, but he explains how the law was a burden for the Jew. Because the Gentile is condemned without the law; here “without the law” indicates the mitigation of the punishment, for the law won’t stand against him... but he will be condemned based on the logic of the nature and the mind. But the Jew, he will be condemned by the law, so his judgment will be based on the nature, the logic alongside with the law, because the care he received will add to the increase of his responsibility. Look to which extent he shows that the Jew is in need to hasten to receive the grace to relieve him. Because if they object that the law is enough for them without the need of the grace, he shows them that they are in need for the blessing more than the Gentiles, because with the law, their punishment will be tougher. }

Saint Augustine says: {those who did not hear about the word (word of the Gospel) will be **judged differently** than those who hear it and despise it. }

He also says that those who are without law, will be perished, and that could have a terrible impact, but those who are under the law, they will be judged, which means that they have no excuse, and the judgment will lead to their destruction, so the judgment against them will be tougher.

- ❖ The first and the natural law that brings back the soul to God (Psalm 19:8) is the nature, which is blameless, and the children use it for their judgment, it has become a reference for all the earth with great fear (Roman 2:24).
- ❖ The hunger was the only reason that prompted David to eat from the showbread. When David followed the law, he examined being bound to the law and its restrictions, at the same time he took into consideration the nature and its necessities, and also the things that had been made for the nature to use. David understood that the nature took place before the law. The law is an addition... as it is written that It was added because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19). It is normal for him to eat, without lust, when he is hungry. This is what David did when he was hungry. And this is also what the disciples did when they were hungry. David cannot be blamed for the bread that he ate, and also the disciples cannot be blamed for breaking and eating the stalks of grain on the Saturday to survive.
- ❖ Nature is older than Moses and the law, and it was taken as a reference for the wise without pain. Due to the failure of the nature, falling and deviating from freedom, it was necessary for the law to take place to raise it from its fall.
- ❖ Love God because your life is a memoir full of explanations. Be simple and pure for you are a carnal book. Don't fool yourself by adding something to your entity because your nature is pure. Don't disturb your nature by accepting different conceptions! If the nature had remained with its status as it was created, its beauty would have been enough for it without any addition, but because it deviated from its beauty, so the law was to be added to it to control it. And because the nature failed to attain life through the law, so the mercy of God had compassion on it and lifted the law by Jesus birth.`
- ❖ Until crucifixion the whole earth lived in the darkness of the night, and the law was like a lamp in the midst of the darkness. The earth was searching for the light of the law such as when the eye searches for the light of the lamp in the darkness.
- ❖ The illuminated law that came down from the mount of Sinai to dissipate the darkness of paganism, had used all ways to prove that there is a creator for the world... the educated people had kept the law, as a light.
- ❖ Moses, as a child, was nursed the spiritual milk from the law, to become the man of God. But Simon Peter was not nursed the milk as a child, because the living bread, that the Begotten Son gave him, had made him a man a God. Peter did not learn the divine teaching from the two tablets, but he became a substantial apostle because of the gift of Jesus body and blood.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

3

Divine commandment and Law of Moses

In the second chapter of the Epistle to Romans, Paul the apostle asserts that the Gentile had fallen in many evils and abominations, breaking the natural law, however, it is not fitting for the Jew to judge him, because the first sinned without the written law, but the second, by using Moses Law, he violated the commandment, so he did not only sinned, but also he was a “**transgressor**” of the law, therefore, he became more responsible and his punishment is more severe.

With ingenuity, **Saint Jacob Alsrouji** portrayed the story of delivering the law by Moses. It is the story of love of God to the mankind which He wanted to bring out of it a heavenly bride. The story begins with the symbol through the Jewish nation to prepare the mankind to accept the Messiah as a heavenly groom.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji feels incapable to illustrate the betrothal of the Jewish people to God, and he explains the symbolism of playing the horn during the delivery of the law, and the importance of the music for the bridal ceremony. He talks about the hesitancy of the Jewish people to accept Moses talk once (Moses who is the mediator between God and the Jewish people), and murmuring against him another time. He criticizes the Jews who preferred the golden calf over the Lord during the time of delivering the law. He compares between the soul and the church which is the offspring of peoples, and the Jewish who are the offspring of Hebrews.

Please refer to Father Melatios Bernaba for a poem about the descending of the Lord on Mount Sinai and the symbol to the church for **Saint Jacob Alsrouji**. Both files are in the Patriarchate Journal, 49 (1985) 459-466; 51 (1986) 33-38. Also the text of Father paul Bijan and Dr. Behnam Sony.

You may come down to my mind as You descended on Mount Sinai!

People of Israel received Law of Moses which was delivered to them by Moses, the greatest among prophets, in a certain way which was appropriate to their spiritual childhood, and at the mean time it bore deep inside the mysteries of “the Divine Word”. Because, what is the law, unless of it is the word of God, who is the only one to be the leader, the savior, the guide, and the one that satisfies the soul. He is the one who leads the soul to the bosom of the Father; He leads her way to His divine glories. Therefore, **Origin the Scholar** says: {there He is, deep inside her; the soul finds her heavenly groom and goes with Him to His chamber}.

God talked about the purpose of the law before showing His love to the people saying: “I bore you on eagles’ wings **and brought you to Myself**” (Exodus 19:4), as if He wanted to make it clear that the mutual love is the foundation of the law. He loved us and bore us by the Holy Spirit (eagles’ wings) and brought us to Himself, i.e. to His divine bosom, in order to experience His inward love and understand His fatherhood.

The Lord said to Moses to Go to the people and consecrate them, let them wash their clothes, and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people (Exodus 19:10-11). That event took

place on the third month since their exodus; they were bound to be ready for the Lord coming down in the sight of all, on the **third day**.... Thus, this book contains continuous assurances of the acknowledgement of the power of resurrection inside us. It was not for the people to benefit from the commandment unless they acknowledge the potentiality of executing it through the risen Christ from the dead, who gives a new nature that is capable of executing the divine commandment.

Origin the Scholar says: {if you come with filthy clothes you will hear this word: "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?"(Mathew 22:12), so, the man cannot hearken to the word of God unless he is hallowed first, so he may be holy in both body and spirit (1 Corinthians 7:34), he washes his garment because within few moments he will come to the table of the groom to eat the body of the lamb, and drink the cup of salvation. No one comes to this table with dirty clothes. The Wisdom recommended it also: "let your clothes always be white". You have washed your clothes once when you gained the blessing of baptism, and your body became pure. All the defilement of both the body and the soul has been removed, so "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15).}

The Lord warned the people saying: "Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.... whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain" (Exodus 19:12-13). For Moses, to go up inwardly to the mountain of knowledge, and to take pleasure in the divine mysteries, we are bound not to allow the senses that are wrapped up with materialistic things such as the sense of sight and hearing, to go up with us, nor the animal lusts also. Thus, neither man nor a beast will go up with us, but Moses will go up alone, i.e. only our inner man in order to enjoy what the Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man (1Corinthians 2:9). Our inner man goes up to feel what is greater than the senses and the things that we sense...i.e. the theology itself! So, do not allow a man or an animal that is inside you to prevent you from seeing God, on the holy mountain in you, and from talking with Him face to face!

There were thundering and lightning, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled (Exodus 19:16). In receiving the law, God treated the mankind as young children who they hear the loud sound and get scared, but in the New Testament, the divine word Himself came talking to us as mature sons where He wanted us to be friends and lovers of Him

Why the sound of the trumpet was used? **Pope Athanasius the Apostolic** answers saying: {trumpets bring the excitement of vigilance and dread more than any other sound, or other machine. This method was used to teach them because they were still children.}

Saint Gregory Bishop of Niseses deems that the sound of the trumpet symbolizes the preaching of the divine incarnation; the theme with which the prophets honked the trumpet to announce to mankind that His coming was near. But when the apostles came and went up to the top of the mountain, the blast of the trumpet sounded and became louder and louder (Exodus 19:19), i.e. they declared it with more power until their voice reached to the far end of the universe, and their message reached the end of the world (Psalm 19:5).

Now, as our hearts are excited to go up with Moses the prophet, on mount of Sinai, not to enjoy the law, but to be delighted in the divine word, let every one of us cries out with **Saint Jacob Alsrouji** saying:

❖ Help me to describe Your wondrous manifestation on mount of Sinai.

The rocky mountain which trembled before Your greatness and Your power, it bore You symbolically, however, You came down upon it, which it is Your handmade. Come down to my mind, so I may understand Your mysteries, for my mind is longing for You.

The earth is not able to recognize You, otherwise it will embrace You as does the mind. Also, the mountains are not capable to receive You in the way the thoughts would do! The mind is broader than the mountain. **The mind is more spacious than Sinai Mountain, so, come down upon it, and the sound of thanksgiving will ascend from it.** It is more capable in glorifying and thanking You. Accept myself that is longing to your beauty. You wanted to have compassion on people who did not understand You, please, have compassion on me, as I beseech You...

- ❖ O, You, whom all directions are under your command, You, who agreed to be contained by Sinai mountain, let my intellect contains You as much as could be and without limitation.

You, who descended, and did not come down on the high mountain, come down truly unto the top of the mind that is waiting for You.

O luminous one, with You, my mind smokes like Sinai Mountain, and the smoke of the hymns of Your praise will be ascending from my mind.

Help me to say that the mountain bore You figuratively, and when part of Your power came upon it (according to its ability), it caused it to shake.

You came down figuratively on the top of Sinai Mountain, the rocky mountain, let's come down to the spiritual intellect that is waiting for You.

He appeared to sanctify and betroth the earthly girl from Abraham's tribe

Saint Jacob Alserouji portrayed for us the descending of God who is fully in His majesty, whose heaven and earth are not big enough to contain Him, He came to render the law to the daughter of mankind which whom He loves very much, explaining the following:

1. His wondrous descending is a sign of His love to the mankind which He seeks to be in union with it.
2. The mountain could not bear His descending; however, He approaches the man to renew the covenant with him, and to be delighted in him forever.
3. This law was close to be like a charter, God formed it for the mankind keeping in mind how much the mankind can perceive.
4. The purpose of the law is to be hallowed with the Holy in order to be ready for the heavenly bridal.
5. The Holy is blaming the mankind for its defilement and corruption, and He had sent the law not to condemn it, but it was to preserve the mankind for Him to be justified through Him.
6. God chose Moses to betroth the mankind and to announce to the people, God's willingness to be in union with them, and also to write the contract.
7. Moses would present the wedding ring that he received in the beginning of his call from the burning bush which was not consumed, i.e. from the incarnated word of God.
8. Heaven and earth rejoiced for this bridal, so, the heaven provided the manna to the bride, the wilderness offered all its needs and the rock had been its companion to provide it with water. All of them wanted to present gifts for the

beloved bride.

9. The heavenly groom was the cloud during the day to overshadow His bride, and was the pillar of light to guide her and illuminate her path.

That was a simple picture to portray the work of God with His people when He gave them the law. If this was the shadow and the symbol, what should we say about the truth itself, when He came down from heaven to announce to the mankind His absolute love through the sacrifice of the cross?!

- ❖ Think of this mighty one, who is holding all directions: what reason that caused Him to come down on Sinai Mountain?

His mercifulness drew Him toward the mankind to become like her, and **with His love, He came to betroth, and to take the earthly girl.**

He longed to the group, the daughter of righteous, because of its people, to become close to the clan of Abraham's house.

He found out that the young woman is being fooled by the Egyptian; the Holy did not show any disgust toward the adulterer.

He sought behind the lewd to bring her back to Him, so, the daughter of the righteous would be hallowed by mingling with Him.

- ❖ **His gorgeous love of mankind has called Him, so He came down to meet its level of understanding.** With His mercifulness and compassion, He came to betroth the daughter of the mankind from the clan of Abraham.

She is the daughter of righteous, its ancestry is honorable. He saw her when she was the symbol of people of Israel....

The Holy did not pay attention to her iniquities and her defilement, but He called her to come back to Him..... So the daughter of the righteous would become hallowed through Him, and would be related to Him.

He sent Moses to her to betroth her. To renew the covenant with her so she would live with uprightness...

Moses was assigned to go and betroth her. He sent him as a mediator to sign an agreement with her.

Moses the Levite came down, he performed miracles, and he took her with him and ascended.

In her finger he put the ring that he received at the burning bush.

He betrothed her to the high most and the Holy, he led her out of Egypt in order to keep her immaculate for God.

The most high received her on mount Horeb, and gave her unusual gifts. The wilderness bowed to her.

When she entered, He gave her His offering..... a tremendous pillar of light to illuminate the road before her.

He was like a light accompanying the bride!....

The most high sent her the manna, and from the air, He sent her the quails. The

rock provided her with water. The nature furnished its prosperity. All creatures agreed on accompanying her.

In order to witness the great bridal that was prepared for her.

Her companions surrounded her, and walked with her, till reaching the Sinai Mountain, the promised place!

❖ Horeb received her and brought remarkable gifts, the desert bowed to her with its offering, when she entered it.

The whole wildernesses had realized to whom she was engaged, and all natures came to accompany her and celebrate with her.

All elements carried the presents and went before her in a crowd, to come with her to the Holy.

The magnificent pillar of light ran ahead of her to illuminate the road before her, it went with the bride like a lamp, and walked with her.

Gifts from the creatures were presented to her every day, while she was enjoying fabulous food.

The height provided her with the manna that He sent to her, and the depth nourished her with the quails that He presented to her.

The blessed water was running to her from the granite, and all natures supported this one who was bragging.

All creatures promised to go with her, so the world would watch the great bridal that was prepared for her.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

Moses on the mountain receiving the covenant from the Holy

Saint Jacob Alsrouji furnishes a magnificent dialogue between the Holy God and

Moses. What does God ask of Moses?

He is announcing to the bride that the Holy gives her the law to attain the following:

1. Establishing a **relation of a perpetual love** with the Holy.
2. Becoming an honorable queen in all nations, the lady of all.
3. **To be a pure, immaculate, and chaste saint without blemish**, to be pure in heart and in mind, outwardly and inwardly.
4. To be the **store of holiness and the provenance of the priests**, and to have in her and for her the prophets who proclaim the hidden.

❖ Moses has left her in front of the mountain, and he ascended the mountain by himself.

He listened to the voice of the beloved God who ordered him to come down another time.

Go down and talk to the bride, whom I saved and brought out of Egypt, the bride who had been carried as if it was being carried on eagles' wings in the air, tell her what I say:

I made you venerable in all nations, and kept you from evil, so let's be lovers! **There is a precondition between Me and you:**

Holiness is the key of our relationship.....stay holy, immaculate, pure, and without blemish, clean and sweet, pure in heart and in mind, outwardly and inwardly.

Be active, impeccable, calm and peaceful, wary, wise and gorgeous, and flawless.

If you come to Me like this, and with these traits, you will be the lady of all, no one is subject to give you orders.

I will give you a magnificent crown and the apparel of kings. You will be the store of holiness and the provenance of the priests.

