

A Patristic Commentary



THE BOOK OF Colossians

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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

**TO THE COLOSSIANS
AN COMMENTARY BY FR.
TADROS Y. MALATY**

By

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AN INTRODUCTION

Colusse, Colosse:

A small city in the province of Phrygia in South Asia Minor; east of the city of Ephesus, and west of Antioch Pesidia; fed by the River Lycus. The Lycus Valley went through several earthquakes, and has been the site of huge precipitation of chalk (calcium carbonate), that covered many of its features, Yet, at the same time, gave it fantastic sceneries of arches, tunnels of chalk. Colosse has been close to two prominent cities: 'Laodicia' and 'Hieroplolis' (4: 13). The three cities were reputed for lumbar commerce and tanning¹.

As the result of the several volcanic eruptions, the region became a great pasture land, with a flourishing industry of wool and its tanning. A famous kind of wool was known as the Colossiac wool.

We do not know much of the history of Colosse, other than a reference by the Historian Herodot describing it in his days as a great city in the province of Phrygia, before it collapsed to become just a small village in the days of St. Paul. Nowadays, there is nothing left of it other than a village under the name of 'Chonas' or 'Konas' in Turkey, located under the shadows of Mount 'Cadmos', rich in high trees, and in some remains of the old city of Colosse, of arches, domes, and stone pavements

Because of the close proximity between Colosse, Laodicia, and Hieraplolis, St. Paul wrote that his epistle to the people of Colosse should be read in Laodicia, and his epistle to the Laodicians should be read in Colosse (4: 16).

According to the Historian Josephus, the Jews resided in the province of Phrygia for two centuries²; and were so influenced by the customs of its people, that those who converted to Christianity,

¹ John I. McKenzie: *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1972, p. 145.

² Josephus: *Antiq.* 12: 147.

have borne in themselves the fingerprints of the customs of the Gentiles¹.

And according to Eusabius, Philip the deacon and his four virgin daughters have resided in this region, and their tombs were discovered in Hierapolis during the last portion of the second century AD.

The ministry of Epaphras in Colosse:

After returning from Jerusalem where they attended the first council held there (Acts 15: 9), St. Paul, St. Timothy, and St. Silas preached in the two provinces of Phrygia and Galatia; then Paul departed from Ephesus, and went again over all the region of Galatia and Phrygia, to strengthen all the disciples (Acts 18: 23). According to some, St. Paul did not go to Colosse; as he passed through the upper region (the north) of Phrygia, as it came in Acts 19: 1, whereas Colosse is located in its south. The majority of scholars believe that it was Epaphras who preached in Colosse; he, who was called by the apostle Paul as: “*One of you, a servant of Christ, always laboring fervently for you in prayers*” (4: 12); which indicates that he was originally from Colosse, and probably encountered St. Paul in Ephesus, and believed on his hands. St. Paul spent two full years ministering in Ephesus (53 – 56 AD) (Acts 19: 10)², where some Colossians have received faith on his hands, yet, according to some scholars, there is no proof that he has not preached in Colosse itself³.

Date of the writing of the epistle:

According to the early church tradition (Act 28) the epistle to the Colossians was written from the prison in Rome, between the years 61 and 63 AD, the same as those to the Ephesians, the Philippians, and to Philemon.

Although, according to some other scholars, those epistles were probably written during his imprisonment in Caesarea (between the years 58 and 60), or in Ephesus (between year 55 and

¹ *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1333.

² *Donald Guthrie: New Testament Introduction*, 1975, p. 545.

³ *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1333.

56). But the following points prove that they were written in Rome¹:

(1) When the apostle Paul mentioned those who worked together with him, it would not be reasonable for him to disregard the name of St. Philip in whose house he stayed shortly before his imprisonment (Acts 21: 8-14).

(2) In the book of Acts, we find no mention of the preaching in its wide extent, as indicated in the epistles to the Ephesians and the Philippians.

(3) It would be difficult to imagine that ‘Onesimus’ the escapee slave would go to Caesarea, but he could have rather gone to Rome, where there were many like him.

(4) Paul was hoping for an early release (Philippians 1: 19-25); which would be difficult to realize in Caesarea without paying a bribe, something that the apostle would never do; while in Rome, he would expect to be set free, mostly during the second of the two years mentioned in the book of Acts 28: 30.

The author of this epistle:

(1) In the introduction to this epistle, it came that it was written by Paul and Timothy.

(2) If we compare this epistle, to Paul’s epistle to Philemon, in which he wrote the straightforward phrase: “*I, Paul, am writing with my own hand...*” (Philemon verse 19); we shall find some common features, like the names of the apostle’s fellow-laborers: Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. Beside the fact that the epistle to Philemon was written by Onesimus, while Onesimus and Tychicus delivered the epistle to Colosse (4: 7). The two epistles were written while the apostle was in prison in Rome (4: 18; 1: 24).

(3) It is befitting of us to say that this epistle bears the same features of the other epistles written by St. Paul; beginning with an introduction of thanksgiving to God, then some doctrinal sides, followed by practical behaviorism.

Controversy concerning the authorship of the epistle:

¹ Richard Sturz: *Studies in Colossians, the Per-eminent Christ, Chicago, 1955. p. 13.*

(1) Some claim that the style of this epistle is different from that of St. Paul in the other epistles. In response to this objection we say that this particular epistle was written to deal with a heresy that appeared in Colosse, that motivated the apostle to write about the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ over everything created, and about the nature and the work of Christ; that this epistle became an important Scripture document to which the fathers of the church referred in responding to certain heresy, particularly to that by the followers of Arius.

(2) Some object that the epistle deals with Gnostic tendencies; when Gnosticism started to attack Christianity only in the second century. In response to this objection, we say that Gnosticism, as independent groups who claimed to be Christians, have indeed appeared in the second century, but it attempted to crawl by its views into the church since its beginning through the Jews, beside some Helenists who bore those tendencies. Although Gnosticism, as well-defined groups led by particular persons like Mercion, Flantinus, and Basilides, appeared only during the second century, yet it even preceded Christianity, and was adopted by Jews and Helenists.

(3) The teachings concerning the Lord Christ in this epistle, particularly those concerning His role in creation, surpass what came in other epistles written by the apostle Paul; which may indicate that it was written after the time of the epistle. In response to this, we say that the prior existence of the Lord Christ, also came in Paul's epistle to the Philippians (2: 9-11), And His role in creation came in (1 Corinthians 8: 6); to both of which nobody objected

(4) Owing to the amazing similarity between this epistle and that to the Ephesians, some scholars claim that his apostle to the Colossians quoted from the later epistle. In response to this claim we say that, by comparing the similar texts in the two epistles, it is evident that the texts in the epistle to the Colossians are older than those in the epistle to the Ephesians. Moreover, there are texts in the epistle to the Colossians similar to texts in the

epistle to the Philippians, which carry the same flare with the same spiritual atmosphere.

The goal of the epistle:

The goal of sending this epistle is shown in its context. Epaphras traveled to Rome to tell the apostle Paul the good news about the church in Colosse, where faith and love prevailed (1: 4; 2: 5). Yet, because he also told him about a certain heresy that crawled to the congregation, which tended to belittle the role of the Lord Christ, to dethrone Him, and to deny Him His position as the Head of the church; St. Paul sent this epistle with Apaphras to deal with this problem, but when Apaphras was arrested and put in prison, Paul sent it again with Tychicus (4: 7-9) ¹.

According to some, the region surrounding Colosse endured several of such heresy that seemed to crawl into the congregation, which the apostle intended to strengthen them against. Starting by commending them, to encourage them to be steadfast in faith, and to reject all those strange heresy, he wrote: *“For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and steadfastness of your faith in Christ; as you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”* (2: 5, 6)..Whereas to the Galatians he wrote: *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel”* (Galatians 1: 6), and, *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth!”* (Galatians 3: 1).

In this epistle the apostle Paul concentrated on the Person of the Lord Christ. Preaching His name², His Exaltation, namely His Divinity, he confirmed that He is God, One with the Father and equal to Him; surpasses all the other beings; as though he cries out, saying: [Do not ever allow for any thing to take the place of the Lord Christ by force; and do not ever allow anyone to make you deny Him].

Dealing with a Gnostic-Jewish heresy:

¹ Richard Sturz: *Studies in Colossians, the Per-eminent Christ, Chicago, 1955. p. 9.*

² Henerietta C. Mears: *What The Bible Is All About, 1987, p. 453.*

It so seems that a group of Jews set forth to Phrygia, where they settled down. That group received some Hellenistic philosophies, mixed them with certain Gnostic philosophies, and some literal Jewish rites. They claimed that what they have got from our Lord Jesus Christ was not enough to fulfill their spiritual or behavioral needs; and that they were in need to strengthen themselves against the unseen hosts (both the good and the evil angels) with what that way of worship provides them.

The most important wrong principles of this heresy:

(1) Those heresys crawled into two fields: the field of ethical behavior, and that of the doctrine of divinity; which targeted the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) Some Jews received some Gnostic views, and mixed them with Jewish ones! And when they came to believe in the Lord Christ, they carried those fingerprints along with them. ... The Gnosticism concentrated on the knowledge, as being the way to connect to God. Yet, for them, knowledge is not a divine gift granted to the believer through divine grace or proclamation; but it is an enlightenment enjoyed by man through his own strife by living a life of destitution and deprivation...

Knowledge for the Gnostics differ from Hellenistic knowledge; for, although both deny man's enjoyment of knowledge or wisdom as a divine gift, Yet, while the Gnostics believe that it is an enlightenment enjoyed by man through his own strife to live a life of destitution and deprivation, the Hellenists, on the other hand believe that it is by man's strife through his use of reason (mind).

According to the Gnostics, man, being bound to the evil matter, would not be able to approach God, except through the angelic beings, who would be capable to help him reach salvation from the world of matter or sin. At the same time, according to some Hellenistic philosophers, there are several ions that are capable of lifting man up from the world of matter, to help him reach gradually to the Supreme Being. These ions are mostly twelve in number; each of them subsequently sends man up to a spiritually higher ion.

(3) The worship of angels: Concerning this issue, the apostle wrote to them, saying: *“Let no one defraud you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind”* (2: 18).

They misinterpreted the divine oracle saying: *“Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness”* (Genesis 1: 26), claiming that God has let the angels create man. And they even went so far to claim that the Lord Christ Himself came to be under the dominion of angels, particularly as He came down to earth, or as He ascended to heaven after His resurrection. That is why the epistle came to confirm that the Lord Christ is the Creator of the heavenly creatures; as well as the earth and all humankind (1: 16).

(4) To bring pleasure to those angels, men are committed to refrain from having certain kinds of food and drinks, claiming that they are unclean; and to practice certain literal rites: *“do not touch, do not taste, and do not handle”* (2: 21).

(5) Counting the material creation as corrupt or unclean, including the human flesh, they refused to believe in the incarnation of Christ, in that He became a real man with a real body.

(6) They claimed the existence of diverse ranks among the angels; and that, among them, there are those who can intercede between man and God, and not the Lord Christ; Or that the Lord Christ is just one of several intercessors -- a Savior among saviors. Thus the epistle came to confirm the atonement intercession of the Lord Christ, set upon the sacrifice of the cross (1: 20); an intercession was well received by the Father; *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”* (1: 14).

(7) The apostle proclaimed that the Gnostics' claim is nothing but *“empty deceit, according to the tradition of men”* (Col. 2: 8).

(8) Having been unable to get rid of their Jewish background, those Jews claimed that salvation could be realized through practicing certain rites, according to the literal statutes of Moses, like

- ❖ keeping the Sabbath, celebrating the monthly and annual feasts, refraining from certain food and drinks, practicing the circumcision, etc.
- ❖ They used to approach God through the angels, and through certain Jewish and Greek practices; which the apostle attempted to correct in his epistle¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

It is worth mentioning that those Gnostic influences, or those movements of Judaism, appeared in other churches like those of Corinth; demonstrated by denying the resurrection of the body, allowing harlotry, despising the flesh, and misunderstanding the essence of leading a life of destitution and deprivation². ..

Gnosticism was not directly bound to Christianity, but got attached to some Jews here and there³, as a philosophy, more than being a distinct system; which could attract heathens and Jews alike, then Christians⁴. Several Gnostic movements appeared as organized groups, under leaders who had their influence on many. In the second century, those Gnostics, although with controversy between one group and another, yet, with mutual and common broad lines of thoughts. I have previously dealt with the Gnostics in my study of the school of Alexandria⁵.

Between the epistle to the Colossians and the epistle to the Ephesians:

The three epistles sent by St. Paul to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and to Philemon, were written at the same time. The epistle to the Ephesians was written by the hand of Tychicus; the one to Philemon by the hand of Onesimus; and that to the Colossians by both of them.

¹ *In Colos. Homily 1.*

² *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1333.*

³ *R. McL. Wilson: The Gnostic Problem; C.H. Dodd: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 97 ff; Rudolf Bultmann: "Gnosis." Bible Keywords, 11.)*

⁴ *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1333.*

⁵ *The Author: school of Alexandria, N.J, 1994, p. 122-155.*

The two epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians are similar, on account of that they were addressed to two geographically close regions in Asia Minor; whose peoples were, not Jews but Gentiles of similar social, and behavioral features. In both epistles, the apostle showed the secret of God's plan to receive the Gentiles, to partake, together with the Jews, of the heavenly inheritance; "*the Lord Christ has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between them, having abolished in His flesh the enmity*" (Ephesians 2: 14, 15). And, "*the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, has now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of His glory of this mystery among the Gentiles*" (1: 26, 27).

Although the two epistles are similar in style, yet each of them dealt with a distinct issue. The epistle to the Ephesians talked about all believers, being the one body of the Lord Christ; Whereas the epistle to the Colossians concentrated on the One Head of the body – Jesus Christ. The former epistle talked about **the church of Christ**; whereas the second talked about **the Christ of the church**. They are integral to one another.

According to some scholars, the epistle to the Ephesians is a natural extension of the one to the Colossians. While the later shed the light upon the position of the Lord Christ or His work; in an attempt to counteract the Gnostic thought, that belittled the Person of the Lord and denied His role, the apostle to the Ephesians, on the other hand, is an ultimate presentation of the work of the Lord Christ, namely the church – His body – "*to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden ...or she is the bride, very beloved by Him*" *to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 3: 9, 10).

The main lines of thought in the epistle to the Colossians:

1- The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ:

As the Gnostic thoughts attacked the Person of the Lord Christ, the apostle concentrated here on the greatness or exaltation of the Lord Christ, “*By whom all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible*” (1: 16). This epistle came to present a faithful portrait about the Lord Christ in His glory and honor; “*the Head of every principality and power*” (2: 10).

In the days of the apostle Paul, some believed that Jesus is a mere Person; or that Christ is the divine Spirit who dwelt upon Him during His epiphany, then forsook Him on the cross. That meant that Christ did not die, but it was Jesus the man who died. Although they worshipped Christ, yet they glorified the interceding powers as spiritual beings; or worshipped them together with Christ.

The epistle came to confirm the divinity of the Lord Christ; and that beside Him there is no need for other intercessors.

Responding to a wrong heresy that God of the old covenant is the creator of the world, and the matter; and that the Lord Christ came to save the world from him; the apostle Paul clarified in this epistle that the salvation was consummated by the Lord Son, realized according to the will and love of God the Father. He kept mentioning the Lord Christ together with the Father, to counteract any faulty Gnostic tendencies (1: 3; 2: 3; 3: 1, 17, etc.).

2- Faith or knowledge?!

We saw how the Gnostics, considering the knowledge as the foundation of faith; and that man is capable of being saved by his knowledge, which is the fruit of his strife to lead a life of destitution and deprivation; they considered Christianity as a call to ignorance.

In this epistle, the apostle clarified in a positive way, that, although knowledge is necessary for our salvation, yet it is a gift of God’s grace to us. The spiritual knowledge that exalts above the human thought, is given to us by God; who sanctifies and causes it to grow in us by His Holy Spirit, the Grantor of enlightenment. ... The apostle often repeats the word “*know*” or “*knowledge*”, as He used to refer to “*the secret of God*”, or “*the secret of Christ*”, to

clarify that knowledge is hidden, even to the heavenly creatures, and proclaimed by the Lord Christ to them and to us.

The apostle also binds “knowledge” to “walking in Christ”; lest, we would be preoccupied with the theoretical knowledge, and not with that of the daily experience, in our new practice in Jesus Christ.

3- The racial and social church:

According to the Gnostics, the society could be divided into two categories:

(1) The perfect: Who should not get married, nor eat certain kinds of food; on account of that marriage is un-clean, so are certain kinds of food.

(2) The less perfect: who could be allowed to get married, and to eat whatever they choose, on account of their weakness.

In an attempt to wipe out this social distinction, the apostle proclaimed that the Lord Christ has “*reconciled all things to Himself*” (1: 20); often repeating the words “all” and “every” more than once in the same verse (1: 28).

4- The doctrine and the behavior:

This epistle reveals in a magnificent way, the greatness of the personality of the Lord Christ; which is only perceived by those who live in Jesus Christ, who draw from the treasures of His grace, and who find Him the true fulfillment. It is truly an epistle of practical doctrine.