The prophets who proclaim the hidden will be in you and for you....

So the giants won't scare you, nor will the powers terrorize you....

With this covenant, the groom has sent Moses....

Saint Jacob El Srouji

My Lord, the girl is ready for all what You requested

- ❖ Moses came down to take the consent of the bride....Moses called her, and asked her in the presence of the elders.

The girl rejoiced, and showed her wish to go with him. Moses made sure that she willingly agreed.

So, he went back to the mountain filled with joy to tell his Lord what had happened.

He shouted: my Lord, the girl is ready for all what You requested!

- ❖ My Lord, the girl agreed on our secret, as we asked her, and she did not give an excuse to be (a bride), with holiness.

I made a good agreement with her as You told me, and if she is truthful as she says, she would not be stolen.

He answered and said to Moses: turn back and go down to her, to adorn her outwardly and inwardly.

Let her be dressed in white (clothes) from outside, and to be adorned with thoughts of holiness from inside.

Saint Jacob El Srouji

Moses adorns the bride

- ❖ Moses went down and commenced to adorn the bride; he suffered and was tired of her rebuke and agitation.

He taught and instructed the vulgar not to be defiled, so the hidden groom won't see that.

Furnish His path with holiness to conduct a celebration for Him, and to be able to see His face with purity when you receive Him.

Place the holy crown on your head when He meets with you, so with purity, you enter with Him to the depth of the light.

Saint Jacob El Srouji

Moses sanctifies the bride for three days (Exodus 19:11)

- ❖ So Moses went down to adorn the bride that he brought, thus she would look beautiful to the groom whom she was betrothed to.

He ordered her and she got dressed, he looked at her and she was pretty, he adorned her and she became gorgeous, he warned her many times, he guided her, taught her, and

completed her beautification.

Moses took care of her for three days; he instructed her and taught her the standard needed to meet with God.

He engraved wise words and put it in her mouth, (he taught her) how to respond to the glorious groom when He calls her.

Moses, her guider and her instructor, he raised her and educated her, in order to obtain the cheerful face before the Holy.

She learned how to approach the groom, and which image she should wear when she reaches him.

And when she was getting ready for three days to be holy, the groom came out of his place to descend to her.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

The Lord weds people of Israel

- ❖ There was a reason that prompted Him to bring down His power on Mount Sinai in order for the group to marry Him, and to keep the dignity.

If he did not come down, the group might have said, after its adultery: I still do not see him, how do I wait for him?

And if this was the case, so he used the figurative excuse, and the word spread: behold, the Lord descends on the mountain.

How wonderful, as if he was fully descended on the mountain, Sinai trembles, because the mighty and the powerful had walked on the top of it.

The smoke ascended from all over the mountain to assure that the fiery had descended there.

The stone has melted with the fire that broke out in it, to believe that the one who wore the flame was there.

The lightning hurried, the thunders continued, and the sounds were terrifying, to make them believe that the dwelling is there.

The cloud extended over the multiplied veil, and He surrounded the mountain as if he was there inside the group with all His fullness.

He spread the fogs like handkerchiefs in all directions outside it, keeping her dignity, He is her groom.

He kindled the rays of light in the air, like the lamps that were truly lit before Him, as if it was to honor Him.

When she was certain that He came to her and He was with her, in a short time, she formed a calf and committed adultery.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

The descending of the Lord on Sinai

- ❖ The group is trembling and Moses supports her with fear, the mountain is smoking and the most high is mighty, and Sinai is burning.

The sounds are frightening, scenes are marvelous, thunders are quickened, ranks are

lined, rows are extended, and the orders are glorified.

Thousands surrounding and meeting, principles are ready, seraphim are glorifying, cherubim are hovering, and the (heavenly) are flying.

The scene is wondrous, the view is peculiar, the dwelling is hidden, the cloud is pausing, the fire is burning, and the cry is loud.

Glory is everywhere, light is pouring and spreading, the sound is strong, and the noise is getting so loud.

And Moses is humble, the groom is dear, the bride is despised, the place is decorated, and the beauty is gorgeous.

Repentant are sitting, the world is joyous, the bridal is ready, and the one who was robbed, rejects the bridal.

The writer stops while carrying the pen to sign the agreement, and the groom waits the world to sign for the dowry.

The daughter of Abraham rejected this groom, because the friend of the calf was not interested in this relation.

The groom brought out the wondrous flame clothes, out of the box of clothes that belong to God which He brought down with Him.

The place is warm by the woven clothes of flame, which covers the intangible bed of fire.

The daughter of Abraham was surrounded by intangible coverings because she was promised to win God.

The apparel of the dark clouds stretched outside; it was black, thick, and tacky.

The winds were pushed a little to allow for the group to see this beauty that is inside it.

Fogs and burning fire were inside, and on the top of the mountain and outside it; there was thick air, in honoring of her.

The glory was concealed in the depth of the clouds, which was shown, but not shown as it was.....

The cloud had covered the splendor of His face, when it allowed little of the light to brighten over the viewers.

A blessed light had overflow out of its care: a small part of the glory that was seen by the people.

When the light gushed to be visible, the cloud blocked it, Sinai Mountain was smoking, and here is the symbol supports it so it won't melt.

When little of the glory was shown through the fog, it was blocked by the cloud, lest it spills over the viewers.

They saw it, but not exactly, so that the inner glory would sparkle within their thoughts.

That scene which was hidden from their eyes had become a motive for them to recognize that he, who is inside, is greater.

Little of the light was revolving in the fog, and they were frightened, because if it had spread, it would have burnt the world.

They saw it through the cover of the cloud, and because it was hidden, so it raised confusion for all around it.

When something is far and hidden, it becomes very precious, so that the cloud had

become a cover for the mountain

The smoke rose to show that the fire had thickened the fog to cool down the flame. Sounds came out as if the horn honks there, and the mountain trembled as if someone is suffering under its weight.

The smoke was there to show the fire, Sinai was shaken as if his dwelling had come there.

The loud heavenly sounds shuddered, because the Lord of the high most came down on the mountain with His camp.

The creatures trembled with the sounds and the astonishing scenes, because the Lord of the wilderness had come on Sinai and in the fog.

Thunders had spread far away on the top of the mountain, and pointed out: the king is her.

The trumpets sounded so strong on Mount Sinai, informing the earth to meet and announce: The Lord is present there.

The singing of those who are watchful honks inside the clouds, it made those who are out, to believe that He is present.

When the light of the fire spread in the fog, the clouds pushed it away, lest it overflows outside it.

When the flame melted down on the top of the mountain, the cloud encircled it so it won't fall on those who were below.

When the waves of the burning coals rose on the tops of Sinai, the fresh air received it quickly.

The cloud was outside, and the flame was inside it, to cool the heat with coldness.

The stunning scene was blazing on the top of the mountain, and it was hiding so it won't fully appear.

The light was in the care of the multiple clouds, it was contained there lest it inundates the earth.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

Isn't the mediation of Moses a symbol of the mediation of the Son of Man?

- ❖ This is the great secret! It caused the minds to be puzzle and the hearts to be fascinated....

Didn't the redeemer of mankind, Christ the Lord, come down from up high, the same as when Moses came down from the mountain?

Or, isn't the mediation of Moses a symbol of the mediation of the Son of Man? O, the wise ones listen to what was said:

"The Lord will appoint to you a prophet like me, by him; the daughter of Abraham was delivered out of Egypt.

And by him, she was betrothed to become a bride for the Holy.

Through His redemption, the Father forgave the mankind. So, the Son came down to save the mankind.

He purified her and brought her back, pure, to His Father. He put on her the clothes

of righteousness; He saved her, made her clean and He betrothed her to be His bride.

Moses put the white clothes, the symbol of purity, on the daughter of Jacob. And Christ put chastity on the soul, through the water of baptism.

Moses sanctified his people for three days. And by the Lord Jesus, the consecration continues to be forever.

His pure blood that was shed, and His holy body, they are still representing Him till the end of the world.

To symbolize this fact, Moses dared to call the Son of God "a prophet like me"...

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

In short, God showed His love to His people by giving them the law, not in the form of orders and prohibitions, but it was a covenant, so they understand what they are to believe. He wanted them to yearn for holiness that prepares them to be a bride for the Holy, and at the mean time, He prepares them for the coming of the promised Messiah, the savior of the world.

Unfortunately, Moses came back to find them honoring the visible golden calf instead of God, their God who saved them from the bondage of Pharaoh. Truly, their commitment to the law was literally (word by word), and they counted themselves as guards over it, without saving it in their hearts or applying it in their conduct. They cling to the deadly literal (word by word), and they brag about it, meanwhile they were breaking it. The apostle says: " You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?!" (Romans 2:23), for they gave God and His precepts their back not their face, they broke the law and fell under the curse, even after the Messiah, the incarnated word of God, came, they did not acknowledge Him. The reason behind their disbelief was that they were slaves to literal (word by word), instead of enjoying the freedom of the spirit. The prophet says: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")" (Galatians 3:13).

A Veil on Moses' face, Moses who received the law

Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them. Afterward all the children of Israel came near and he commanded them as the Lord has spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel with all the commandments.

And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him. (Exodus 34:29-35).

The Jews could not bear to meet with God; they could not even bear looking at Moses' face, because his face carried the reflection of God's splendor on him. The apostle says: "unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:13-14)

The people of children of Israel were not ready to look at Moses' face, shining, which was a temporary glory that would be taken away. God allowed them to see this, so they would ask for what is greater: the eternal glory that would not vanish. If they focus on the literal (word by word) not on the spirit, and if they close their eyes so they won't see the light of the Gospel that given to them, then, their hearts will be blinded and they will be full of foolishness. As if the veil which blocked the brightness of Moses' face from them, still remains. Darkness and foolishness has become the veil that stops them from looking at the glory of the Gospel to shine on them.

- ❖ What happened with the case of Moses, it always happens with the case of the law. What is said is not an accusation to the law, and has no reflection on Moses who wore a veil, but it is an accusation against those who are not open minded and they care for the literal of the Jewish Law. The law has its own glory that befits with it, but, they were incapable to recognize it. So, why should we be wondering that the Jews did not believe in Christ, and they did not even believe in the law?
- ❖ The veil covered their hearts....because of the heavy and carnal mind of the Jews.... Don't you see that the veil was not on Moses' face, but it was on the Jewish insight? This has happened, not to hide Moses' glory, but they did not see it, because they did not find a way to see it. It was their fault; this did not make Moses unknown for anything... Paul the apostle says that there is no need for us to cover ourselves as Moses did (Exodus 34:33), because we are capable to see the glory that surrounds us, even if it was brighter than the first.

Saint John the Chrysostom

- ❖ Why does he say so? Because he, who focus on the literal and mere meaning of the law, and just pays attention to memorizing the law, his heart will be as if it is wrapped with the acceptance of the Jewish literal, like a veil. This might happen to him because he is unaware that keeping the law in a carnal way has been taken away through the presence of Christ, and because the symbols had been fulfilled to the facts of the future.

He, who has the ability to look at the depths of the meanings of the law, and afterward, will be able to pass through the ambiguity of the literal (word by word), as if passing through a veil, to reach the things that are unspeakable, he will be like Moses who took off the veil when he talked with God. He is returning from pursuing the exact literal of the law, to be following the spirit. The veil on Moses' face coincide

with ambiguity of the teaching of the law, while, the spiritual meditation matches with the return to God. He, who is like this, is more likely to be like Moses, whose face was glorified by declaration of God.

When objects are put close to bright colors, they get a touch from the brightness that shining around them; it is the same for he, who focuses with a steady look at the spirit. He is glorifying the Lord to reach greater level, and his heart will be enlightened, as if from a light that is pouring from the truth that of the spirit. This is the "transition," to the glory of the spirit, it reaches a point which is not rare, or fade, or not clear, but it is as we expect for he, who is enlightened by the spirit.

Saint Basil the Great

- ❖ Truly, the Old Testament of the Sinai Mountain has produced the children of bondage, now it does not aim to anything except to bear witness for the New Testament. The words of the apostle would be truthful: "But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart, but when a man from the Old Testament turns to Christ **"the veil is lifted"**. This is what happened, those who are making a change by turning from the Old Testament to the New Testament; they begin to look for spiritual happiness more than worldly happiness.
- ❖ Without doubt, there is a veil in the Old Testament, which is lifted once the man comes to Christ. During crucifixion, the veil of the temple was torn in two (Mathew 27:51), to meet the meaning of what the apostle said about the veil of the Old Testament which was abolished in Christ.
- ❖ **The Old Testament was not abolished in Christ, but it was the veil which blocked the understanding of it through Christ. It means that the Old Testament would become visible and clear, and without Christ, it is hidden and mysterious.**

The same apostle added promptly: "**when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away**". He did not say: "the law or the Old Testament is taken away". It is not so! With the grace of God, what was covered is taken away because it is not useful, **the cover that hides the useful truth, is to be removed**. This is what happens to those who are interested in seeking the meaning of the holy books, being eager to learn with piety, not with pride and evil. They receive clear explanation of the order of the events, the reason behind words and actions, and the harmony between both testaments, New and Old, so, there should not be one point without complete understanding.

Saint Augustine

- ❖ While the (bride) turns the pages of the prophets, page by page, as an example, she finds Christ in there. As the veil, which once covered these pages, now, it has been removed, she can realize Him, manifesting and becoming clear in these pages that she is reading, He comes out of it in a quite clear proclamation.

Origin the Scholar

- ❖ The shadows bring up the truth, even if it was not the exact truth. Therefore, Moses, who was revealed to him by God, had laid a veil on his face, and thus he spoke to all the children of Israel. But, by this action, he cried out that it is befitting for the individual to look at the beauty of the truth, not through the outer and the symbolic look, but by the hidden meditations within us (2 Corinthians 3:15-16). Therefore, let us lift the veil of the

law, and liberate Moses' face from all the covers, in order to see the truth clear and naked.

Saint Kirellos Alsakandary

- ❖ The veil of the temple was torn in two, because what was concealed in Judas was unveiled to all nations. The veil is torn to reveal the mysteries of the law to the believers, but for the unbelievers, it is still hidden until this same day. When Moses was read – the Old Testament – in a loud voice by the Jews every Saturday, in accordance with the apostles, "**the veil covered their hearts**". They read the law which tells the absolute truth, but they don't understand, because their eyes grow in darkness, where they are unable to enlighten it. Truly, they are like those whom the bible says about them : "Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not"

❖

Saint Jirome

- ❖ It is appropriate for us to know that removing this veil is kind of a blessing, because it is right for the eye to be free of any restrictions, so it becomes able to see the beauty of the beloved.

Saint Gregory Bishop of Nisis

The law leads us to Christ

The apostle says: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). "Therefore **the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ**, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

- ❖ The Jews are like children under the supervision of a teacher

The law is our teacher, it leads us to the Master, and Christ is our Master.....

We fear the teacher, and the master refers to the path of salvation. The fear brings us to liberty, liberty leads to faith, faith leads to love, love brings sonship, and sonship brings inheritance. Therefore, where there is faith, there is liberty, because the slave works in fear, but person who is free, he works with faith. The first is under the literal, and the second is under the blessing. The first lives under bondage, and the second is in spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"

- ❖ The Lord did not say that the law was halted, but it was a start of the Gospel preaching; as if, what was considered a lower level, should be halted in the presence of what is better, therefore, let's strive diligently to win the kingdom of God! Let's take Jesus by force, with strong jealousy, not with coldness, because fierceness in faith is piety, and coldness is a sin.

Saint Ambrosios

- ❖ The law which was not completed through the requirements of the literal, it was fulfilled by liberty of grace.

Saint Augustine

- ❖ (Paul) says that the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ..... the law did not ever hinder them from believing in the Son of God, but rather it urged them to do so by saying that the man cannot be free from the wound of the old sin unless through believing in Him, He, who took the likeness of the sinful flesh, and was lifted up from the earth, on the

wood (cross) of the martyrdom, drawing all people to Him (John 12:32, 3:14), and raising the dead.

Saint Erinaous

- ❖ Both testaments are one; the Old Testament prophesied about Christ who came in the New Testament, the Old Testament guided us to the school of Christ through the law and the prophets.....if you heard one of the heretics saying evil things about the law or the prophets, tell him, with the voice of the savior, that Christ did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Mathew 5:17).

Saint Kirellos of Jerusalem

Law and the prophets in the spiritual meaning

Origen the scholar has commented on the words: "you have dove's eyes" (Song of Solomon 1:15), by saying: {certainly, comparing her eyes with the doves returns to her understanding of the divine script not literally but according to the spirit. She can perceive in Him the spiritual mysteries. **The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit** (Mathew 3:16). The spiritual meaning of perceiving the law and the prophets can be attained if we have the dove's eyes....a soul like this will be given the dove's wings, as it says in the psalm (Psalm 68:14), to rise **until it is able to fly high in its understanding of the spiritual mysteries**. It will settle in the courts of wisdom.}

- ❖ The Jews continue to stay at Marah, where the water is bitter, because God did not show them the tree yet, with which the water is made sweet.
- ❖ The Lord casted a tree in the water and it was made sweet. But when Jesus' tree (cross) comes, and when the teaching of my savior dwells within me, then, truly, Moses' law becomes "sweet" and tasty to those who read it and understand it.
- ❖ "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21)....that is to repent turning from the literal to the vivid spirit, "if someone returns to the Lord, the veil will be lifted".
- ❖ We need to implore to the Lord Himself, and to the Holy Spirit itself, so that He lifts every cloud and every obscurity that led to the blindness and the hardness of our hearts through the spots of the sins, so then we will be able to see the knowledge of His wondrous spiritual law.

Origin the Scholar

- ❖ The Old Testament, from Sinai Mountain, brings bondage, and it will not be beneficial unless it is a witness for the New Testament. Moses' law is read while the veil is on their hearts, but once anyone returns to Christ, the veil is revoked.
- ❖ When the number of the veils is on the rise, this which is behind it will be honored, even if it was not comprehended. Because he who is with more respect, the veils are more likely to be dangling in his palace. The veils cover secretly and with honor what is preserved behind it. The veils will be removed from he who pays respect to what is preserved, but he who despises it; he will be driven out so he won't touch it. For if we come back to Christ, the veil will be revoked.

Saint Augustine

❖ Jesus' work is to call people to turn from the law to the grace.

Tertilyan the Scholar

The law with the literal meaning

❖ The main troubles in church, did not come, unless from those who abuse the law.

Saint Augustine

❖ He, who tastes the law in a sensual way, will bring death, because its commandment shows the sin, but does not remove it...as Paul witnessed saying: "for the law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:19). Also: " Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12), afterword he immediately said: "But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful" (Romans 7:13).

❖ **"Can flavorless food be eaten without salt?"** (Job 6:6) the hidden meaning of the law is the salt of the literal. So he who depends on the sensual meaning and refuses to understand the spiritual meaning, what he is doing is only like eating flavorless food? But this salt, i.e. the truth, is added to the food when the scent of the hidden meaning does exist in the depths of the law, saying: "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46). Also: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another" (Mark 9:50).

Pope Kirellos the Great

The law reveals the sin and condemns it, but it does not remove it

The apostle says: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the entire world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19-20). And also says: "because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13).

❖ The law was not given to heal the weak, but to uncover their weakness and to show it...they received the law which they could not fulfill, they knew their illness, and beseeched the help of the physician, longing to be cured. They acknowledged that they were in distress, which they did not know it before until they realized their inability to fulfill the law they received.

❖ Be attention, o beloved ones, the law was given for this purpose, to detect diseases not to remove it. Thus, the herd that is sick which was possible for them to have patients in their homes in great secrecy, if it wasn't for the five porches (five books of Moses) to be known. By entering the five porches (five books of Moses), they became known to all

mankind, but these books are incapable to heal them.

- ❖ So, the law is beneficial to detect the sins, because such a man will be guiltier, by transgressing the law, he is to bridle his haughtiness and entreat the help of He, who is compassionate. Hearken to the apostle: "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20)...and in another text: "for where there is no law there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). The man may be called a sinner before the law, but he cannot be called a transgressor. But because he committed a sin after receiving the law, he was found not only a sinner but also a transgressor. By adding the offense against the law to the sin therefore the "sin abounded". And when the sin abounded, the human pride learnt ultimately to surrender, to admit, and to say to God: "I am weak".
- ❖ The law was given by a servant, it made people sinful, and when the forgiveness came from the emperor, the sinful were saved.
- ❖ He says: "**take away the stone**" (John 11:39). Take away the weight of the law, and preach with grace. "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:21-21). Therefore, "take away the stone".

Saint Augustine

- ❖ Moses commandments were "**to serve judgment,**" but he called the grace which through the savior, "**servicing of righteousness**" which exceeded in glory...the law that condemns was given by Moses, but the grace that justifies, was exercised in full by the only begotten Son. So how is it possible that Christ won't be exceedingly glorified and in an incomparable way?
- ❖ The shadow shows the truth in advance, but it does not have the power to serve the spirit. Moses in the flesh cannot enter the heart and extort the defiled and dark apparel, the power of the malicious darkness cannot be removed or dissolved unless through a spirit that out of spirit and a fire that out of fire.

Saint Macarius the Great

With the law, the sin abounded

The apostle says: "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20).

Saint Augustine gives us an explanation regarding the abundance of the sin, he says:

{The law came for the sin to abound, because banning the sin prompted the lust to abound, and made it strong (Romans 7:7). Thus, the sin was found, which was not there without the law, despite the existence of the sin (even before the law) "**for where there is no law there is no transgression**" (Romans 4:15). And therefore the strength of the sin was increased by the law, and with the absence of the help from the grace, and because of banning the sin. The apostle says: "**the strength of sin is the law**" (1Corinthians 15:56).

Therefore, no wonder that through the weakness of the man, the good law led

to the increase of evil, even though, the man was given the law to be committed to fulfill it.

Truly, For they being ignorant of God's righteousness (Romans 10:3) that He gives to the weak, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, which is avoided by the weak, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God, and they became corrupted and arrogant. But, the law while it serves as an instructor, it leads those who became criminals to the grace. Those, who seek the "physician" because of their serious wounds, God leads them to taste the good work, instead of the fatal lust, so that they gain greater joy through chastity, and their ground gives its fruits (Psalm 135:12) which nourishes the soldier (the spirit) who defeats the sin by the help of the Lord.}

Saint Augustine has an explanation for the phrase "**for where there is no law there is no transgression**" (Romans 4:15), he says: {before the law, the man could have been called a sinner, but it was not possible to be called a transgressor. But because he erred after receiving the law, so he was not only a sinner, but also a transgressor. Thus, "transgression" was added to the "sin," that the sin greatly abounded.} He also says: {those who hear the word (the Gospel word) should be judged in a different way than those who hear the word and receive it with contempt.}

4

Divine commandment and Law of Christ

The law proclaimed the love of the Holy God to the mankind and at the same time disclosed the weakness of the mankind and its need to be hallowed by the Holy. The believers acknowledged their need for the holy divine word to come down to present Himself a sacrifice for them, and to grant them the right of the adoption to God the Father by the Holy Spirit through baptism.

As sons of God who were liberated from the literal law, not to send them without a law, but to live with **the law of Christ**, and to call it the **law of God**, also the **law of righteousness**. This is what the apostle affirmed saying: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the **law of God**" (Romans 8:7). " but Israel, pursuing the **law of righteousness**, has not attained to the **law of righteousness**" (Romans 9:31). "I became... to those who are without law, as without law (not being without **law toward God**, but under **law toward Christ**), that I might win those who are without law" (1 Corinthians 9:21). "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the **law of Christ**" (Galatians 6:2).

What is meant by the law of Christ?

Life in Christ provides us the inner liberty, where we are freed from the curse of the law; and we enjoy the power of the rich grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we grow ceaselessly. This freedom is not out of control, but it is subject to the law of Christ which does not know chaos, or negligence, or laziness, or defer. Because righteousness of Christ has its own law which takes us from glory to glory, so that Christ will be formed in us, and His image will manifest in us.

Life in Jesus Christ has its own commitment and rules so that the believer would carry the traits of Christ which are love, holiness, patience, and obedience etc. This life has its own precise joyful spiritual system, being a deposit for the heavenly accurate life. We abide to the law of Christ which is the law of love; with it we fulfill the law (Romans 13:8, 6:2). The law of Christ fulfills the law, which is completed in one word: love!

- ❖ Now I ask: who is Israel today? The apostle replies: those who follow the spirit not the letter, they **follow the law of Christ**, they are Israel of God.
- ❖ How is the "**law of God**" being comprehended, except to be only love? With it, we read inwardly how the commandments of life should be supported with outwardly works. The sound of the truth says about this law: "this is my commandment, that you love one another" (John 15:12). And Paul says about it: "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10). Also: "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:5). **Therefore, how the law of Christ is perceived more than to be love, which we truly fulfill it when we carry the burden of our brethren, based on love?**

This law itself is called "**doubled**" (Job 11:6), where love that is of extreme attention and jealousy, extends to the works of the virtue. Love was presented through just two commandments, but it reaches to countless number of it. For, the beginning of the law is

the love of God and love of our neighbor (Mathew 22:39-40)....

But the love of God is divided into three parts. We are advised to love our creator "with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all our strength".....so that he who wants to please God by being perfect, it is befitting for him not to leave anything within him to be for himself.

The love of our neighbor came in two commandments. From one side it was said by a righteous man: "**do** this, not to have someone that you hate" (Tobias 4:15). And from another side, the truth says: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you do also to them" (Mathew 7:12). With these two commandments the evil conduct was refrained and the good conducted was applied to us to follow.

- ❖ Therefore, the law of God is truly called "**multiple**"once it captures the mind, it turns it on, by multiple ways, to do countless works.....Paul talked about the mounting of this law itself in a proper way, counting the following: " Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy....." (1Corinthians 13"4-6).

Pope Gregory(the Great)

- ❖ It is befitting for us not to fall short in **the joint love**, being negligent in endurance, for, it is possible for anyone to become weak and err for once and for many times. But rather that we need to be like those who treat the illness of our bodies, because those, they do not treat the patient once or twice only, but every time he becomes sick.

We need to remember that we ourselves, are exposed to weaknesses, and our passions may take control over us, therefore, we ask those who have the right of reproaching and the power to discipline us, to be kind to us and forgive us. Thus, we are also obligated to have common feelings, that we sense the weakness, and Bear one another's burdens, and by this way we fulfill the law of Christ

Saint Kirellos the Great

- ❖ "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Now the law of Christ is love, and this love won't be reached unless we bear one another's burdens. He says: "with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2).

When you were weak, your neighbor bore you, now, you are well, and you bear your neighbor. This is how you fill what was incomplete in you. Then, "**take up your bed**". And when you carry it, do not stay in place but "**go**". Through your love to your neighbor, and by bearing your neighbor, you complete your walk. Where are you walking in your path to the Lord God, who requires us to love Him from all the heart, all the soul, and all the mind? So, you bear Him, while walking, to reach who you want to stay with. Therefore, "**take up your bed and go**".

Saint Augustine

- ❖ How would the perfection of purity of the heart be reached without executing the

commandments shown by the prophet: " Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2), or without possessing the virtue of love which is: " Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1Corinthians 13"4-7)?! Because "A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Proverb 12:10)

Father Sherimone

Saint Augustine who had preached often with the law of love with its two sides, which never separated: love of God and love of the neighbor, he believes that the law of Christ works in the heart in the same way as the Holy Spirit did in the womb of Saint Mary. {What the womb of Mary did with the flesh of Christ, let you heart do it with the law of Christ.} With the law of Christ, Christ is shaped within us. The apostle says: "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again **until Christ is formed in you**" (Galatians 4:19).

Saint Eklemdos the Alexandrian believes that Gnostics, i.e. those who have the true spiritual knowledge of the law of Christ, they are above the passions of the flesh: {they are above the pleasure, they are exalted above the desires, and they know what to do. The Gnostics are greater than the world.}

5

Divine commandment and the law of sin

God, in His wondrous appreciation and His honor to the freedom of the man, He gave him the commandment. The man was in a position to choose to obey gladly or to rebel against his creator, so by choosing rebellion, the law of sin dominated his heart and his mind, even with longing for the holy life, the law of sin which controlled the steering wheel, drove him by his desires.

Who is here that the Law of Moses was not able to bring him back to his state before falling, it revealed his depths which was corrupted, and assured his need to the heavenly physician. And the law of Christ came to renew his creation and to give him the ability to grow in knowledge and holiness through the richness of the grace of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But, the devil did not surrender, using every trick to pull us away from the hand of our Christ, and to let us fall again under the law of sin. This should not drive us to surrender, but we should be more attached to our Christ who is our true weapon, and the giver of triumph and the crown. He is the weapon, the leader, and the one who's crowning His believers who are sticking to him.

We should not be wondering if we hear Paul the apostle, who saw the third heaven, and the Father raised him and seated him with Christ in heavens, he moans saying:

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the **law of sin** which is in my members" (Romans 7:23).

"I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the **law of sin**" (Romans 7:25).

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

Some people think that these cries show how the apostle was before receiving the faith of Christ and before his baptism. But receiving the faith, our baptism, and the use of guidance to obtain grace, does not stop the battle with the sin completely, but it gives us the ability of triumph, so that we strive diligently with the spirit of hope and joy in the Lord.

Saint John the Chrysostom says, it is fitting for us, not to understand the passages stated here, literally, and believe that the man is being forced in what to do, and being forced to practice evil, otherwise, being subjected to fall under judgment would have been unjust. When he says: "**For what I will to do, that I do not practice**" (Romans 7:15) the apostle does not deny the freedom of the human will as if he is being forced to err, otherwise, he would have said: "but what I am forced and compelled to do, I will do," but he said: "**but what I hate, that I do,**" for he does not deny the power of the sin which took away the power of his will, but meanwhile, he does not act without his will.