A-Christ is our life:

In the epistle to the Romans, we perceive that **Christ is our Righteousness**.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians, we perceive that **Christ is our Riches**.

In the second epistle to the Corinthians, we perceive that **Christ is our Comfort**.

In the epistle to the Galatians, we perceive that **Christ is our Liberator**

In the epistle to the Ephesians, we perceive that **Christ is our Life** (we are His body).

In the epistle to the Philippians, we perceive that **Christ is our Happiness.**

In the first and the second epistles to the Thessalonians, we perceive that **Christ came for our glory.**

In the first epistle to Timothy, and to Titus, we perceive that **Christ is our Teacher.**

In the second epistle to Timothy, we perceive that **Christ is our Role Model.**

In the epistle to Philemon, we perceive that **Christ is our Role Model as a Master.**

In the epistle to the Hebrews, we perceive that **Christ is our Atoning Intercessor.**

In the epistle to the Colossians, we perceive that **Christ is Everything to us**, “*You are complete in Him*” (2: 10). In Him we find everything, and we need nothing more.

- ❖ He is the **Light** who saves us from “*the power of darkness*” (1: 12-13); so that we, ourselves, would become the light of the world.
- ❖ He is the **Savior** who saves us from the authority of the devil, For “*in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*” (1: 14).
- ❖ “*He transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son*” (1: 13). As through baptism in His name, we enjoy the sonhood to the Father, and are counted as the beloved children of God.
- ❖ As far as His divinity is concerned, “*He is the image of the invisible Father*” (1: 15); In Him our nature is renewed, to become, ourselves, according to His image, “*and (we) have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created (us)*” (3: 10). In the first Adam, we have lost the image of God; while in the second Adam, we have restored it.
- ❖ He is the **Creator**, “*By Him all things were created (1: 16)*; In Him, He carried us as His body; and in Him, He led us enlightened, to enjoy our risen life, “*He is the beginning, the*

firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (1: 18); *“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (3: 3).

- ❖ He came to be our **Head**; We are His body, and He precedes us in everything (1: 18); to become a role model for us in everything.
- ❖ By His **salvation work**, He revealed to us the exalted secret of the divine love; and we enjoyed the hope in glory, *“which is Christ in you, the hope in glory”* (1: 27). *“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory”* (3: 4).

If the Gnosticism has wronged the Person of the Lord Christ, and made Him as one of the ions; the apostle Paul calls on us to enjoy fellowship with Him, to experience His passion: *“To fill up in (our) flesh what is lacking in the affliction of Christ”* (1: 24), in His death, and His burial: *“buried with Him in baptism: (2: 12); we, consequently partake of His glory: “You will also appear with Him in glory”* (3: 4). He will let us in need of nothing.

While Gnosticism calls them to mere mental knowledge as a way to salvation, Acquiring Christ is the true way, *“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (2: 3).

B- The church in Christ:

a- The church is united To Christ, being her Head (1: 18). For, by His incarnation, he became no stranger to her, nor she from Him, but His own body. This line of thought came originally in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Mark 14:58; 2: 19-22)¹; attaching us to the Lord Christ, and uniting us with Him; being the Head of man (1 Corinthians 11: 3); and on account of that, our relationship with Him is a relationship of “spiritual matrimony. *“For, as man is the head of woman; Christ, as well, is the Head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body”* (Ephesians 5: 23).

b- The church finds her comfort in the Lord Christ in the midst of her sufferings, counting the suffering as *“filling up in her*

¹ E.E. Elias: *Paul's use of the old Testament*, p. 92.

flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” ; testifying to the cross, and experiencing the sweetness of the fellowship with her crucified Christ (1: 24).

c- Having granted the church to walk in Him (2: 6); the Lord Christ opened the way for her. Her relationship with Him is one of continuous movement, which perpetually works to realize the work of her Heavenly Groom; for she is set on Him (2: 7); practices everything in His name, particularly the thanksgiving to God the Father (3: 17; 2: 7).

d- The church enjoys her fullness in Christ (2: 10); She would never feel satisfied, except by being according to His image.

e- She dies together with Him (2: 20), buried with Him (2: 12), raised with Him (3: 1), hidden with Him in God (3: 3), and appears with Him in glory (3: 4).

f- She has got the renewal by baptism, and her renewal will continue by repentance, so as to perfectly bear His image.

g- She feels the riches and the royal life, as she acquires Him, in whom there are the treasures of wisdom and understanding (2: 2, 3; 4: 16).

h- Her constitution is faith in Christ, and love for all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for her in heaven (1: 4-5). This is the key of the epistle: ‘Faith, hope, and love’; this triple-sided grace, is perpetually connected in the new covenant, with the experience of Christian life. In this epistle, this constitution is presented in a diversity of ways¹. This epistle, like the other epistles of St. Paul, reveals the call of the gospel, namely: Faith in Christ, to love Him in His brethren, and to be together with Him in his heavens.

i- This epistle reveals the spirit of the church and her exultant atmosphere. Although the epistle exhorts awareness against the false teachers and the authors of vain philosophies, Yet, it very obviously proclaims how the church should be with her acquirement of her Christ, the Head who grants her all riches and fullness; to experience prevalence over the devil with all his hosts, as there is no more chance or possibility of darkness in her; and to

¹ Cf William S. Deal: *Bakers Pictorial introduction to the Bible*, 1967, p. 366.

joyful experience the kingdom of God, and to walk along the royal path, to become an icon of her Creator. The apostle thus presents His church experience, as a victorious, exultant, and glorious life, even in the midst of affliction.

j- This exultant church life does not encourage looseness and slothfulness, but the serious behavior “in Christ” (1: 16), and seeking the heavenlies (3: 2); in particular “love”, which is the bond of perfection leading to the opening of heart to let the peace of God dwell in it; and to practice the perpetual life of fellowship.

Our exultant church life motivates us to a life of watching, thanksgiving, praying, and preaching, by the secret of Christ (4: 2, 3), counsels us in our familial relationships (3: 18-21), and guides us in our relationships with others (3: 21-25). It is a life practiced in the church, at home, in the place of work, and in the street; on account of that it is an inner life, which has its roots in our depths; It directs our feelings, senses, energies, talents, words, and behavior; It intervenes in every hidden and manifest act. In other words, our Christianity is “getting hidden in Christ”, to see Him in everyone of us, guiding us by Himself, to get to enjoy Him.

k- This epistle reveals Christianity as a practical call to an enjoyment of the freedom, provided to us by Christ, from the devil and his darkness; granted us the sonhood to God the Father, to enjoy His kingdom; and presented to us Himself – the wisdom. Through this freedom, we reject any call to the deadly chains of literalism, and the wrong understanding of piety; to minister to our Christ as children in glory. This freedom in Christ leads us toward certain commitments. This epistle presents to us what we should avoid, and what we should strive to achieve; and how we should live a life of thanksgiving¹.

The divisions of the epistle:

As this epistle presents to us the Person of the Lord Christ; Wherever we look, He transfigures before our eyes: “In Him we are grounded and steadfast (1: 23); He is the Eternal, who carries us to His eternity. He grants us the perpetual growth to bring us forth to

¹ Cf. *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 1989, p. 1180.

Him (2: 7); He is the Life, the Giver of everything (3: 3); And He is the Leader of our behavior.

- 1- Christ is the Depth** **Chapter 1**
- 2- Christ is the height** **Chapter 2**
- 3- Christ is inside us; the Leader of our inner life.** **Chapter 3**
- 4- Christ is the Guide of our outer behavior.** **Chapter 4**

**AN INSPIRATION FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE
COLOSSIANS**

YOU ARE EVERYTHING TO ME

- ❖ You are the secret of the whole love;
For my sake, O Lord, You became man;
Yet, carrying the whole fullness of the Divinity;
For You are One with Your Father;
Your Divinity parted not from Your Humanity!
- ❖ You granted me to unite with You
To enjoy the fullness, and to be in need of nothing;
You are everything to me;
You are the Forgiver of my sins, and the Grantor of Your
righteousness;
You became to me my freedom and my treasure;
You became my glory, and the exultation of my heart;
Carrying me in You, I discover the exalted divine secret;
You bring me forth, whole in You;
By Your Holy Spirit, You qualify me to fly, and be in Your
Father's bosom
- ❖ I enjoy You, and take refuge in You;
When You dwell in me;
All the hosts of darkness cannot approach me;
- ❖ You raised me above the literality of the law;
And brought me forth to the glorious liberty of the children of
God;
You became for me the depth and the height;
You carry me forth to the depths of Your secrets;
And You lift me up to the height of heavens;
You lead my inner life, for in me You dwell;
And You present Yourself to me, life and constitution;
By You I walk my way to the Father;
By You, I know how to relate to every man;
What more would I need?

Hoping for the resurrection of all, and their salvation by You.

- ❖ By You I enter into the depths;
I get in touch with You, to recognize the Father through You;
For You are the hidden image of the Father;
The image of unity with Him, in His same essence;
When I see You, I see Him;
When I recognize You, I get filled with the treasures of wisdom
and understanding.
- ❖ y You, I recognize You;
O Creator of the whole universe, and the ALMIGHTY ONE;
The Care-Taker of everything big and small.
- ❖ Entering into the secret of Your church, I discover Your
leadership of her, O the Head who loves His body;
You grant her Your Holy Spirit, to prepare her for the eternal
encounter with You;
To make her truly a blameless heavenly bride for You;
To let her have the right of fellowship in glory; for she is Your
holy body;
With every moment, You let her enjoy the full measure more
and more;
Until she becomes Your living icon.

CHAPTER 1

CHRIST IS THE DEPTH

As it is his usual way, the apostle Paul starts his epistle with thanksgiving to God for His work with His people, particularly with those to whom the apostle sends his epistle. In this attitude he expresses his perpetual longing for the life of thanksgiving and praise, supports the church in her weaknesses, and instigate in its congregation the spirit of hope.

He reveals to us the exaltation of the Person of Christ, and clarifies His position concerning the Father, the creation, and the church; a revelation to the account of the church which is His body, enjoying what belongs to her Head. When he talks about the church, he means everyone of her members; as the goal of the epistle, and even the goal of his whole apostolic work, is to discover the believer, and to perceive his possibilities, to live a perfect life in Christ; for in such a goal will be the perfection of the church¹.

The Lord Christ is the Depth. How?

- ❖ He alone, can enter deep into us, to utterly solve our problems in their depths, not through changing the outer circumstances, but through reconciling us with the Father; to enjoy the Divine Bosoms; by which He does not just bring us back to the garden of Eden, but to the Creator of paradise Himself.
- ❖ He alone, being One with the heavenly Father, of the same essence, is capable of granting us the fullness, taking away our corruption, granting us His non-corruption, forgiving our sins, and granting us His righteousness.
- ❖ He deals with the problem of suffering in its depths, which has corrupted the human life along all generations; not through taking the suffering away, but by bringing man forth into its way, to find pleasure and joy in the fellowship with the Lord Christ in the midst of sufferings.

¹ *G. Campbell Morgan: An Exposition of the whole Bible, 1959, p. 496.*

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1- THE APOSTLE PAUL AND THE COLOSSIANS:

a- Greetings:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother” (1)

The church of Colosse probably, has not so far recognized the apostle Paul by face; Here he writes to them, not as a ‘busybody’, but as an apostle, sent, not by man, but *“by the will of God”*.

“and Timothy the brother”: Although Timothy has not got the grace of apostleship, yet he was granted the blessing and privilege to be, with the apostle Paul, a partaker of his ministry and strife. He has been his partner in many of his preaching journeys, sent as his deputy, and, together with him, wrote many epistles. While being twenty yeas of age, he carried the bishopric responsibility in Ephesus, and was imprisoned together with the apostle. About him, Paul wrote: *“I send Timothy to you shortly; ...*

for I have no one like-minded who sincerely care for your state, for all seek their own, not the things which are of Jesus Christ. But you know his proven character, that, as a son with his father, he served with me in the gospel” (Philippians 2; 19-22).

“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse; Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2)

How could he call them: *“the saints who are in Colosse”* (2); while he, later on, wrote to them, saying: *“You must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth”* (3: 8)?!

1- ‘Consecrated’ or ‘sanctified’, is a term meaning (separated from the others for a certain task, to be referred to the Holy God. Despite their weakness, yet they were chosen by God to the account of His kingdom, and committed by His divine grace, to bear the features befitting to them, being *“saints”*.

2- ‘Consecrated’ or ‘sanctified’, is a word that bears the meaning of purity, when the believer is qualified for his mission, as consecrated for a divine task. This ‘sanctity’ is a divine gift, and not one’s own: *“But you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our Lord”* (1 Corinthians 6: 11). We are committed to strive, by the divine grace, to grow in the holy life, lest we would lose it.

According to the scholar Origen, the title ‘saints’ is not only used for those who have reached ‘holiness’, but also for those who desire it, and who faithfully seek God’s grace to work in him.

- ❖ Tell me: Since when have you have become a saint? ... Was it not since you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ!; ... Since when have you become a believer? When you have actually not kept faithfulness, by words, or by work; nor by what you have achieved! ... Since when have you been worthy of God, entrusting you with His secrets, which are not even known by angels?
- ❖ Every believer is a ‘saint’, despite the fact that he lives in the world, for, according the apostle: *“The unbelieving husband is*

sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband” (1 Corinthians 7: 14).... See how the apostle evaluates faith by ‘sanctity’? If we see a ‘laic’ (a member of the congregation) in affliction, we should stretch our hand to help him out. We should not only be zealous toward those who worship God in the wilderness, who are truly saints in their faith, as well as in their behavior. The former, as well, may be saints by their faith, and many of them also by their behavior. ... I wish, the way we go to visit a monk cast in prison, we also do to a regular member of the congregation. For both are saints in the Lord¹.

- ❖ Having been made ‘saints’ by the Lord Himself, we are committed to stay as such; for the ‘saint’ is he, who keep on living in faith, and walking a blameless life².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He, who is purified from evil and sin (through the cross), is called ‘a saint’. For the absence of evil from man is a greater perfection of the soul, bringing pleasure to God.

(St. Anthony the Great)

We are committed to discern between the use of this term to call those who, by the grace of God, strive to become saints, and its use it to call those who have already, by grace, consummated this goal, and departed to paradise, after reaching the ultimate victory. ... We are as well, committed to discern between ‘sanctity’ and the blameless behavior out of weakness.

- ❖ Ithough little children are blameless, on account of that their bodies are still pure and sinless, yet they would not be called ‘saints’; for sanctity is not realized without will and strife; ... he who commits no sin is called blameless; but the saint is he who is filled with virtues³.

(St. Jerome)

¹ *In Hebr. Hom 10: 7.*

² *Hom. On Ephes. Hom 1.*

³ *Ep. To Ephess. 1: 1: 4.*

“... and to the faithful brethren”. By which he means those who keep faith, and are steadfast in it.

“from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2). By this, the apostle proclaims that God the father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, are One in divinity, the Source of the same grace and peace; contrary to the false claim of some of the Gnostics, that Jesus Christ has come to save the world from the Wrathful God of the old covenant, the Creator of matter; ... But He is One with Him.

b- What Paul the apostle heard concerning the Colossians:

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you” (3)

What preoccupied the mind of the apostle and of those around him, even in his prison, was to give thanks to God for the sake of the spread of His kingdom in the world.

For the apostle, thanksgiving was not only merely an item of worship, but an essential line in his whole life. Despite his many commitments, and of partaking of the sufferings of those to whom he ministered, whether because of persecution from outside, dissensions from within, or of suffering from those with wrong views; Yet, his epistles perpetually bore the fragrance of thanksgiving, praise, and joy, and often exhorted the recipients of his epistles to give unceasing thanks and prayers. For him, thanksgiving was a perpetual holy sacrifice of love, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, received by God the Father as a fragrance of pleasure.

In the veins of the apostle, there has been an unceasing rich flow of thanksgiving praise, and joy.. For him, the ministry of thanksgiving and praise, was a rich and satisfying food for his soul, according to the words of the psalmist David:: “*My lips shall praise You; thus I will bless You while I live. I will lift up my hands in Your name. My souls shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*” (Psalm 63: 3-5). In the song of conquest over the actual enemy who seeks the destruction of man with the spirit of despair, David says: “*Out of the mouth of babes and infants, You have ordained (praise), that You may silence the enemy and the avenger*” (Psalm 8: 2).

The apostle presents thanksgiving in the pleural tense (1 Thessalonian 1: 2). He opens most of his epistles with a praise of thanksgiving to God (Romans 1: 8; 1 Corinthians 1: 4; Ephesians 1: 16; Philippians 1: 3; 2 Thessalonians 1: 3; 2 Timothy 1: 3; Philemon 4).

He starts by giving thanks to God for the sake of His work with His people, their faith in Him, their love for the saints, and for their hope in the heavenlies. He looks at them with a joyful positive spirit. ... Starting his talk, not with the sorrowful negatives, but with the joyful positives; he motivated them to listen to him with a wide-open heart, and filled them with hope in the perpetual growth with no despair.

Although he was in prison, physically shackled in chains, yet his soul remained alert, and free to work through perpetual prayers, seeking from God the salvation of every soul. In prison, he was a victorious lion, according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: *“He cried like a lion: ‘My Lord, I stand continually on the watchtower in the daytime; I have sat at my post every night’”* (Isaiah 21: 8).