Some may wonder: if the man, before his experience with the grace, being under the written law or Moses' Law, was able to say that the sin deformed my understanding, and took away from me the good and active will, so that I do not do what I will to do, but what I hate, that I do, would this apostolic saying apply for us, we who live under the covenant of the grace? Or in another meaning, does this saying fit with the sinners who have not yet enjoyed the work of God in them, or all are suffering from it?

Father Theyonas replies in a long talk in the debate of Saint John Kasian, explaining the following:

A. Father Theyonas believes that the apostle spoke these words about himself even after his conversion to the faith, not because there was no change, but although he enjoyed a

flow of virtues which were like jewels, and also enjoys the divine blessings, but while he was looking to what he was going to get, eternally, he considered what he had, was worthless and little. Despite his practice to the holy life in the Lord, he longed to see God face to face, and nothing would keep him away even if it was good for the necessities of life.

B. when the apostle compares his goodness with God's exceedingly goodness, he deems that "**No one is good but One, that is, God**" (Luke 18:19), so the apostle counts himself under the weakness.

C. The more the man enjoys the spiritual growing, the more he becomes pure from inside; meanwhile he becomes more sensitive to any little sin, if this expression can be true. When he grows spiritually, he becomes much more anxious to fall, not out of despair or fear, but he is being cautious, lest his fall might be awful.

- ❖ Partially we enjoy freedom and partially we are under bondage, the freedom is not entirely complete yet, or perfectly pure, because we haven't entered the eternal yet. We are still partially under weakness, but we partially received the freedom. The sins we have committed were washed away previously by the baptism, but had all the evil been blotted out, and we stay without weakness?
- ❖ There is an evil lust in us, but by rejecting it, we are not wicked. There is a desire in us to sin, but by refusing it, we do not fulfill the evil, but the existence of it, means that we have not fulfilled the goodness yet, and the apostle explained both points:
 - A. we have not fulfilled the goodness, for we still desire the evil.
 - B. and we have not fulfilled the evil, for we do not obey such a desire.

He explained the first point by saying: "**for the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find**". He showed the second point by saying: "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). In the first statement, he did not state that the good is not there, but he said that he did not find (I do not find), and in the second statement, he did not say the carnal lust is not there, but said "**you shall not fulfill**".

Therefore, the evil desires find its way to us, where there are the illicit desires, but we do not fulfill these desires when we resist it mentally, serving the law of God.

Also, the goodness finds its way to us, when the wrong pleasure finds no place due to the triumph of the good pleasure over it. But fulfilling the goodness is not fully reached as long as this flesh – the servant of the sin – is drawing the evil desire. Although we resist it, but it moves, our fight against it is a sign that it moves within us. Therefore, the fulfillment of the goodness is found in full through the destruction of the evil entirely, so one will be raised to destroy the second.

We will be deceived if we believe that this will happen in this life, for it will reach its full image where there is no death, but eternal life. There, in the eternal kingdom, goodness will be in its highest ranks, and evil will never be there at this time...., and in that place, there will be no struggle for chastity and self control.

So, flesh is not an evil if it avoids wickedness, i.e. the sin with which the man becomes a sinner, because the man is he who found it. Both sides of the man, the flesh and the soul, were made good by the good God, but the man who chose the evil, has become a wicked.

- ❖ According to our inner man, when we are pleased with the law of God, we possess some

kind of peace, but it is not full peace, because there is another law in our members which fights against the law of our minds.

- ❖ When we are free, we are delighted with the law of God, because freedom is joy...

Let your delight to be in God, and be free. Don't fear punishment but be in love with righteousness.

Aren't you able to love righteousness, so, be afraid of punishment perhaps you reach the love of righteousness?

- ❖ For a good reason we say that the sweetness of God is hidden in you. The law of (sin) has found place in your members that resists the law of your mind and captures you. Therefore, the sweetness which for you is hidden, the angel saints drink from it, while you cannot taste it because of the captivity.

Saint Augustine

- ❖ "But I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). This means: "being a carnal man that has been placed between good and evil, and as a free deputy, so, I have the power to choose what I want. So, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death" (Jeremiah 21:8, Ecclesiastes 15:8, Deuteronomy 30:15), i.e. the death comes as a result of disobeying the spiritual law or the commandment, and due to obeying the carnal law, i.e. the counsel of the serpent. By following this choice, I am sold to the devil, and falling under the sin. Thus, the evil held on to me, clung to me, dwelt in me, and the right has handed me over to the evil because of violating the law.

Father Methodos

- ❖ The apostle did not say that his flesh has done this, but, "**the sin that dwells in me,**" because God has made the flesh good, it is not an evil itself, but once the sin entered, anything good was no longer there.

Saint John the Chrysostom

- ❖ If the (apostle) fears the temptations of the body, so, are we safe?
- ❖ Do you need to know that we have bodies, which are the same as the bodies of the saints... and we are all committed to struggle, so, each one will be rewarded according to his strive.
- ❖ Even the apostle, he did discipline his body and bring it into subjection, lest, when he has preached to others, he himself should become disqualified (1Corinthians 9:27), and as he feels the strength of the sensual desires, he talks in behalf of the mankind saying: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24).
- ❖ If the apostle, the chosen vessel, who was separated from his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15), due to the stings of the flesh and its temptations toward wrongdoing, he disciplines his body and brings it into subjection, lest when he has preached to others, he himself should become disqualified, in spite of this, we found him with another law that works, in his members, against the law of his mind, and captures him to the law of sin. Though

when he was naked, or fasting, or hungry, or in prison, or being whipped, or being suffered, he returns to himself crying: O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Do you think it is appropriate for you not to be vigilant/

Saint Jerome

- ❖ We all feel the same way, but not all of us are being saved. How miserable I Would be, if I don't ask for the medicine!.....

We have a physician, so let's ask for the medicine. Our medicine is the grace of God, and the body of death is our body. Let's be strangers to Christ. Though, we are in flesh, but we are not subjected to the interests of the flesh....but we ask for the gifts of the grace: "For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23-24).

Saint Amprosios

6

The blessings of the divine commandment

The commandment and the divine grace

It is befitting for us to ask for Christ, for He is the way, so we win being with Him and we taste the sweetness of the obedience of the divine commandment. Also we need to cry out to him so he keeps us in Him, that our ways will be straightened by being united with the true way which is the only way without blemish. The Lord is the firstborn who begins with us, and escorts us until we fulfill our mission with the spirit of continuous striving and perseverance with the Lord. This is the work of the divine grace that is given to us to enjoy being with our savior.

- ❖ Firstlings (beginning of the work) and the achievements (finishing the work) are for the Lord. To start walking in the way, it is necessary for me to be called, because: "A man's steps are of the Lord; how then can a man understand his own way?" (Proverbs 20:24) and in order not to be deviated from the straight ways, or to walk in a crooked way, I say as if I am wishing: "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" Because I cannot keep your statutes, unless my ways are to be under Your guidance and your management.

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ These things that God had commanded will not be accomplished unless it is a gift given from the provider of the commandments, and with His assistance, because, in vain we will be asking, if we are able to fulfill it without the help of His grace.
- ❖ "And turned my feet to Your testimonies" (Psalms 119:59)...turned them from my own ways that please me, so they follow your testimonies, and there they will find a way... in fact, this is attributed to the grace of God, as the apostle says: "for it is God who works in you" (Philippians 2:13).

Saint Augustine

The commandment and the treasure of the spirit

- ❖ It is the treasure that was given to them in this life to keep it within their souls, who "**became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption**" (1Corinthians 1:30). Who found the treasure of the heavenly spirit and possessed it, with it, he will be able to fulfill the righteousness of the commandment and the virtues, with purity and without blame, but easily and without being forced.

So, let's entreat to God, and ask Him, feeling the need, **to grant us the treasure of His spirit, so we will be able to walk in all of His commandments with purity and without blame**, and to be able to complete the spirit of righteousness with purity and perfection, through the heavenly treasure which is Christ.

- ❖ The soul is in need for the divine light which is the Holy Spirit, that enlightens the dark house, and to the luminous sun of righteousness that lights and shines in the heart, and

also to the weapons to win the battle (John 16:33, Isaiah 63:1-6, Romans 3:21, 12:2). And this is what it meant by the widow who lost the coin and lit the lamp first (Luke 15:8) then she swept the house. When she swept the house while the lamp was lit, she was able to find the coin after it was buried in the dust and the dirt. Thus, also the soul cannot find her thoughts or recognize it, but when she enlightens the divine light, then the dark house will be lit, and the soul will be able to recognize her thoughts and, how it was buried in the sludge and the defilement of the sin. When the sun rises, the soul sees her perdition, and begins to restore its scattered thoughts that is mingled with dirt and defilement, because the soul has lost its image when she disobeyed the commandment (Genesis 1:26, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10).

Saint Macarius the Great

The commandment and the delightful praise in the Lord

When Christ sanctifies "the way" our ways, He grants us "righteousness of the heart," and our hearts overflow with thanksgiving and praise to God. Following the righteous ways or keeping the commandment, or maintaining the purity of the heart, they give us the life of the inner joy which is demonstrated through thanksgiving and praises. Without righteousness, we cannot join the heavenly in their praises, no matter how much we sing or praise in our rooms or in the church.

- ❖ He whose heart is not upright yet, means something improper is in him, he won't thank (praise) God, and the Lord does not accept his confession.

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ Truly, if my ways become righteous, I will acknowledge it because, You are the one who made it, and this is praise for You not for me.

Saint Augustine

Through the commandment, we accept God, our portion

The purpose of the Lord's commandment is to present the Lord as a groom for our souls, we get to be united with Him, and we gain the participation of the divine nature, i.e. we enjoy His traits in us, so, we become ready for the eternal bridal. His main trait is "love," he gives Himself as a gift to His beloved soul of mankind, He gives His life as a precious gift or as a deposit for the bridal or as a dowry for us, therefore the psalmist says: "**You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your words**" (Psalm 119:57).

This is the divine love, God loves all for He is the God of all mankind, He does not ignore anyone, and at the same time, each one feels as if God has dedicated all His deeds to be for him personally. He is God's darling, he is found in the divine bosom, and settled in His wondrous heart, as if God is his portion, and he is God's portion.

- ❖ The Lord said to Aaron and to Leviticus: "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance..." (Numbers 18:23). That was said about all those who reject the worldly matters, who abandon the earthly, and does not desire to acquire it. The Lord is their portion, and they keep his law which says: "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you

will drink; or about your body, what you will put on" (Mathew 6:25).

Onsimous Bishop of Jerusalem

- ❖ The man who abandoned matters in this life, no longer has any portion on this earth, and does not have any desire toward it, but he is satisfied only with the Lord, in place of all people, a man like this can say: "the **Lord is my portion**". Thus he says: "**I keep Your law**," i.e. I keep the spiritual law which Paul says about it: "For we know that the law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14). So, how those can take the Lord as their portion, unless they keep His law?
- ❖ If we are close to the Lord, if we practice meditation in His commandments, observing seriously His statutes and judgments (Deuteronomy 12:1), thus, this is what he means to be perpetually close to the Lord, we keep our minds busy with God, ask about what pertain to God, so, God will always be with us.

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ "My portion in the land of the living," it means my inheritance, my treasure, and my fortune. You are, Yourself, everything.

Saint John the Chrysostom

Through the commandment, we can meet our heavenly bride, join Him, and be able to see Him

When the believer is interested in joining the royal bridal, the divine commandment works in him to prepare him for the bridal, and this should happen under all conditions, even if it is severe. The believer hastens to his groom without hesitation, enduring any pain in order to meet with Him, while keeping His commandment. While the commandment urges us to seek the Lord to be our portion instead of the temporal, our hearts yearn for Him, demanding to see him by the inner insight, i.e. by the heart. We may obtain mercy, and we get to see him later face to face, our love to Him increases our desire toward Him, and there will be no rest for us until we see Him eternally! "**I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; Be merciful to me according to Your word**"(Psalm 119:58)

- ❖ The garment of the wedding is the commandments of the Lord, and the works that fulfill the law and the Gospel; it becomes a garment for the new man. Who's found on the Day of Judgment carrying the name "Christian" but without this garment, he will be condemned.

Saint Jerome

- ❖ If we are close to God, considering His commandments, and carefully observing His statutes and judgments (Deuteronomy 12:1), this would explain what he means by being close to God, we ask and think of things pertaining to God, thus, God will be always with us.

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ The image of the Father is His Son as we mentioned before, likewise as the apostle said that He is the brightness of His glory and the image of His hypostasis. So, we, the Christians, beseech Him from all our hearts, in purity, because those with pure heart,

they shall see God, also, we entreat His mercy according to His word, i.e. as He promised.

Onsimous Bishop of Jerusalem

- ❖ He is the express image of His person, (Hebrew 1:3). Who desires the face of God from all his heart, and able to think of Him with a pure heart fixing his sight on Him, he will be blessed as the Lord said. Such a man is able to say these words that we have. How great he is, who sees the face of God. the Lord Jesus explains this greatness saying: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mathew 5:8).

Saint Dedimous the Blind

- ❖ According to what the apostle says: Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ....whose the law is his tutor, will reach the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4), when he puts away childish things (1Corinthians 13:11), such a man is not a corrupted or disbeliever. The Psalmist says: "I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have given me life" (Psalm 119:93). **I will keep in mind your precepts that I received from You, these, that I learned it here on earth. With it I departed from earth to heaven, where I lived with the angels.**

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ Not following God's commandments is being distant from God, and this is the core of the sin which is the separation from God and not being united with Him.

❖

Saint Basilious the Great

By following the difficult commandment, we will enjoy the kingdom of God

The life of purity that prepares the heart to see God, is sharing the pain with the crucified Christ, therefore, the Lord Himself says: "**Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it**" (Mathew 7:13-14).

The narrow gate is the gate of kingdom, which no one will enter it except the Lord of kingdom, Jesus Christ who is the only one without sin. And the difficult way is His cross, which no one can cross it, except the crucified.

Therefore, we will never enjoy entering through the narrow gate, or walking in the difficult way, unless, by being concealed in the crucified Jesus Christ and by abiding in Him. So, the distress and the trouble will turn to be joy of being united with the crucified.

Origen the Scholar says that the broad way includes many corners where the hypocrites stop to pray in order to be seen by people and to be rewarded (Mathew 6:5). On the contrary, the difficult way does not have street corners where the believer can stop, but he hastens and sets off to the eternal through the narrow gate. The believer does not find anything to please him in this way, to settle there, but he speeds up toward Christ who is the

secret of his joy and his life.

- ❖ The way that will lead us to life is narrow and difficult, but the reward is magnificent and great for we will enter it in glory!