What he heard concerning them from Epaphras brought joy to his heart; and motivated him to keep on praying and interceding for their sake, to perfectly perceive the will of God, and to enjoy the divine knowledge.

It is not strange for the apostle to bind his thanksgiving to God to his perpetual prayers for the sake of his people. For, if God seeks from us, thanksgiving and praise, as a sacrifice well received by Him; Our love for Him, and our praise to Him, would not be separated from our unceasing love for our brethren, and our prayers for their sake.

The apostle bore a true spirit of fatherhood toward all those for whom he ministered. For their sake, he did not cease to present thanksgiving to God, for His works with them.

❖ Paul always took on himself the position of a father for the sake of his children¹.

¹ Comm.. On 1 Cor 1: 2 (1: 15).

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Every prayer we raise to God, whether thanksgiving for what we have got, or supplication for more; To encourages us to seek for ourselves, and for those we love, the apostle says: “*making mention for you in my prayers*” (Ephesians 1: 16) ¹.

(Father Marius Victorinus)

“*Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love for all the saints*” (4)

If the only-begotten Son has incarnated, and delivered Himself a sacrifice on behalf of the life of the whole world, We, in our turn, should present

it to the only-begotten Son, who loved us, and delivered Himself for our sake. Salvation is the work of the Holy Trinity.

Hearing about their faith, which is the fruit of the strife of his disciple Epaphras, the apostle Paul offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God; on account of that this faith is not his or his disciple’s work, as much as it is a gift from God: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2: 8); “*(We) are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1 Peter 1: 5).

“*... and of your love for all the saints*” (4). Our faith is not a mere mental doctrine, nor dry philosophical thought, but living faith working with love; Faith in the Savior, the Lover of mankind, translated practically in our love for our brethren in the Lord: “*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 John 3: 16). The love of the believers for all the saints is not the fruit of human social bonds, but being the first fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5: 22); The love sung by the believing bride is “*as strong as death, a most vehement flame, many waters cannot quench*” (Song 8: 6-7).

¹ Marius Victorinus: Ep. To Eph., 1. راجع سيرته في قاموس سير القديسين.

***“because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven,
of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel”***

(5)

If we praise God, and give Him thanks for the gift of the gospel, which draws our hearts and minds, to perceive the eternal plan of God for us, even before we exist; And if we praise Him for the gift of love, to practice it, ourselves, by His Holy Spirit in our practical present, We, as well, give Him thanks for the gift of hope, which does not imply something we desire, that may, or may not be realized; but the hope which opens up the gates of heaven, to experience its deposit, and to perceive the truth of the eternity and the glory, prepared for us, and the pleasure of the Father in our fellowship in Him. We hear our Christ addresses the Father, saying: *“I desire that they also whom You gave to Me may be with Me where I am”* (John 17: 24); That is *“the hope that does not disappoint”* (Romans 5: 2-5).

“... laid up for you in heaven” (5); namely, kept, guarded, and guaranteed, *“an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”* (1 Peter 1: 4). This hope abides in us through the heavenly experience that we live now.

“... of which you heard before in the words of the truth of the gospel” (5). The Colossians might have not so far received and enjoyed the written gospel, but have received and enjoyed the word of the truth of the gospel orally, transferred to them through Apaphras; *“When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe”* (1 Thessalonian 2: 13).

- ❖ The Lord Christ prepared another life for those who have hope in Him; on account of that this present life is prone to sin; whereas the higher life, He reserves as a reward for us¹.

(St. Ambrose)

¹ Ep. To Ephess 1: 1: 4, 18.

- ❖ To reach the heavenly goods, you have to abide to, and support the steadfast hope, all your works have to harmonize with these goods¹.

(Father Theodor, bishop of Messisa)

- ❖ It is not without labor that we come to know the hope of our call, and the riches of God's inheritance in the saints; a hope which truly comes as a reaction to the renewable gift given by God Himself in the glorious resurrection of His Son; a gift, not given only once, but is a continuous gift; ... For every day Christ is risen from the dead; and every day He is risen in the repentant².

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ Paul reveals to them that the hope set before us in the resurrection and the kingdom, is not realized by the ordinance of the angels; but is only realized by the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ³.

(Father Severian, bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ We actually see heaven through the eyes of faith, preparing for it by a zealous spirit⁴.

(Father Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ We may reach that divine revelation through an elaborate meditation in the heavenlies, as we do the physical and mental practices, to be able to receive the unutterable eternal glory, which separates us from this world, and from our thinking in it. By this we may realize the hope set before us, and securely abide in it⁵.

(St. (Mar.) Isaac the Syrian)

¹ *Commentary on Colossians Cf. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scriptures (ACCS).*

² *EP. TO Ephess. 1: 1: 4, 18. On his brother Satyrus, 2: 124.*

³ *Severian of Gabala: Pauline Commentary from the Creek Church., (Accs).*

⁴ *Interpretation of the letter to the Colossians (ACCS).*

⁵ *Homilies, 43. (ACCS).*

- ❖ We do not have hope in Christ, only in this life, where even the wicked can do more than the good, where the doers of more evil are happier, and the doers of more iniquity live richer¹.

(Father Maximus, bishop of Turin)

“Which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth” (6)

What they have received from Epaphras was ‘the truth’, or ‘the truth of the gospel’, namely, the joyful truth of good news; the truth that, being preached, gives heavenly joy. This good news is presented to the whole world, and not to a particular category of people *“as it has also in all the world”* (6); The joyful evangelic truth before which no diverse worldly culture, nor any particular race, could stand; for it is a steadily fruitful plantation, if planted in good soil (Matthew 13: 23); *“It is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth”* (6).

Indeed *“Men loved darkness rather than light”* (John 3: 19). Yet, truth will abide in those who enjoy it; they will not be able to hold it back inside themselves, without testifying to it; the true practical longing for man to experience the joy of the evangelic salvation. That was the experience of the prophet Jeremiah who said: *“The word pf the Lord was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name’. But His word was in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not”* (Jeremiah 20: 8-9). This is the fire of the Holy Spirit which burns the heart with the joyful love, which would never be held back, but would unceasingly flow.

- ❖ Faith is not only known all over the world, but grows every day ...; and grows as well in your depths².

(Father Theodor, bishop of Messisa)

¹ Maximus of Turin; Sermon 96: 1 (ACCS).

² ACCS.

- ❖ The fruit of the gospel refer to those who listen, then respond to it by living a life worthy of commendation¹.

(Father Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ Although the gospel at the time of the apostle, has not yet extended to the whole world, he says it will definitely grow and will give fruit. Even though it is now hidden from us, yet it is certain that the ultimate end will not come before the whole world gets filled with the fruits and growth of the church².

(St. Augustine)

According to **the scholar Tertullian**, while opposing the heresy of Mercion: [Whatever the heretics will do, our gospel will extend all over the world, and not their gospel³]. And according to **St. Augustine**: [Steadfast hope in the enjoyment of the whole world of the gospel, is realized according to the words of the Son of God Himself, saying: “*You shall be witness to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1: 8) ⁴].

- ❖ Honor, love, and praise the holy church, your mother the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, in this faith you receive, that bears fruits and extends all over the world; “*the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Timothy 3: 15) ⁵.

(St. Augustine)

“as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the spirit” (7, 8)

Here, the apostle presents to us the following practical steps to ascend to the enjoyment of the gladness and strength of

¹ ACCS.

² *Letters*, 199: 12-51.

³ *Against Narcion*, 5: 19.

⁴ *Letters*, 185: 1-5.

⁵ *Sermons*, 214: 11.

salvation, or to get the experience of glory; that ladder which is befitting of us to climb¹:

1- Thanksgiving, together with fervent prayers for the sake of every believer in the church to enter into glory (9).

2- To be filled with the will of God (Knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding).

3- Walking with joy, as is befitting of the children of God (10).

4- Continuous growth in work and spiritual knowledge (10); namely, in the increasing fruit.

5- The glorious experience of God's strength, working in us.

6- Perception of the life of conquest over the devil.

7- Entrance into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

8- In Christ, we enjoy the gladness of redemption and the forgiveness of sins

c- What Paul the apostle prays for the sake of the Colossians;

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (9)

Having heard that the Colossians have received faith on the hands of Epaphras, St. Paul and St. Timothy, not only presented thanksgiving to God, and their souls exulted with His praise (1); they also felt a commitment toward them, namely, the perpetual prayers and supplication for their sake, to ascend the ladder of joyful salvation without ceasing, which is set, not upon ignorance, but upon being continuously filled with the will of God, the enjoyment of the heavenly wisdom, and the true spiritual understanding. This role in the ministry of the apostle Paul for all the peoples, is so vital, that he says: *“I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 3: 14).