Saint Capryanous

- ❖ The way was called narrow and difficult to ease our tiredness, and to declare that peace and pleasure are great.... The way is difficult and the gate is narrow, but the city that we will enter is not likewise, therefore, we should not seek comfort here, and also we should not expect pain over there.

Saint John the Chrysostm

- ❖ The wide gate is the worldly pleasures that people seek, and the narrow gate is the gate that is opened through suffering and fasting, which Paul the apostle had practiced: " in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting" (2Corinthians 6:5)...and Paul the apostle encouraged Timothy to practice it: " You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules" (2Timothy 2:1-5).

Look carefully to see how he talks about the two gates. The vast majority enters from the broad way, while few who find the narrow gate. We do not look for the broad gate, and there is no need for us to find it, because it presents itself to us automatically (beyond our control). But the narrow gate is not found by all, even those who find it, not all of them will enter it, because many after they find the gate of the truth, they are attracted by the worldly pleasures and they go back in the middle of the way.

Saint Jerome

- ❖ "**Strive to enter through the narrow gate**" (Luke 13:24). .. The way that is straight is narrow, any turning is full of risk, whether to the right or to the left. It is like a bridge; whoever stumbles on any side will fall in the river.

Saint Basilious the Great

- ❖ I have seen fulfillment for every virtue: purity is fulfilled by controlling the lusts, the just can be fulfilled by being faire to each one....manhood is fulfilled by being brave and facing terrors.

Everything has its own end, but for the righteous, **their end will be in the kingdom of God!....**

I have seen that Your commandment is exceedingly broad, and if the way that is leading to salvation is narrow, Your commandment widens it to those who keep it. It makes them brave and strong, and its end will be joyful and bright.

Saint Onsimous Bishop of Jerusalem

- ❖ I will show you His commandments, if you do more; you will be in greater glory and will be more blessed by God.

Hermas

Through the commandments, men, will be raised, by the grace, to live

in love with the heavenly

Saint Filoxinose deems that our early fathers had walked through the way of divine commandment because it was the royal way which we should not turn away from it, whether to the right or to the left.

This way is the ladder seen by Jacob, extending between the earth and the heaven, and the angels going up and down on it. It is the ladder where the men meet to ascend with the angels who come down to us. The believers ascend on it as heavenly soldiers; they change their names from "men" to "angels". As the soldiers in old days used to change their names when they were enlisted in the army, we too, we get to be enlisted in the spiritual army.

On this ladder, God's will is fulfilled. Through the commandment, the men, by the grace of God, are raised, as if on steps of the ladder, to live in love with the heavenly. And upon God's command, the angels come down to minister them (Hebrew 1:14).

On this ladder, the believers meet with the angels in the circle of love, same as when the spiritual and the carnal meet, where it is necessary for both teams to strive, by the help of the grace of God, to keep the divine commandment.

Those who are from below are the carnal (the mankind) in their nature, the divine commandments raise them up to be spiritual.

And those who are spiritual in their nature, according to the commandment of the creator they descend to the lower places to be with the carnal.

Thus, we see creatures of different kinds meeting together in one group, and in one loving connection, it fulfills God's will in a harmonious praise. They all move in one spiritual move, the same as when the whole body moves by the life of the soul.

Saint Filoxinos

Divine commandment and freedom

Freedom and divine love

In fact, the commandment was a sign of the streaming God's signs of love toward the man. It was not just in giving Adam the chance to express his feelings of love toward He, who has loved him first, or was just in preparing the circumstances in which the man would have the chance to be united with the source of his existence, so he wouldn't go back to his origin of (dust) another time. **But, the commandments carried a significant meaning of the freedom of the man who had a free will and authority over himself.** The man is in likeness with God in terms of the free will, and his control over himself, so, the greatness of the man lies greatly on his authority over himself, not just over birds of the sky, the sea fish, and the treasures of the earth.

How would it be for the man to have authority over himself and to have a free will unless if there was to be a commandment that he would have to obey or disobey?! The commandment carries an honor from God to the man. It proclaims the freedom of the man, his power, and his ability, because who was worthy to be given a commandment from God except the man?! If the man did not have the ability to execute or to break the commandment, God would not have given it only to him.

On the same example, when the Lord gave us the commandments – and we think it is difficult or as others believe that it is fictional – the Lord did not mean to incapacitate us to execute it, or to destroy our souls by failure, but He wanted to show the man the significant ability that he has. It is an honor for us, that through the divine grace, we are able to implement what it looks hard and impossible.

❖ In any case, the commandment through which you have been found guilty, and by which you have turned away from the subject of joy, **it was imposed on the man by the goodness (God) in purpose of making him happy.** The commandment was meant for the man to be in contact with God, so that he would not look like an awful creature, but to be a free one, and so he would not put himself down to the level of other animals who's without free will. As human being, God gave him the chance **to be proud that he was the only one to be worthy to receive commandments from God**, on the ground that he is a human being, capable of wisdom and knowledge by controlling himself quietly with the rational ties of freedom, and being complied to God who's everything is submitted to Him.

To ensure preserving this commandment, the goodness has also presented an advice supported with this punishment: "for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). It is a work full of God's compassion, pointing out sources of rebellion, lest his unawareness of the risk might lead him to be careless in obedience. Truly, he showed the punishment, but He did not want it to be without cure. So, be aware of the goodness of our God in these matters. Learn about His goodness that appears in His great works, His overflowing blessings, His many mercies, His kind arrangements regarding His commandments and His warnings....thus, it is good and merciful!

❖ God gave the man freedom, so **He made him a master over his will and his authority**, indicating that when the man was given the image of God, being in his likeness, was not

something different than his nature.

He was not (in his image and likeness) in terms of the structure of the flesh...but it was in terms of the trait which is for He, who took it from God (as a breath from mouth), i.e. in terms of his spiritual which responded to be on the likeness of God, and in terms of freedom and his strong will.

The state of the man was backed by the commandment itself which God imposed it over him. The commandment cannot be given to him, who's in his authority does not have the capability to obey it. And it would not have been possible to threaten with the death punishment against sin, if ignoring the commandment, by the man, was impossible to happen, using the freedom of his will.

Also, in the subsequent divine commandment, you find that God has laid before the man, good and evil, life and death; He even set certain rules of discipline for those who break the commandment, calling unto the mankind, threatening and warning them, to escape from evil, and this is only because the man is free, he has the free will to obey or to resist.

- ❖ Moreover, the man with this structure is protected by the goodness and the purpose of God. Those themes which are found to be in a harmony in our God. Because his purpose is not without goodness, and His goodness is not without purpose!.....

It is befitting for him who is in the image and likeness of God, to have freedom of will and authority over himself, with both of these, he is considered to be on the image and likeness of God....on the other hand, how could it be that the man cannot have control over himself, despite that he was once the owner of the whole world?!..Is it possible for the master who has authority over others (earthly creatures), to become a servant? So, you can sense the righteousness of God through the gifts that He gave to the man, and from His purpose and from His will in everything.

So, may the righteousness of God to be the only thing that attracts our attention, for the man had been given a valuable gift.....the freedom of his will!

- ❖ God Himself is righteous in His nature, because the goodness of Him, who is without beginning, was not created, but it was goodness in its nature. But (Adam) who came to exist entirely through creation, he had a beginning. With this beginning he was given the image that he had, was given his nature, not out of a self nature (taken from him), but as a result of creation....i.e. he took it from his righteous creator, He who is the source of all goodness.

For the man to possess goodness, it should be given to him by his creator, and then it will become his own. He will have the (image) of the natural goodness... so, through that goodness that was given to him by God, he will have the freedom of will and authority over his will.... The man, with his full freedom of will, he is given two directions:

- A. He perpetually, as a master, accepts goodness, by paying attention to it, with a desire from within.**
- B. With an internal motive, he abandons evil, by trying to avoid it....** It is not necessary for the man to be awarded for the good or for the evil, if he is **found to be good or wicked, without being given the choice between both...**

Thus, the goodness of God and His purpose are clear in God's gift in regard to the freedom of the man.

- ❖ The (commandment) was not merely for the man to live this natural life that God had given to him, but to **live** in virtue, i.e. being related with God and His commandment. So that God allowed him to live when He formed him in a lively soul, and commanded him to **live the life of virtue**, when He commanded him to obey the commandment.

Thus, it is clear that God did not create the man to let him die....but the man is the one who brought death to himself, not because of vulnerability or ignorance lest the creator might be blamed.

(Satan) who deceived the man was an angel before, but the man, the victim of this temptation, was free, had authority over himself, being on the image and likeness of God, so he was much stronger than any angel, also being a breath from the mouth of God, made him more significant than the spiritual entity for the angels, for he says:"Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire" (Psalms 104:4). If the man was weaker in authority than the angels, and was less than them, everything would not have been under his authority, the command that was not given to the angels. He would not have laid the burden of the commandment on the man, unless the man was capable significantly of bearing it, and He would not have been threatened a creature with death punishment, while God knows that he is not guilty as a result of his incapability.

In short, if God had **created him weak, He would have not given him freedom and independency for his will**, but rather, he would have taken away the field of these gifts.

Tertelian the Scholar

- ❖ The **righteous, loving, and (giver)** God had given the man the freedom concerning good and evil, granting him a mind with which he can observe the world and everything in it, so he will know God, who created everything for his sake.

But the wicked man, might desire (to know God), but he would not understand, and will perish because of lack of his faith and due to his thought that contradicts the truth. This is the freedom of the man in regard to good and evil!

- ❖ We do not consider those who are free, as free because of their positions, but those who are truly free in their life and their nature, are considered free.... The freedom of the soul and its happiness are the result of the true purity and renouncing the temporal.
- ❖ The free man is he who is not enslaved by the pleasures, but he carefully controls the flesh with purity and prudently. He is contented with what God had given him, no matter how little, thanking Him from all his heart.

Saint Anthony the great

- ❖ If the element of the freedom of the will is separated from the virtue, its entity will be destroyed.

Origen the Scholar

- ❖ It is good that he, who is with authority to raise himself, was called free..... And it is good that He, who came down to save others, was called free.

Saint Amprosios

- ❖ There is no such power that can force us to do good or evil, but he, who's we work for, with our free will, if God or Satan, he is the one to urge us to do the work that pertains to him.
- ❖ Do not say: I do not know what is right. What I did is not my fault! If you do the good that you know, the good, that you do not know, will be revealed to you little by little.
It is not useful for you to know the good that is coming, unless you execute the first one, because "knowledge puffs up" when it is without work, but "love edifies" because "love bears all things" (1Corinthians 8:1, 13:7).
- ❖ When the Bible says "kingdom of heaven is taken by force" (Mathew 11:12), he is talking about the **will for each one**, so that no one of us would turn to evil after being baptized, but he will abide in the good.
- ❖ The slave does not ask to be liberated (from slavery) as a reward for his work, but he tries to do his best as a debtor, and waits for liberation as a gift.

Saint Mark the Hermit

- ❖ Also, as the physician dislikes the illness for the sick, and he uses the standards of curing to remove the illness and to heal the sick, thus, God works with His grace within us, to remove the sin so the man becomes free.
- ❖ The apostle says what we start to say: "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" (Romans 7:22). Here, where **we become free when we are delighted in the law of God**, because freedom brings joy. Because if you do goodness out of fear, God won't be the subject of your joy. **Seek Him for your delight, so that you might become free.** Do not fear the punishment, but love righteousness. Do you still do not love righteousness? Fear punishment so that you gain righteousness.
- ❖ No one, in his defending to the freedom of will, dare to set it in a way that might forbid us from the prayer that says "do not lead us into temptation". And on the other side, no one should deny the will and dare to find an excuse for the sin. Let's pay attention to the way the Lord presented the commandment, and how He offered His support. In both ways, He tells us about our obligation to our responsibilities and His support in its execution. **Some rise to the pride through their exaggerated confidence in their self-will, while others fall in apathy through exaggeration in mistrust.**
Some say earlier: "why do we ask God, and we don't seek to overcome the temptation if everything is within our ability?" later others say:"why do we struggle to become righteous if the ability to do so is in God's hand?".....on one side, we are to thank Him for the power He gives us, and on the other hand we ought to pray for our little power, not to completely fail. It is the faith itself that works through love (Galatians 5:6), according to the standard that God gives to each man, so that he who glories, does not boast in himself but in the Lord (1Corinthians 1:31).
- ❖ Those Jews who "**could not believe,**" not because those people cannot change for the better, but as long as their mind is taking this direction, they won't be able to believe, therefore they are blind with harsh hearts, for because of their denial to the need of divine support, they found no support.
- ❖ No wonder they could not believe, for this was the pride of their will, for they being

ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, as the apostle says: "have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). They became arrogant not through faith but through works, and they stumbled before the stumbling block. Thus it was said "**they could not**" so we understand that they did not want to, and in the same way as it was said about the Lord our God: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2Timothy 2:13). It is said about He who is almighty, that "**He cannot**".

- ❖ Note how the Father attracts the (souls), He is delighted in guiding, not in placing binding necessity on mankind.
- ❖ If we came to Jesus under compulsion, so, we believe without our willingness. And this is violence not freedom.
- ❖ Saint Paul says about Philemon: " whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel, But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary" (Philemon 1:13,14). And in Deuteronomy: " See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply" (Deuteronomy 30:15,16). Also in the book of Son of Sirach: "God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel....If you will keep the commandments and perform acceptable fidelity. He has set water and fire before you, stretch forth your hand to which you will" (Son of Sirach 15:14, 17).

So we do not reach the purpose without our will, but we cannot complete the purpose without divine support.

- ❖ They seized Him, he who can free them from their bonds. Perhaps, among them was He who mocked Him, but also among them was He who was saved by Him. They say: "You have loosed my bonds" (Psalm 116:16).

Saint Augustine

- ❖ Among the creatures that glorify You through their fast natural movements, I am the only one who enjoys freedom. Neither the sun nor the bright moon nor the stars can revolve in their orbits or at the speed of their orbits by their own will. It is Your great power that obligates all of nature to praise You, without distinguishing its freedom to fearfully praise You. It is befitting for me to praise because I am the free one, if I understand, because it is my own will whether to cease or to continue praising.
- ❖ With our will we become healthy or ill, because we are the reason beyond being healthy or sick.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

- ❖ Behold, the kingdom of God is within you. He says do not ask about the times in which the kingdom of God will come, but be eager to be found qualified for Him, because He is within you, i.e. He depends on your will, and it is in your hand to receive Him or reject Him. Every man who receives righteousness by believing in Christ and becomes adorned with virtues is considered qualified for the heavenly kingdom.

Saint Kyrillos the Great

- ❖ The servant is required to give an account of his actions, but the son is required to give more than that, he is required to give an account of his words (Mathew 12:36), and of his thoughts (Mathew 5:8), so, if he gains freedom, it will make him more careful.
- ❖ God gives the man the freedom of the will, not just regarding faith but also in works.