St. Paul often refers to himself as a man of prayers for the sake of the salvation of men, which does not stop at wishing for

¹ راجع الدكتور يوسف سلامة: كولوسي.

their salvation, but he even bows his knees, and supplicates with his heart, mind, and his whole being for their sake. Commenting on this, father Marius Victorinus says: [By bowing our knees we realize the perfect appearance of prayer and supplication. We are committed to pray, not only with our minds, but also with our body. We bow our knees, to wipe out any tendency in us toward haughtiness or pride¹].

According to **St. John Chrysostom**, St. Paul the apostle repeats the word “all”, for the believers to perceive that they are committed to persist on perpetual growth until they reach (all) wisdom, and, with (all) pleasure and joy, practice every good deed.

Getting filled with the knowledge of God’s will, means the perception of the secret of Christ, who, alone, knows the Father, and proclaims His knowledge to whom He chooses. The believer should not cease seeking until he get the fullness of knowledge, through his perception of the secret of Christ; of all wisdom, uniting with Christ, the Wisdom of God; and of all spiritual understanding, led by the Holy Spirit, to enter into the bosom of the Father.

- ❖ It is the will of God that we know Him, and to know that we would not be saved through the angels, but only through Jesus Christ. We shall know this, only by the spiritual, and not by the temporal wisdom².

(Father Severian, bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ As there is no consummation of blessing, except by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle could find nothing better to wish for us than that, saying: “*We do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord*” (9, 10). We know that it is the will of God, that, by walking in good works, words, and

¹ Marius Victorinus, *On. Eothes. 1: 3: 14.*

² ACCS.

feelings, we would get filled with the will of God, who puts His Holy Spirit in us¹.

(St. Ambrose)

“That you may have a walk (behavior) worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (10)

The apostle seeks from us to translate our faith to a living behavior, which is not a mere commitment to social virtues, but is rather a unique one:

1- ***“A walk (behavior) worthy of the Lord”*** (10), which we practice as children of God, icons of Christ, bearing the Spirit of the Lord in us, motivated by being the ambassadors of Christ, bearing the stewardship of heaven.

2- ***“Fully pleasing Him”***. Through such a behavior, we see in the narrow road of the cross, the pleasure of God, and our pleasure as well, sharing with our Christ His cross, and enjoying the fellowship of the divine nature.

3- ***“Being fruitful in every good work”***. Not just in the material *and* mental giving to others, but in practicing the work of the Lord, who, through His love for all mankind, has laid His life for the salvation of the world; *“Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men”* (3: 23).; Whether we eat or drink, would be to the glory of God; In our sleep, our heart should be alert; Our life, with all big and little things, should bear the touch of the Holy Spirit to the account of the kingdom of God.

❖ We were commanded to do good, in the saying: *“Depart from evil, and do good”* (Psalm 37: 27). But we have to pray to do good, *“We do not cease to pray and ask ...”* (9). Among the things Paul asks for, he says: *“You may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work”* (10). Having known the role played by the will, when we were given this command, I wish we also know the role played by the divine grace, when we present these supplications².

¹ *Of the Holy Spirit, 1: 7: 89.*

² *Letters, 177: 105.*

(St. Augustine)

“Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy” (11)

The divine commandment may seem difficult, and the way of the cross may seem extremely narrow; but walking along it together with our crucified Christ, we experience the power and joy of His resurrection (Ephesians 1: 19-20). We practice the longsuffering, which is not our own, but is the work of God in us; and we rejoice and exult, on account of that we bear the fellowship of His features; the experience of the apostles

who, *“when they were beaten, they departed rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name”* (Acts 5: 40-41).

Talking about the city of God, **St. Augustine** clarifies that God allows for those on their the way to the city of God, to pass through hardships, afflictions, and opposition of people against them; yet He arms them with perseverance and longsuffering, to support them on the way¹.

- ❖ *“You, therefore, must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2 Timothy 2: 3) ... If it is counted as a great honor to serve an earthly kings, and to endure hardship as his soldier, What would be expected of the soldier of Jesus Christ²?!.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The true soldiers of Christ are committed to be perpetually strongholds for the truth, and never to allow for any vain seductions to crawl to their souls³.

(The scholar Origen)

“Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light” (12)

¹ Cf. *City of God* 15: 6.

² *Hom on 2 Tim*, 4.

³ *Comm.. On John* 6: 32.

According to **St. John Chrysostom**, this saying conforms to the nature of God, who, has not only given us the inheritance, but qualified us for it as well. As an example he says that, choosing a governor on a certain province, the earthly king would qualify him through training to do his job efficiently; otherwise, he would probably fail in a sorrowful way.

Calling it an inheritance, is on account of that it is not acquired through self-effort or abilities, but it is like a gift given by a father to His children as an inheritance.

“in the light”. This inheritance is in Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and the Lamp of the higher Jerusalem. For *“the new Jerusalem has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God illuminates it, and the Lamb is its light; and the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light”* (Revelation 21: 23-24). It is the divine light that shines its splendor on His believers, to become, themselves, illuminating stars. *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever”* (Daniel 12: 3). *“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Matthew 13: 43).

According to **St. Augustine**, presenting thanks to the Father who qualified us for the fellowship in the inheritance of the saints, is a sign that it is through the will of God, and not through our own will¹.

- ❖ The great amphitheater is full to capacity with spectators who will come to watch your strife and martyrdom, the way they watch wrestlers competing for championships.... So will the whole world, all the angels, on the right and on the left, as well as men, the portion of God (Deuteronomy 32: 9), they will all come to watch us wrestling for the sake of Christianity. ... Yes indeed, angels in heaven will exult, and the rivers will clap their hands; ... But the hosts from down below, who rejoice in evil, will definitely not rejoice².

(The scholar Origen)

¹ Letters, 217- 1: 3.

² Exhortation to Martyrdom, 18.

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son” (13)

On a negative aspect, He transfer us from the bondage of darkness that corrupted our insight; And on a positive aspect, He brings us forth to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Being the children of light, He takes us away from among the team who bear enmity to God, the kingdom of darkness, to the team of light and unity with God.

The word “*power*”, in Greek, means (legal right); for on him, who gives his back to the light and cast himself willingly in the pit of darkness, the kingdom of darkness will have legal rights to conform him according to its features and corrupt nature; and the devil, as the prince of darkness, will have the legal right to seek and enslave his soul to the account of his kingdom.

- ❖ ***“He has delivered us from the power of darkness”***. Namely, from the tyranny of the devil. He said “the power of darkness, on account of that the darkness has indeed great power on us. It is difficult for us to be under the devil, and would be more difficult to be under his power. ***“and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son”***. Namely, He not only saved us from the darkness, but He showed as well His love for mankind¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The angels of God, before, and in the law, have ministered for the sake of our salvation; Yet, God did not bring us forth into His kingdom through them; but through our Lord, His only-begotten Son..

(Severian, bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ According to the statement of Paul, who showed that God is the Creator of everything, it is not the law, but the Lord Christ who bore the law, who granted us salvation through the saving baptism;

(Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

¹ Explanatory notes for the Ep. To Colossians, hom, 2, PG 62: 337.

❖ From these words we understand that there is only one King who created the whole universe; While, on the other side, there is the ruler of this world, who calls himself the prince of the power of darkness. Tens of thousands of angels minister to the true King; while, tens of thousands of demons surround the prince of the power of darkness (13). The principalities, the rulers, and the virtues follow the King of kings and the Lord of Lords. *Then comes the end, when Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power, For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet*” (1 Corinthians 15: 24, 25) ¹.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

❖ Nothing would save man from this power of the evil angels except the grace of God about which the apostle says: “*Who delivered us from the power of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son*” (13). .

The story of Israel clarifies this portrait, as they were saved from the power of the Egyptians, and were transferred into the kingdom of the promised land, that flows of milk and honey, in reference to the sweetness of the grace².

(St. Augustine)

“*He transferred us*”. According to St. Augustine, The crossover or Passover of the Israeli people from Egypt through the Red Sea; was a “transfer”. We, as well, are transferred or cross over from the devil to Christ, and from the mortal world to the steadfast kingdom. Here, the apostle praises God for this grace given to us³.... We are saved, and we deny the devil; shall we not strive so as not to fall again in his hands⁴?!

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (14)

¹ Homilies on Song of Songs, 14. ترجمة الدكتور جورج نزار

² On the Psalms, 77: 30.

³ St. Augustine: Tractates on John, 55:1.

⁴ Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 59: 1.

According to **the scholar Origen**, the Lord Christ delivered Himself to the enemy in Hades to redeem His believers; There, the enemy assumed that he could take hold of Him, but he did not perceive that Christ, alone, could break down the gates of Hades, not to set forth through them on His own, but to carry on His arms the captives, and to bring them forth into the bosom of the Father. The apostle says: “*When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men*” (Ephesians 4: 8). He purchased us with His blood, and restored us into His bosom.