Saint Irina'ous

- ❖ If we are just tools directed by celestial orbits, then, we don't have the freedom of the will, and if the man lost the freedom he will lose everything.

Saint Gregory Alnisy

- ❖ If we struggle, as human, against troubles and sins, then, it will fall under our control and our will; we will be able to fight and destroy the desires of the flesh, and to capture the gathering of our sins under our authority. We will drive out the terrified guests from our heats, with the power that we gained through the cross of our Lord. We will enjoy the triumph spiritually as in the example of the centurion (Mathew 8:9).

Father Sirinous

- ❖ There is nothing to stop you from changing your wicked path in life, you are a free human!

Saint Melito Bishop of Sardis

Christ is the liberator

The real free man is the one who is free from within; he lives without being controlled by a lust, or being fooled by pleasures. No one can enjoy this freedom unless if he attains the spirit of being a child of God.

- ❖ The righteous man is free even though if he was a slave, but the wicked is a slave even if he was a king.
- ❖ Who is he that conducts the release from death and from bondage unless He who is "free among the dead" (Psalm 88:5)? Unless He who is without sin among the sinners? Our savior Himself says, our rescuer: "for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30). (The ruler of this world) captures those whom he deceives and tempts, and those whom he draws to sin and death, this "he has nothing in me".

Come O Lord, come O Savior. Let the captive knows You. Let he who was driven to the captivity flees to You. Be a redeemer to him! While I was lost, I was found by he who the devil found nothing in him that comes from the flesh. The ruler of this world has found in me a flesh; he has found it, but what kind of flesh? It is a dead flesh, he can capture it, and he can crucify it and kill it!

You were wrong o deceiver, for the savior cannot be deceived... you see in Him a flesh that fits for death, this is not the body of the sin, but it is in the likeness of sinful flesh. "God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh; on account of sin He

condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3), in a flesh, it is not in the sinful flesh but "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but for what purpose? "So by the sin which certainly none of it was to be found in Him, He condemns sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4). No one should call himself free lest he remains a slave. Our souls will not remain in bondage because He pays off our debts day after day.

- ❖ Honorably and effectively He saves from the bondage of this sin, he says in the Psalms: "I am like a man who has no strength, adrift among the dead" (Psalm 88:4, 5). He alone was free, because no sin was in Him. For He Himself says in the Gospel: "the ruler of this world is coming" He means the devil who comes in the Jewish individuals who persecute Him "and he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30, 31). He does not find in Me any proportion of the sin as it is found in the righteous who are killed, he never finds anything in Me...I am not paying the death punishment as a necessity because of My sins, but I die to fulfill the will of My Father. And hence I do this, I endure death, if I did not want the pain, I would have not accepted suffering. He Himself saying in another place: "I have power to lay it down (my life), and I have power to take it again: (John 10:18). Certainly, He is the one who is free among the dead.

Saint Augustine*

- ❖ "Christ died for our sins" (1Corinthians 15:3). **He gives freedom to those who faithfully serve Him.** For He says: " Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Mathew 25:23).

Saint Mark the Hermit

- ❖ Because you were a child when you had been bought without the (will) of your father, so, let the selling contract be canceled, and you become free. Let the sin, which bought you by the serpent, be acknowledged that the contract that had been conducted by the snake has become idle. Because the Father wanted His children to come back to Him. Here, they are calling Him, and who can stop them from calling out to Him?

Saint Jacob Alrouji

- ❖ There is only one righteousness which is free and secured from any limitation or captivity, it is the thought that is risen for Christ

Saint Gregory Alnezeny

With our own will we give ourselves to the sin, and we lose our freedom!

"Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). There is no righteous man who never commits sin, but not everyone stumbles is a slave to the sin. It is meant by his saying "**commit sin**" that he chooses the sin and prefers it over the righteousness of God, he prefers the path of wickedness over the path of holiness (Jeremiah 44:16-17), he conducts a covenant with the sin, and receives it as a constitution for his life, it leads his carnal lusts and his love to the world.

In the beginning of practicing the sin, the man believes that he is in power, he has

the right to accept the sin or reject it, but once the sin controls the steering wheel, the man loses his control over his will gradually, and the sin becomes like a drug that the man cannot live without it. Then, the sin directs the man according to its tendency, so the man will do what he never expected someday. And as the fathers say, when the sin takes a place in the heart or the mind of the man, it reigns over him, it opens the way for other sins to reign with it, and the man enters in a chain of sins that he fails to resist it.

- ❖ "Jesus answered them: Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin (John 8:34). He is a slave, not to a man but to the sin! Who do not panic in front of these words? May our Lord grant you and me – to speak with the appropriate expressions about this freedom while seeking it, and to avoid that slavery.....

It is miserable slavery! When mankind suffers from wicked leaders, they request, in all cases, changing the leader. What would the slave of the sin do? To whom he submits his petition? To whom he asks for salvation?...

Where would the slave of sin run away? He is carrying his (master) wherever he goes. The wicked conscience will not leave him, and there is no other place to go. Yes, he cannot pull himself out because the sin that he commits is within him. He commits the sin to partially enjoy the carnal pleasure. The pleasure passes and the sin remains. What brings his joy goes away, and the thorn remains behind. What an evil bondage.

Let's all run away to Christ, and protest against the sin to God for He is our savior.

Let's ask to be sold so He saves us through His blood. For thus says the Lord: "You have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money" (Isaiah 52:3), without price from your side, that is because of me. Thus says the Lord because He paid the price, not with money but with His blood, otherwise we could have been destitute slaves.

- ❖ We were slaves of lust, but by being liberated, **He makes us slaves of love**. This is also what the apostle says: "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

So, the Christian should not say I am free, I was called to liberty, I was a slave then I was saved, and with this salvation I became free, I do what pleases me to do, and no one should be against my will as long as I am free.... Don not mess up your freedom by the sin, but use it to commit no sin. If your will is devout, only then it will be liberated. **You are free if you still a slave that was set free from the sin and serve as a servant to righteousness**. As the apostle says:"for when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." (Romans 6:20, 22).

Saint Augustine

- ❖ We should not be bothered even if we are troubled by the lust. Why do you wonder o lustful man? And why are you disturbed when you aroused by any lust? You are the one who created it (originated it) and agreed to keep it inside you, and though you are troubled?! You acknowledged its signs, and you however say: why the lust bothers me? It is better for you to endure, struggle, and pray to God to help you, because it is impossible for the man to obey the lust without suffering from its painful attack. And as Father Sisawy says: "**its vessel is inside you, return to it what belongs to her (inside you) and it will leave you**". As long as we love it and take it to the scope of execution, then it will

be impossible for us not to be attracted to the lustful thoughts that excite us – even without our will – to obey it, because with our will, we gave ourselves into its hands.

Regarding the man who is attacked by lustful thoughts, before starting to execute it, he is free in his own city and God will help him. Once he humbles himself before God and fights a little, the divine support hastens to save him from the enemy's attack.

But if he did not fight leaving himself to be defiled, surrendering to the carnal pleasures, the divine help pulls away from the soul. These pleasures will tempt the soul to conduct the lustful action; the soul will adore the lust whether wanted or not.

Father Dorithi'ous

By our will, we ask God to help us to be committed

The freedom that we are practicing, does not come with force, but it is practiced through love **"from the heart"** with complete will. Having been set free from sin, is being slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:18), but it is the bondage of optional love not the bondage of binding violence, it is the bondage of maturity and commitment without being careless!

- ❖ The Christian does not say I am free I do whatever pleases me; no one can force my will as long as I am free. If with this freedom you commit a sin, then, you are a slave of the sin. Do not spoil your freedom by being liberated to commit sin, but use this freedom to help you not to commit sin. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. " (Galatians 5:12).
- ❖ He who created you without your involvement, He will not justify you without your participation. He made you without your knowledge, but He will not vindicate you without your willingness.

Saint Augustine

- ❖ "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Romans 9:16)... let's see what does this mean? The issue does not concern who wills or who runs, but it refers to God who has mercy. So, if we do not have the will or we do not strive, God will not come to help us. From our side, we need to have the will and to strive so that God will have compassion upon us, but if the fighter falls asleep he will lose the triumph.
- ❖ From our side, we gladly receive the freedom of the will, but we do not forget to thank the donor, acknowledging that unless God always keeps His gifts in us, we will walk without power.

The willing is from us, and striving also is from our side, but without God's constant help there would not be willing or striving. The savior says in the Gospel: "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). He perpetually and continuously gives.

It was not adequate for Him to grant grace just once, but he gives it perpetually. I ask to be given, and when I get, I come back to ask again, for I am desiring excessively in the richness of God, he does not cease giving, and I don't stop taking. The more I drink, the more I am thirsty, and I hear the praise of the psalmist: "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). We taste the Lord whenever we get any goodness.

- ❖ The grace is not given because of works, but it is a free gift from the donor... and though, we have the choice to be willing or not, but the freedom itself that we have is given to us through the grace of God.

Saint Jerome

- ❖ Direct our freedom to carry your yoke willingly, and if it rebels, force it with your cross.
 - You take care of the physician and heal the wounds of the sick, so, take care of us and heal our wounds, o You, the good physician.
 - Take care of us and heal us, because we ran away from the cure. Use compulsion, and force the freedom to be in harmony with You, and fulfill the healing, even if the freedom does not welcome it or desire it.
 - It is worthy for You to spoil the freedom of the man, and not to let the soul be damaged with iniquity, because it is your image.
 - When You heal us, we will have no actual freedom (we do not want) to be free and die in our sins.
 - The soul will perish if the freedom is not damaged, because when You force the soul, it does come to repentance.
- ❖ O Lord, force us and replace our wicked will to run away from evils that go after us.
 - The teacher forces the child to learn, even if he does not want to learn.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

Freedom and the devil

- ❖ Do not get panic from the perception of fantasy. The power of the devil is nothing, toward freedom. He cannot force or put pressure forcibly on the soul, but he only fights with anxiety and pushing the desire. He does know which snare to use to catch the man; therefore, he multiplies and diversifies his snares. If he knew with which snare he can snatch the man, he would have set it up for him since the beginning to defeat him.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

The choice and the freedom of will

God appreciates the will of the man and his freedom, so do not wonder that David the prophet and the king, chosen by God, who's heart was found after God's heart, when he failed and allowed himself to look at Uriah's wife, he fell into sin.

- ❖ David was selected from among his brothers, so, how could the one who was selected fall into the sin? It is a great wonder! Let the chosen ones be panicked of their personal failure and for their reproach. Then let them know that if the eye tends for a little, the failure of the saints will be easy, if they dawdle! And not being relied on His fair selection. But he should keep himself from harmful things, and let the strong selected knows that if he becomes weak, he will fall contemptuously into the snare and becomes ridiculous.
 - Let the selected be cautious when he considers beauty lest the beauty becomes a snare for him to fall into. And let him know that if the freedom stumbles, the selection and the perfection will also slip. The freedom of the man is from God whether he is good

or he is sinful. Whoever is selected, he has the freedom, and if he chooses to err he will fumble and perish, so the sinful has the freedom. And once he wants to become repentant, then he is good...

If the chosen one was not given freedom, he would never be honored. It was used to say to the selected that he did not have his chance to stumble. And if he wants to slip, he cannot because he is selected, and the praises that kept for the selected would be taken away from him.

The sun is beautiful, and it is a fixed nature, but being without freedom did not make it win the praise...

Thus, if the selected is tied from falling when he chooses to (fall), he will not receive praise... it is enough for he who is selected, to keep himself from falling, because if he wants to fall, his Lord will not stop him...and if He stops him, he will not be rewarded or getting any praise

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

The commandment and being liberated from the deadly grieve

Perhaps the psalmist had suffered from being extremely disappointed within a certain period, therefore he cried out to God to grant him the joyous hope of His divine promises and sayings. The psalmist says: "**My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word**" (Psalm 119:28). The commandment supports the man even in his weak moments, that he confesses his sins and tells about the grace of God that gives the wondrous righteousness of Christ, this commandment also offers support to the soul in its moments of slumbering, or coldness, or laziness, or its grieve in order for the soul to wake up, to be encouraged, and to be strong to strive.

- ❖ The (psalmist) knows that we cannot drive out the spirit of sadness unless through meditation in divine teachings, therefore we have to be vigilant as He says: "watch and pray" (Mathew 26:41).

Pope Athanasius the Apostolic

- ❖ It is befitting for us to pay attention to God's commandments when it is read, or when the memory recalls it, as if looking in mirror, as Jacob the apostle says. This man looks at God's commandments as if looking in a mirror and without confusion, because he chooses not only to listen to the commandments, but also to put it into action. Therefore he is interested in guiding his paths toward keeping God' statutes. How could it be guided without the grace of God? Otherwise he will not find the source of joy in God's law; he will find the source of confusion, in case he chooses to know the commandments and not to put it into action.

Saint Augustine

Baptism and human freedom

- ❖ The holy baptism gives us complete freedom, though, the man has absolute freedom and will, whether to be enslaved again with lustful ties or remain free in implementing the commandments. If one of the lusts clings to the mind, it is a result of our personal will, not forcibly. For the Bible says that we are given the power "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:5)...and when they destroy the

evil thought, it becomes a sign of their love to God not to the sin. **Because the presence of the evil thought is not a sin, but the sin happens when the mind talks lovingly with that evil thought.**

We are not in love with the evil thought, so why we are slow with it? What we hate from our hearts entirely makes it impossible for our hearts to elongate talking with it, unless if we have a malicious relation with it!

Saint Mark the Hermit

8

Divine commandment and fatherhood

Commandment in the light of fatherly compassion

God is a father who wants to adopt the man that came from ashes. And the motive of the commandment is love not enslavement, and to declare freedom not humiliation. It is a fatherly commandment! But the severe punishment that He stated as a payment for disobedience was not for revenge, but to reveal the natural result for an action taken by the hand of man.

As the father stops his son from touching the fire, so not to burn himself, it is not because he does not want him to get burned, but because the nature of the fire is to burn. Thus, God warns Adam from the sin because the nature of sin, or being separated from God lead for the man to lose his life. So the warning and the alarm are kind of pity and compassion not anger and revenge as in the light of our human understanding.

It is wonder when God talks to us, He does not attribute the everlasting fire to us, but He says it is prepared for the devil and his angels (Mathew 25:41). As if it was not prepared to mankind. But when He talks about the heavenly kingdom He refers it to us, "prepared for you" (Mathew 25:34).

Implementing the commandment in the light of the spirit of adoption to God

If God is pleased to call Him "our Father," for through baptism we became children of God and church, and the commandment becomes a sign of our response to the adoption that we received, with which we cry out saying: "Abba, Father". So implementing the commandment indicates our admittance to the adoption and our acknowledgement to it, therefore the apostle assures: "And now, little children, abide in Him..... If you know that He is righteous, you know that **everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him**" (1John 2:28-29).

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should called children of God.... Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous..... He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning... **Whoever has been born of God does not sin**, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God" (1John 3:1-10).

The devil and defamation of understanding the commandment

The devil works to implant doubt in the man toward God's love and His fatherhood, through defamation of understanding the commandment, for he says: " Has God indeed said,

‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden...you will not die, For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1-5).

The devil enters into the heart of Adam and his bride by implanting doubts in God's fatherhood for them, dishonoring the motive of the divine commandment. But he failed to enter the heart of second Adam when he tried to put some doubts saying: "if you are the Son of God.." and thus the devil is not capable to put doubts in God's true bride, the church, body of our Lord Jesus, regarding its sonship toward the Father.

The commandment in the sight of the obedient son is considered freedom

The work of the commandment that comes from a compassionate father is to **melt the will of the man in the will of his father voluntarily**. The commandment in the sight of the obedient son is the perfection of freedom and the love of the father toward the son, but in the sight of the disobedient, it is a sign of slavery. The obedient son does not perceive freedom as to leave his father's house as the prodigal son believed (Luke 15:12). He complains that his father does not give him pocket money to enjoy his time with bad friends, he gives orders and restrictions, preventing him from staying up late, and he stands against spending the nights outside with the wicked.

Freedom in the sight of the obedient son is not to get rid of the father's commandment, but is to receive it voluntarily and with love, therefore the will of the father will be in accordance with the will of the son when the son obeys his father, and the commandment will become the subject of pleasure and happiness.

This is the concept of the freedom of the soul which the Jews could not comprehend due to their wickedness. When the Lord said to them: "and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," they answered Him, we are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, you will be made free?" Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32-36).

❖ My beloved, we should be ashamed, and walk in a virtuous life.... Because he reveals for us the hidden saying: "I do not call you slaves, because you all are My beloved, for I told you with all what I heard from the Father" i.e. **I granted you the friendly connection....examine it to find how it is a love relationship?**

Let's be ashamed, he did not talk to us like this about the hell. Our betrayal to Him and our dishonesty toward His love and His blessings is more terrified than hell; we are free sons not leased slaves, doing everything for the sake of the Father's love.

Saint John the Chrysostom

❖ Be advised that he, who fears God and keeps His commandment, is a servant of God. This is not slavery but freedom. It is liberation from slavery to **reach the inheritance of the Son**. Therefore, our Lord chose the prophets and the apostles and put His trust in

them for the apostolic preaching. They became captives for Jesus Christ, as Paul the apostle testifies about himself saying: "**I am the prisoner** of Christ Jesus who was called to be and apostle"....

If we come near the grace, then, Jesus Christ will say to us, as He said to His disciples: "no longer I call you servants, but I have called you friends for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Those who live in grace know through the Holy Spirit **their pleasure of clinging to God**. So they cry out saying: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father" and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:15-17).

Saint Anthony the Great

- ❖ He who's will is subjected to God's will, he desires only what God wants, and he rejects what God refuses, he always follow his own will (because it matches God's will), and enjoys being quiet and always live with great and continuous comfort.
- ❖ My son, beware and do not overload yourself with troubles. If you want to always work (in monasticism) as dictated by your will, so I will show you a way with which you can always work according to your will. This way is not just valid and free of iniquity, but also is perfect and sanctified. Do you want to know how this could happen? Be advised that he who is without self will, he makes his own will. The man (the monk) who fully surrenders his mind to obedience, and strips himself from his will, he does not do anything against his will because he puts the will of others in the place of his will.

Saint Dourothi'ous

- ❖ There is no one who is best in handling his actions, like he who is with a heart that ready to abandon what the divine power does not approve, and this readiness is more than conducting an action according to the standard of his human mind.
- ❖ My God...he who does not want that You ask him to do what matches with what he wants, but he only wants what you only want for him, he is a good servant for You.
- ❖ Do not ask God to do for you what you want, but ask – as you learned – to fulfill His will in you.
- ❖ If our delight in executing God's will is less than our pleasure in executing our will, it is necessary to ask God not to fulfill our will, because it may harm us. We ask Him through His grace to let our will to correspond happily with His. And this would always bring us goodness and blessings.
the children of Israel (the wicked), who hated the heavenly manna and wished and asked for meat, God made their wish to come true, but this turned to be a harm and evil for them.
- ❖ "they will be done on earth as it is in heaven" as Your will works in the angels, the heavenly hosts, so they cling to You and enjoy being with You completely, where there is nothing wrong with their wisdom, and nothing takes away their happiness, thus, let Your will to be done in Your saints who are living on earth....and when our will goes with God's will, then His will, will be fulfilled in us as it is complete with the heavenly angels. Thus, there will be no resistance in the path of our happiness, and this is peace.

Saint Augustine

Give your will to Him, and He will grant you His will

It was said about a virtuous woman that whoever asked her to pray for him, his request was answered, despite her forgetting to many things when she prayed, people used to come and thank her. She stood in love blaming God that people thank her for things that has nothing to do with her, but she even forget to pray for these things. It was said that the Lord appeared to her and said: "**my daughter, be aware that since you gave your will to me, I too, let my will goes with your will.** So, even if you did not ask about anything particularly, I answer the prayers according to your will, because I know the wish of your heart.

The divine commandment and the tree of knowledge of good and evil

The divine commandment and the tree of knowledge of good and evil

The Lord planted Garden of Eden for Adam and his children to enjoy its fruits (Genesis 2:8). No one was to be banned from all the fruits of the trees except the fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Here many questions are raised:

Did God want to take away from the man from what He created, for him?

And why the tree was called, the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

Was it a real tree?

And if it was a real tree, did He who is full of goodness, make a tree to know the good and evil?

The issue of this tree, and the commandment regarding not eat from it had preoccupied the minds of many of the church fathers.

It is befitting for us to understand that when the man was expelled from this garden due to his disobedience, to go and live on a land that produces thorns and spines, God, through generations had offered divine chances to make out of His people an enclosed garden (Song of songs 4:12) that carry the fruits of the spirits. He called His people a fruitful vineyard that bring forth grapes to make a enjoyable spiritual wine. But unfortunately, the insistence of the man to be disobedient had led the vineyard to bring forth nothing but bitterness (Isaiah 5), and the Old Testament is full of lamentations for this vineyard.

It was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil because when the man rebelled against God, ate from the tree, and erred, he learned about the evil after he knew nothing but goodness on account of his good creation. Therefore, God said, after the man sinned: "behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22). Through this way the man learned about the evil i.e. he recognized it and fell under its power, but God's knowledge about evil is not through practicing like the man.

- ❖ God with His foreknowledge knew that the will of mankind may tend to one of two ways (good or evil), so He preceded and secured the blessing given to the mankind, by placing a commandment and a place. He let them enter into His paradise and gave them a commandment, that if they hold on to the blessing and continue to be righteous, they will live in the paradise without grieve or pain or trouble, in addition to the promise of eternity in heaven. But if they break the commandment, reject the (good), and become wicked, they know that they will bring death to themselves according to their nature, they will never live in the paradise, but they die outside it and remain forever in corruption and death. This is what the Bible had already warned us, through the mouth of God saying: " of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17). "you shall die" does not mean exactly just only dying, but it means remaining in corruption and death forever.

Saint Athanasius the apostolic

Sayings of the fathers regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil

Saint Basilus the Great says about fasting:

{Fasting is a precious jewel that we inherited from our ancestors... fasting is as old as humankind. Fasting was legislated in the paradise. Adam's first commandment was: " of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17). "you shall not eat" is a legislation for fasting and discipline. If Eve practiced fasting, and avoided eating from the fruit of this tree, we would have not in need for this fasting, because "those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mathew 9:12). So, our sin brought sickness to us. Let us get healed through repentance, but repentance without practicing fasting is void. }

{Fasting started in the paradise when the Lord said to Adam: "you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". Our first parents were driven out of the paradise because of not fasting. So, **through fasting, we enter the kingdom**. Do not tremble or be afraid from fasting. Isn't your body in need of medication? Also, your soul, many times is in need of medicine. **Fasting is the medication for the soul to get rid of the sin.** }

- ❖ If Adam chose to cover himself with that fasting, he would have not become naked! But because he tasted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, being against the heavenly commandment, trespassing the fasting (breaking its regulation) that was imposed, by eating food "obeying the sensual lust," he knew he was naked! (Genesis 3:6-11). **If he fasted, he would have kept the garment of faith and would not found himself naked**. So, let's keep ourselves from being covered with sin and getting drunk, lest it might be said about any of us "he clothed himself with cursing!" (Psalm 109:18). Adam covered himself with a bad garment, and went seeking a cover of tree leaves, so that he was sentenced to a curse.

Saint Amprosios

- ❖ Christ defeated the devil using same ways the devil used to defeat the world. He fought him using the weapons that he used. How? Here they are: **the virgin, the wood, and the death**, they were the signs of our failure.

The **virgin** was Eve who did not know a man yet. The **wood** was the tree, and the **death** was Adam's punishment.

The virgin, the wood and the death, which were the ways of slipping; they became the ways of triumph. Mary took the position of Eve, **the wood of the cross instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, and the death of Christ instead of the death of Adam. Thus, you can see that the devil was defeated with same ways that helped him to gain victory. The devil defeated Adam by the **trunk of the tree**, and Christ destroyed Satan with the cross. The tree trunk threw Adam in the hell, and the cross saved from the hell those who were thrown into it. The first (the tree) undressed the man from the weapon, and caused him to die, and the second (the cross) stripped Satan, who was victorious, from his weapons, exposed him to the world and defeated him.

Saint Kyrellos the Great

- ❖ "You hold me by my right hand, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:23-24)... the man receives good guidance **when God holds his right hand, the hand of God Himself**. This man can say: "I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8). If Adam had selected God to be on his right, he would not have been deceived by the serpent, but because he forgot God's commandment and fulfilled the serpent's will, **the Satan grabbed his hand**

and commanded him to reach the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to pick things that he was banned to pick.

Saint Ampresios

- ❖ God took care of Adam, so he would not err or driven out of the paradise. Therefore He commanded him before committing the sin: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). But regarding us, He gave us more attention when He gave us **the written law and the prophets** (Mathew 11:13).

What else He can say more than this? He gave us **the grace of the Gospel** (Acts 20:24), in which He pointed out how we receive primitive dignity, how we avoid the fear of the hell (Luke 12:5), and also request paradise (Mark 13:33). He asked the man to judge himself to be rewarded according to his works (Mathew 16:27).

While learning all of this, we need to go along with our life in an appropriate way. For everyone should be punished and crowned in accordance with his works. Those who are like Adam, they fall under penalty because they did not learn from the lesson of discipline. But those who keep the commandments of the law, they become great by keeping the precepts (Mathew 5:19). We will be qualified for a double reward from the righteous judge (Mathew 5:12), because we are supported by the grace given to us through the new Adam (Romans 15:15). This is the path with which we can enjoy happiness in the kingdom and in the glory of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Father Hiseakhose of Jerusalem

Was the man stripped from the knowledge before eating from the tree?

- ❖ It is worthy for us not to think that God has made the man without a will, or that He is lacking goodness, because if He had given the man the wicked will and the ability of doing evil, without giving him the ability of doing good, he would have banned him from the free will, so, what would it mean by the phrase that the Lord had said right after the man fell: "behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22)? We cannot think that the man was completely unaware of the good, otherwise, the man would be considered an irrational creature like the non-speaking animals, and this believe is odd in our apostolic church. In addition to this, Solomon said: "God made man upright". Which means that he alone enjoys righteousness all the time, "but they have sought out of many scheme" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). For they were given the knowledge of good and evil as it was before. After falling, **Adam gained the knowledge of evil that he did not know before, but he did not lose his knowledge of righteousness which he knew before.**

Finally, the words of the apostles reveal clearly that the mankind did not lose the knowledge of good after Adam fell, for he says: "for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)

in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (Romans 2:14-16).

Father Sherimone

- ❖ Before the fall of Adam and Eve, they did not know (through experience) the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil, but Adam's disobedience led him to this knowledge...we know from the Bible that Adam enjoyed dignity and purity, but by breaking the commandment he was driven out of the paradise and allowed the wrath of God to take place...thus Adam began to learn the good things and the evil things to take heed of it, so he won't return to err again and fall in the judgment of death... now we know that all the creation is under God's judgment.... He who created heaven, earth, animals, reptiles, and beasts....and we see all these creatures, but we do not know its number.

Saint Mecarius the Great

The commandment and the desire of being like God

God prepared everything for the man to stay in the paradise. All trees and plants that God made, were pleasant to the sight and good for food, as the Bible says: "and out of the ground the Lord God made **every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**" (Genesis 2:9). God who is full of goodness made everything good.

And perhaps He made **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a good tree, for He did not create any evil thing**. God had in mind many great gifts that he wanted to give to the man as a reward for his continuous obedience to the commandment, but the enemy of good was full of envy toward the man, so he wanted to drive the man to death, using the serpent to start a fatal dialogue. He tried to persuade him with the same sin that led to his fall, which is being like God, saying: "you will not surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, **and you will be like God, knowing good and evil**: (Genesis 3:4-5). He offered a promise that they will be like God (pride!) getting knowledge, but he did not offer any thing for their good.

As **Saint John the Chrysostom** says: {the devil did now show any good work – little or much – but he tempted the woman with theoretical talk, filled her with worthless hope, and fooled her, however, she trusted the devil more than God, although God showed His good will through His works}. He also says: {because the devil was not able to offer anything practically, so he offered promises in form of words, and this is the personality of the deceivers}.

The enemy used the good creature which God made, as a way to destroy the man, the method used was not wrong, but it was the man's fault when he allowed himself to enter in dialogue with the serpent. Especially when the woman started to distort the words of God claiming that God asked them not to touch the fruit, which was kind of exaggeration! Therefore Paul the apostle asks us to escape this kind of dialogue which corrupts the mind and the soul, saying: "avoid foolish and ignorant disputes" (2 Timothy 2:23).

When the faith of the man in the truthfulness of God's commandments weakens by the doubts and lies of the devil, he begins to view things differently and in a wrong way, and he will have a new vision formed by the lies of the devil. This is what happened exactly with Eve, for after her talk with the serpent, the Bible says: "so when the woman saw that the tree

was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6).

The desire of the sin of the pride, for Adam and Eve was to be like God. It makes them see the tree as good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise, not because of the beauty of its creation, but due to the desire that dominated over Eve and Adam through the deceit of the devil.

❖ I will say of the Lord "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him I will trust" (Psalm 91:2).

Who is he that says this to the Lord? "He who dwells in the secret place of the most high," and not in his own secret place.

Who is he that dwells in the secret place of the most high? He, who is not arrogant like those who ate (from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) to become gods, so they lost their immortality they had since they were created. They chose to dwell in their own secret place, not the secret place of the most high. Thus, they listened to the counsel of the serpent (Genesis 3:5), and eventually they found out that what God had threatened took place in them, not the promise of the devil for them. Therefore, you may also say: "He is my refuge; He delivers my soul, it is not me to do it"

Saint Augustine

What is the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil?