And according to **St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian**, when the Word became a Lamb, the devil wolf intended to devour Him, which he did; yet his stomach could not keep hold of Him, the divine Lamb tore it open, but saved those who were in it.

- ❖ The word “*redemption*” refers to the ransom given to an enemy to save the captives, and to redeem them to their freedom. That is why, when humanity fell captive through their enemy, the Son of God, “*who became for us, (not only) wisdom from God – and righteous and sanctification, (but also) redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1: 30), came and delivered Himself a ransom for us; Namely, He delivered Himself to our enemies, and poured His blood on those who thirst for it; by which the “*redemption*” was realized for the believers¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Christ is “Redemption”; having delivered Himself an atonement to our account; when He granted us the gift of non-mortality to acquire. He redeemed us from death by His life².

(St. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ God, not only made us wise, righteous, and saints, in Christ, but He, as well, granted us Christ Himself, so as to need nothing concerning our salvation³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *Commentary on Rom, 3: 24.*

² *On Perfection.*

³ *Hom. On Corinth., 5: 4.*

- ❖ A person who anticipates redemption is a captive under the authority of an enemy. We, therefore are captives in this world, bound by the yoke of servitude to the principalities and powers; helpless to set our hands free from shackles. Hence we lift our eyes up high, anticipating the coming of a Redeemer¹.

(St. Jerome)

2- A PRAISE FOR THE LORD CHRIST, THE PRINCE OF OUR SALVATION:

a- The Lord Christ is the origin of all creation:

Paul the apostle quoted this praise pertaining to the Person of the Lord Christ, the Prince of our salvation, which sings praise for His position, through which He presents to us His divine possibilities. Whether the apostle quoted this praise as it is, or he is its author, or gave it his interpretation and Theological touches, It is considered one of the most prominent pieces that came in the New Testament about the Person of the Lord Christ.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (15)

“He is the image of the invisible God” (15). If sin has denied man the vision of the glory of God, the incarnate Word came, not to provide us with theoretical mental doctrines concerning the glory of God, but to wipe out the sin, to split the veil, and to restore to us the right to see God through the cross. When the Lord Christ shined with His divine light on Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus, his physical eyes were blinded; but his inner insight opened up to see the true light. This same experience was enjoyed by the apostles Peter, James, and John, on Mount Tabor, *“when the Lord Christ transfigured before them, His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light”* (Matthew 17: 1-5).

The word *“image”*, an (icon) in Greek, refers to the complete visible proclamation of the invisible God; by Him, who bears the nature of His essence and the image of His splendor;

¹ Ep. To Ephes. 1 (1: 7).

which the Lord said about Himself: *“He who saw me has seen the Father”*.

The Lord Christ, the incarnate Word, came to realize the wish He has put deep in the heart of man, namely, the longing to see God. It was the heart desire of the prophet Moses, after all those amazing things he has seen, to say to the Lord: *“Please, show me Your glory”* (Exodus 33: 18); And that of David the psalmist who says: *“When I will go to the altar of God; (toward the face) of God my exceeding joy”* (Psalm 43: 4 LXX). It is even the pleasure of God Himself, to be seen by His beloved man, as He used to do with Adam in paradise at the time of the evening breeze (Genesis 3: 8-9). He ultimately came to let man enjoy the fellowship with Him on earth, to carry him forth by the cross into the bosom of the Father, to enjoy the divine vision forever.

- ❖ There may be conformity between the image of an earthly father and that of his children, regardless of the difference in age. Yet, with God, the difference of time does not exist; For we cannot imagine that God the Father has begotten the Son in a certain time, He through whom time was created. That is why the Son is not just the image of God, for He is of Him, according to His image. Here, the likeness is great, on account of the absence of any time distinction to come in between them¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Let us meditate before anything else in the thing called ‘image’, according to the human sense. This term could be used to describe a painting or a sculpture of wood or stone. And is sometimes used to express the great likeness of a child to his father or mother ... As to the Son of God, His image could best be expressed by saying: *“He is the visible image of the invisible God”*².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ The regular image is a still image of a movable being. But here, we have a living Image of a living Being, and although distinct

¹ *Three Different Questions*, 74.

² *De principiis*, 1: 2: 6.

from Him, yet it conforms to its Origin to a higher level than between Adam and his children¹.

(St. Gregory the Nezianzen)

- ❖ The Lord proclaims: “*If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me*” (John 10: 37). By this He teaches that, as He consummates the works of the Father, He is seen in Him; that the power of the perceived nature proclaims that of the unperceived. When, therefore, the apostle Paul says: “... who *is the image of the invisible God*”;by whom He reconciles all to Himself, He means that He is the image of God by the power of those works².

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitier)

- ❖ He calls the Lord Christ the “*the image of the invisible God*”, not that God becomes visible in Him, but rather because the greatness of God appears in Him. On one aspect, we see the invisible nature of God in Christ as an image; namely, He is begotten from God ... And will judge the whole earth when He appears in the nature befitting of Him in His second coming. For our sake, therefore, He took upon Himself the state of the visible “image”, that belongs to the earthly Jesus, in His human form, so that we can refer to His divine nature.

(Father Theodor, bishop of Messisa)

- ❖ Being Himself, the image of the invisible God, the non-corrupted, let Him shine on you as in the mirror of the law. Confess Him in the law, to be able to recognize Him in the gospel³.

(St. Ambrose)

To reveal the goal of the divine incarnation, and to deal with the heresies of the Gnostics, some of whom called for worshipping the angels as intermediaries, ions, or intercessors, who, they claim would bring the believers forth to the true knowledge of the supreme Being; While others claim that there is

¹ *Orations*, 30: 20.

² *On The Trinity*, 8: 49.

³ *Letters*, 20

contradiction between God of the old covenant and that of the new; the apostle Paul used the expression, “*image of the invisible God*”, to confirm that the Lord Christ is the incarnate Word, the Creator, by whom, and for whose sake, everything has been, in whom all creation are set; And that, having incarnated, and proclaimed by the cross the divine love, is capable of proclaiming the knowledge of the Father. We see the Father, and perceive His secrets in the incarnate Son, as in an image, not hard, but living, capable of revealing the Father.

“*the firstborn over all creation*” (15)

Calling Him “*the firstborn (or prince) over all creation*”, does not mean that He is one of the exalted creatures; But that, having incarnated, He became through His own choice, a Brother, to embrace all creation to Himself, and to bring them forth into the bosom of His Father; and that He, alone, by His blood, is capable of consummating the reconciliation between the Father and humanity.

According to **St. Athanasius the apostolic**, it was never mentioned in the Holy Scripture, that the Lord Christ is “the firstborn from God”, nor “a creature by God”; but it was written that He is “the only-begotten”, “the Son Word”, and “the Wisdom”; all of which touch the relationship between the second and the first Persons of divinity. As to calling Him “*the firstborn over all creation*”, it concerns His condescendence for the sake of the creation¹.

“*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him*” (16)

As “*He is before all things, and in Him all things were created*” (17), He, therefore, is not a creation, but the Creator of creation. Calling Him the firstborn, is not that He is as such from the Father, but because, by Him, all creation came to existence; and He is the only-begotten Son of the Father.

¹ *Discourses Against Arians, 2: 21 (63).*

“In, by, and for Him all things were created”, namely, that within the mental ordinance of the Son; or through the Wisdom of God, the Son, the Word and the Wisdom, they were created. By Him the plan of creation was realized, when God said, and it was. *“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”* (John 1: 3).

It is a confirmation that in Him, all things were created, ... whether thrones or dominions or to confirm the importance of discerning between the Creator, and even the most exalted among the heavenly creation (16), ... He is not one of them, nor are they partners with Him in the intermediation or atonement intercession, and in lifting man to the bosom of the Father.

St. Paul had to confirm and reconfirm that all creation – whether in heaven or on earth – owe their existence to the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ; so that the believers would be sure that there is no point of comparison between the Lord Christ and the angels; contrary to the wrong assumption by those who claim the intermediation of the angels between God and mankind, without the Lord Christ.

❖ *“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”* (John 1: 3). There is no exception to this *“all”*. The Father made everything through Him, visible and invisible, the sensed and the mental, the temporary and the eternal. All have been made, not by angels, nor by any other power, separate from His ordinance¹.

(St. Erinaos)

❖ If there was anything before the Son, it would instantly follow that all things in heaven or on earth have not been created in Him, and the apostle would be wrong in what he wrote in his epistle. ... Anyway, I wonder how could it be said that He, who was born before the ages, came after the existence of anything²!