Many of the fathers and scholars did not determine the type of the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil. Thioudore Almasisi and Nersay believe that the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil was a fig tree, of which Adam and Eve ate the fruit and with its leaves they covered their bodies.

❖ Some believe that God had given the man great gifts, but after his stay in the garden, He wanted to commend him and honor him with greater gifts – perhaps through eating from the tree of life – if he lived in obedience to the divine commandment, showing his practical love to his creator and great companion. **Saint Theofilose the Antioch** says: {God wanted to commend him because of being surrendered to the commandment, and at the same time, He wanted the man to remain as a child in his simplicity and sincerity for longer time}.

The tree of the knowledge of the good and evil refers to "the knowledge' which itself is grace and blessing, but if it takes the direction of evil, it leads to perish. **Saint Teophelos the Anioch** says: {the tree of knowledge itself is good, and its fruit is good. It is not the tree that bore the death as some believe so, but it is the disobedience that bore it , nothing else with the fruit except only the knowledge, and it is good if it used with insight}.

But **Saint Jacob Alsrouji** believes that the tree was symbolic, and God the righteous did not implant the evil tree. He also says: Is it possible to name one tree the tree of good and evil unless if it was figurative? God sows the good, and the devil sows evil (Mathew 13:24-30). So, it is the mankind concept that implants the evil tree that produced death.

❖ Two planters, one is God, and the other is the devil, give your land to any of these two that you want.

One sows the plant which gives life to the soul, but the plant that belongs to the other, leads to death for he who gathers it.

Here are two trees placed before freedom, choose one of them and reign over it.

Thoughts of the soul are like the earth, so choose for you a seedling that gives life to yourself.

Do you love life? Let the tree of life grow in you, and run away from the tree that bears death!

The tree of life and the tree of death are before you, you have the right to choose one and leave the other.

I am the life, he who chooses me will find life, this is what our Lord said, He is the blessed tree.

I am the life; he who eats My fruits will live forever, he will move, pass, and jump from the place that full of death (the world).

Righteousness, holiness with justice, compassion, goodness, comfort, peace, security, and the love of all virtues are all the fruits of the good tree of life.

When the soul implants it in its mind, it becomes a paradise that carries live fruits to those who eat it.

When you keep it, abide in it, and taste it, you become like a river where the water of life flows from it.

It is not God who is fair who planted that tree over there, because if he did, death would not have come out of it.

The Bible states that God did not create death, so, it is clear that He did not implant that tree.

That tree that produces death grew from the thought that came from evil.

He, the righteous had compassion on us, and He sent His son to pull out the roots of this tree that corrupted the earth.

He ordered and warned Adam in Eden so he would not eat from the tree that offers death to those who taste it.

At the end of ages, our Lord taught those who hear him, not to let their eyes stare with lust to that tree.

One is the Father, one is His Son, the true Son, and one is the command: do not eat from the tree.

❖ I believe that the **lust of our world** is this (tree), and whoever is in love with it becomes a stranger to God.

Everything in this world is lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh with the pride of the arrogant heart.

It did not (come) from the true Father, but from the world, and it belongs to it.

The world passes away and gets corrupted with its lust, and whoever loves this world gets corrupted and becomes worthless.

The pleasure is mingled with the lust of this world, and when the soul gets to obtain it and love it, it bears death...

This is the tree that our Lord said: it cannot produce good fruits.

They cut it with ax from its roots to fall into the fire, and become a food for the flame

Our Lord commanded Adam's not to come near the tree to eat from it, because the death was hidden in it.

They did not listen to Him, they violated and trespass His command, so they fell and driven out of the garden that was full of beatitudes.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

And invitation not to leave this paradise

In fact, God's commandment to Adam regarding not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil, is actually an invitation to stay in the paradise as a deposit for heaven, which Adam and his sons would have enjoyed, and stayed in an interesting dialogue with God Himself, if they refused to enter in a dialogue with the deceiver, whether through the serpent or the lust of the flesh.

- ❖ You are standing at the door of that paradise, so do not go outside, because the death is present and waiting for you.

That serpent that killed Adam is outside the door, and it carries the lust of this world as in likeness of the fruits.

Do not be misled by the fruit of death that you may like, because it is the lust of the flesh that brings death

The lust of the flesh is death as it is written, and the lust of the soul is the peace and the life for who asks for it.

Do not allow that serpent to whisper in your ear, while it fills you with the pleasure of the lusts

Do not be fooled when the serpent steals you by its trick through the beauty of this world and the charm of its possessions.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

Did the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil drive Adam out of the garden?

Saint Jacob Alsrouji believes that the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil was not the reason beyond driving Adam out of the garden, but it was the sin, he committed that disconnected him from the garden.

- ❖ Adam sinned, dishonored (the commandment) and stole (the fruit), that he became angry, rebelled, and left the paradise. The Lord of the paradise wanted to reconcile with Adam by offering the (right) thief, the fruit of life.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

The tree of the knowledge of the good and evil, and the second Adam with His temptations

The three temptations that the Master faced and conquered were the same temptations that Adam faced and failed to conquer when he was in the paradise. These are: seeking pleasures, worthless glory, and greediness. The enemy fooled Adam by eating to fill

his stomach with what was forbidden, and to become, with his wife, like God, and consequently to own the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil. What the first Adam failed to conquer; the second Adam did conquer, that through Adam who came from the dust, we perished eternally, and through the last Adam, we were given the eternal glory.

The serpent bites Zacchaeus

Saint Jacob Alsrouji compares between - Adam who in his disobedience looked at the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil and desired it, he picked for himself and for his offspring the fruit of death – and Zacchaeus who in his lacking climbed, with faith, a tree to be healed from the poison of the serpent (Luke 19), as if he shared the fathers in looking at the copper serpent to be healed from the stings of the serpents. He shared the right thief in his looking at the crucified to free him from the bondage of the devil and death and to enjoy the kingdom of the savior.

❖ Zacchaeus, the head of tax collectors, was bitten by a hidden serpent, so he looked at the Son, and the poison was gone from his body.

The bite of the serpent hurt him, and when he realized it, he ran to see this, who the Hebrews lived with His mystery.

Our Lord came to replace the copper serpent for the head of the tax collector (Numbers 21:4-9) who was bitten by the sin like the serpent.

The sin spread in his body as poison, and when he looked at the Son, it was eliminated and he was justified.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

Zacchaeus offered to be one of the fruits of the tree

Saint Jacob Alsrouji displayed a marvelous dialogue between Zacchaeus and the tree that he climbed. Instead of first Adam who picked its leaves to cover his nakedness, he asked the tree to be one of its fruits to please the second Adam, when he wanted to see Jesus.

Some believe the word "Zacchaeus" means "the justified" or "the selected" because Zacchaeus represents the victorious Gentiles who are justified through the blood of Christ.

❖ (Zacchaeus) realized that he could not see the Son as he wanted, so, the wise man ran to the fig tree to reach what he wanted.

Zacchaeus was talking to the fig tree with these phrases: provide me with the opportunity as you used to do since the beginning.

You put the leaves on Adam when he was naked, let my need be completed by you now to see the Son (Genesis 3:7).

Give me your height to climb on it, to stand on your branches, and to meditate at the Lord of Eden who came to save us (Genesis 2:8).

Prepare for me a place on your high peak, to stand and see He, who with His Father, made all these trees grows.

Be patient a little until I see and contemplate at the fruits of life that were sent to us from the most high.

I am short, and if I had not stood on your high peak, I will not be able to see your Lord among the crowd.

I do not have the tall stature, and you do not have the fruits, because you are withered (Mathew 21:19-22), let you be my height, and let me be a fruit in you.

When I climb on you, be my stature, and I will take the position of the fruit for you.

- ❖ The fruit of this tree was valuable, because Christ picked it up from its branches when He was passing by.

He saw Zacchaeus as a first fruit in the tree; He hurried and picked it up to benefit from its sweet taste.

He did not find, even in Eden, like that fruit which He picked up from that tree, when He was passing by to Jericho (Luke 19:1).

Zacchaeus was not like Adam who ran away between the trees, and took only leaves from that tree (Genesis 3:7-8).

Standing on the tree top, Zacchaeus longed to see the Son, not like Adam who hid from the creator (Genesis 3:10).

Love had grown in him, and he was full of the bait of repentance, that he was presented to God, and God was pleased with him.

From Jericho, and from the withered sycamore tree, Christ, with His labor, had made this fruit.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

A paradise without the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil

The fathers talked several times about the baptism as a door that takes us back to the paradise, which does not have a tree of the knowledge of the good and evil, and through which the man meets with God to be with Him.

- ❖ At the water the man is formed to receive the spirit instead of the soul, and God does not bring animals to him, but He brings him devils and their heads, saying: "tread on serpents and scorpions".

God raises you, not to guard the paradise, but to become a heavenly citizen.

You no longer see valleys or trees or a spring, but you get to have the Lord Himself and be mingled with His celestial body which the devil cannot come near it...

As long as you do not come down to him, he won't be able to ascend to you, because you are in heaven, he does not come near heaven.

The tree of the knowledge of the good and evil is not here, but there is only the tree of life.

He no longer creates a woman from your side, but all of us have taken from the side of Christ.

- ❖ The baptistery, here, is better than the garden of the paradise, the serpent is not here, but Christ enters with all of you to the renewal with water and spirit.

You do not see fine trees and fruits, but you see spiritual blessings.

You do not find the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil, nor the law, nor the commandments, but the grace and the blessings, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Saint John the Chrysostm

The church is a new paradise

The church sings saying: "like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons, I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song of Solomon 2:3). Because she lived among the trees of the woods, she could not go up to Him, so He came down to her, and became like an apple tree (the symbol of the divine incarnation) between her hands. He lived among us, we are the trees of woods without fruits, and became one of us, but not without fruits like us, but like the apple tree: beautiful view, refreshing smell, its fruits are edible, and its juice is potable. He is the tree of life that we grab instead of the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil.

Truly, the earth has dried up for a certain time, because we ate from the tree of disobedience, and then the beloved "the obedient Son" came. He came in midst of our thorns, and participated in our pains, He bore the curse of the thorns for us, that we sit at His feet, and sheltering by the cross of His love in the midst of the distress of this world. He made us a paradise full of holy trees that are full of spiritual fruits. He called it "the enclosed garden (Song of Solomon 4:12).

Saint Augustine believes that this is the church, for he says:

- ❖ The paradise is the church as it was called in the Songs of Solomon,
The four rivers of the paradise are the four Gospels,
And the fruitful trees are the saints,
And the fruits are their works,

And the tree of life is the holy of holies i.e. Christ,

And the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil is the freedom of the will, so if a man despises the will of God, he destroys himself, then, he learns the difference between sanctifying himself for the general good, and his works according to his own will.

Saint Augustine

Origen the Scholar tells us about the inner trees saying :{ there are trees inside us, either good or bad (Mathew 7:18), the righteous cannot bear bad fruits, but trees that bear good fruits. Do you want to know the names of the trees that are inside our souls? It does not have apple trees or a grape vineyard, but there is a tree called the righteousness, and another one called vigilance, also the strength and moderation. If you want to know, there are many kinds of trees inside us that represent the garden of the Lord, which He implants it by Himself. Truly, there are the trees of piety, wisdom, learning, and the knowledge of the good and evil and on the top of all of these, there is the tree of life (Genesis 2:9).}

Also, **Origen the Scholar** deems that the wife is like Eden garden where there are the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil. And **Saint Isaac the Syriac** deems that there are two schools in this life, one pushes us toward anger and testing the works of others and criticizing them, if it is wither good or evil, and judging them fairly, and thus we lose the peace, the humbleness and the patience. The other school leads us toward love.

- ❖ There are two schools where we are enrolled: one for the knowledge of the good and evil, and the other one is for training to learn the truth that pertaining to life and light.

Regarding the **school of the knowledge of the good and evil**, it is specialized at the origins of justice and selecting, and this produces jealousy, disturbance, rage, distress, envy, anger, love of triumph, and the rest of the sufferings.

But the **school of the truth**, which teaches about the grace, it does have the love, peace, quietness, humbleness, patience, with the rest of the fruits of the spirit as Paul the apostle wrote. For the tree is known by its fruits. So, now you need to recognize in which school are you being raised?

Saint Isaac the Syriac

A return to desire the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil

- ❖ If our unawareness to God is not considered an excuse to deliver us from the punishment, how much more dangerous to despise Him after knowing Him.

But he, who after he gets the knowledge of the good and evil, he goes back to do what he should have run away from, or what he already escaped from, he humiliates his mind and himself, and despises the gift of God. He insults the giver when he abandons the gift; he denies the good when he dishonors his sponsor.

How does he please the one who gave him, while he is not pleased with his gift? He appears before the Lord, not just as a rebellious, but also as a denier for the favor.

Tertelian the Scholar

Let's direct our desire to the tree of life instead of the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil

- ❖ When our Lord Jesus Christ gave up His human spirit, with His will, with His authority, and with His superior love, Joseph Arimathea looked at the cross and his heart was longing to pick up the fruit of life which was not given to Adam, Eve, and their offspring.

Joseph Arimathea saw the cluster of the life giver dangling from the vineyard of the cross. With faith and a fiery heart he set out with the spirit of power to Pilate to take his permission to pick up this fruit to eat it and to present it to all mankind. It is wondrous that first Adam and his helper Eve did not go to the tree of life in Eden garden to eat from it, but the son of Adam, Joseph Arimathea, is asking a permission from Pilate the earthy, the slave of death, to pick up the fruit of the eternal life.

Adam and Eve longed for the fruit of the knowledge of the good and bad, but Joseph Arimathea longed for the fruit of a tree of life to pick it up and enjoy it.

Saint Jacob Alsrouji

Why was there this penalty due to eating from the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil?

Because the penalty of disobedience was "you shall surely die," that prompted some to believe that the story of the falling of our first parents was a symbolic one, saying that the punishment was extremely difficult, and it was not balanced with the commandment of not eating from the fruit of a certain tree. But some scholars replied with the following:

First: the punishment was not due to the type of the commandment, but it was due to the inner thought which in return met the superior love of God and his caring for the man, with denying. The punishment is a normal fruit of the sin, whatever it is. It is like the paradise which with its first joy is appropriate for the state of man who is clung to God.

Secondly: the hideousness of the punishment is balanced with the gift of the human freedom and the assessment of God for the man.

Thirdly: the hideousness of the punishment highlights the power of salvation that God offers to the man, by giving His only Begotten Son.

Fourth: the wondrous thing is that the punishment with its heaviness fell on the earth and the serpent, God did not curse Adam and Eve, but He cursed the serpent due to its deceit to the man, and He cursed the earth because of who dwell in it! God in His love, showed the bitterness of the sin, but He did not curse the man. No love is greater than this.