(St. Ambrose)

¹ *Adv. Haer. 22: 1.*

² *Of The Christian Faith, 4: 100.*

- ❖ There is no doubt that all things are by the Son, according to the words: “*All things were made through Him*”. If all things came from nothing; with no exception, I wonder how could He lack anything of the nature and the power of Divinity; when He used the power of His nature to create those things, the object of His pleasure, which never existed before¹?

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers)

- ❖ Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, the Creator of the world, For, as we are taught by the gospel: “*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him*”, and “*He came to His own*” (John 1: 10, 11). According to the command of the Father, Christ created, not only the visible, but the invisible things as well; the apostle says: “*By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*” (16, 17).

Even if I talk about the (worlds), Jesus Christ is their Creator as well, by the command of the Father, as “*He in these last days has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the (worlds)*” (Hebrew 1: 2). He, to whom is the glory, the honor, the might, now, and forever, Amen².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ The Word of God did not exist for our sake, but we rather exist for His, and by Him all things were made. It is not because our weakness that He was strong, and came from the Father, to create us through Him as a tool, Far from it to be like that! For, even if God did not choose to create creation, the Word, though, has been with God, and the Son was in Him. At the same time, it was impossible for the creatures to be without the Word, for they exist by Him. And as the Son is the Word Himself, according to the nature concerning the Essence of God, and He

¹ *On the Trinity, 5: 4.*

² مقالات لطالبي العماد 11 : 24.

is from, and in Him, as He says Himself, Hence it would not be possible for the creation to exist except by Him. For, like the light which shines on everything with its radiation, without which everything would be in the dark, the Father, likewise created all things by the Word, as though by a hand, without which nothing would be created¹.

(St. Athanasius the apostolic)

“whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, All things were created through Him and for Him” (16)

According to **St. Anthony the Great**, there are different kinds of angels and demons.

- ❖ They were given different names according to their kinds. Some angels are called ‘archangels’, ‘thrones’, ‘principalities’, ‘dominions’, and ‘powers’. These names were given them when they kept the will of their Creator.

On the other side, the evil of the others made it necessary to call them by other names: they are called ‘demons’, ‘evil spirits’, ‘unclean spirits’, ‘princes of this world’, etc².

(St Anthony the Great)

- ❖ As I already said, If the Word is a creature, it would not be necessary for Him to be the foremost among the other hosts, even though He surpasses them in glory; the way we may find in the other hosts, which, although all were created at the same time, yet there is no first and second among them; they may differ in glory, as some of them stand on the right side of the throne, some around it, some on its left side; yet they all sing praise together, and minister to God³.

(St. Athanasius the apostolic)

¹ *St Athanasius: Discourses Against Arians, Book 2: 18: 31.* ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة.

² الرسالة السادسة

³ *St Athanasius: Discourses Against Arians, Book 2.* .79 ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة، ص

According to **St. Dionysius the Areopagite**, there are nine heavenly ranks, he divides into three categories¹, each includes three ranks;

(1) The first category includes the ‘thrones’, the cherubim, and the Seraphim, full of eyes, and have many wings, who dwell eternally and perpetually stand in the presence of God; more attached to him, and above all the other ranks. These; Although equal in rank, yet they are more perfect than others in their direct union with the first light of the Godhead.

(2) The second category includes the ‘powers’, ‘dominions’, and ‘virtues’.

(3) The third category includes the ‘angels’, the ‘archangels’, and the ‘principalities’.

According to ‘Ben Ebri’², these three categories are analogous to three heavenly churches:

(1) The first church includes the ‘seraphim’, the ‘cherubim’, and the ‘thrones’; these three ranks together represent the divine throne. In the book of Ezekiel, we see the ‘seraphim’ as the chariot carrying God. And in the psalms we read: “He who sits on the ‘cherubim’”, they are the throne of God.

(2) The second church includes the ‘virtues’’, the ‘powers’, and the ‘dominions’.

(3) The third church includes the ‘principalities’, the ‘archangels’, and the ‘angels’.

In the Old Testament we read that the high priest used to put on a breastplate carrying 12 precious stones, nine of which represent the angelic hosts, which are:

The first row includes a red sardius, representing the fiery seraphim; a yellow topaz, representing the knowledgeable cherubim, and an emerald, representing the thrones.

The second row includes a turquoises, a blue sapphire, and a white diamond.

The third row includes a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst.

¹ *Dionysius the Areopagite Celestial Hierarchy*, 6.

² ركن 5، الباب 2، فصل 1، مقصد 1، 2.

The fourth row, representing the church of mankind, joining the heavenly churches, includes a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper, referring to the ranks of priesthood: the high priests: the priests, and the deacons.

“And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (17)

“In Him all things hold together”. The Son was not a mere tool to realize the creation, but, being their Lord, who loves, and cares for them, works continuously for the sake of their dynamic, *“upholding all things by the word of His power”* (Hebrew 1: 3), To Him is offered the heavenly praise, saying: *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For You created all things, and by You they will exist, and were created”* (Revelation 4: 11). All things submit to Him, And through His divine power, perpetually creating, the creation enjoy continuity. He is Almighty, who ordains everything; nothing in this world or in this life runs haphazardly, but is under the control of Christ.

- ❖ If the creation was created through the Son, and ***“in Him all things hold together”*** (17), he who meditates in the creation in the upright way, will necessarily see the Word who created it, and through the Word, he will start perceiving the Father¹.
- ❖ He was not called ‘firstborn’, meaning (equal) to the other creatures, or preceding them time-wise, for how would this be, when He is truly the only-begotten?. But, because of the condescendence of the Word, He became a Brother to many. ... He definitely is “an only begotten”, for He is alone with no other brothers; And He is the “firstborn” among other brothers ... Now, if He is a “firstborn”, he would not be an “Only begotten” (1 John 4: 9); For He could not be “Only begotten” and a “Firstborn” at the same time, unless this refers to two different things. ... He is “Only begotten” because of being born from the Father, and “firstborn” because of His condescendence to be a Brother to many ... He is bound to the creation, referred to by

¹ Adv. Arian. 1: 4: 12. ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة

the apostle Paul, saying: “*By Him all things were created*” (16). If all creation were created through Him, He, therefore, should be different than all creation, and would never be a creature, but the Creator of creatures¹.

- ❖ “*In Him all things hold together*”. It is obvious that the Son could not be a “work”, but He is God’s Hand and His Wisdom².
(St. Athanasius the apostolic)

b- The Lord Christ is the Head of the church:

“*And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence*” (18)

“*And*”, here, as conjunction, clarifies that the care of the Lord Christ for the world, is set upon His love for humanity, desiring to see it all as His one unified church, being His body, to which He is the head.

He cares for the world, and allows for all kinds of temptations, for the benefit and the purity of the church, and her enjoyment of the fellowship of His glory. All events, including the sufferings and the joys, work together for the edification of the church, the kingdom of God on earth, to realize her mission as the light of the world, and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5: 13-15).

Being His one body, He flows on her (the church) with His abilities, and possibilities, being Himself, Holy, Righteous, the Wisdom of God, the Word of God, the Life, and the resurrection; to become the secret of her sanctity, righteousness, wisdom, enjoyment of the truth, as well as of the risen life. He is her spiritual food, which the apostle means by saying: “*For no one ever hated hates own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does His church*” (Ephesians 5: 29); and, “*It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2: 13).

¹ Adv. Arian. 2: 21: 62. ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة

² Adv. Arian. 2: 21: 71. ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة

“The firstborn from the dead” (18). This does not mean that He died like every man, but He received death in His mortal body; through His own will, to destroy death by His death. And once He is risen, He became “the Preeminent”, the first to rise with no going back to death, and without being affected by the corruption that dwelt upon us because of sin. The Lord Christ put on our nature, to carry ours in Him; and put on our death, without being stricken in His body by the darts of the corruption associated with death. By that, He granted us the right of resurrection, and the enjoyment of its power, having become our firstborn, and brought us forth as children to glory (Hebrew 2: 10), Being the resurrection, He granted His own body the experience of resurrection, although it was not possible for corruption to dwell upon His body, on account of that it is One with His Godhead. This experience He received in Himself, to preeminent in everything. He presents His experience to us to live; so that the resurrection, the heavenly glories, and the eternity, would not be for us, mere promises, but facts which we see in Him, having preceded us.

“He is the beginning” (18)

The word “beginning”, in Greek, is derived from (Arche), which bears two meanings: (priority) and (preeminence). The Lord Christ is the beginning of creation, meaning, He is its origin, *“In the beginning was the Word, ... All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”* (John 1: 1-3).. And He is the beginning of the church, namely, He is the origin of the new creation.

“that in all things He may have the preeminence” (18)

“Having emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, and being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross; Therefore God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2: 7-11).

- ❖ Being in whom everything was created, He is described here as the Head of the church, which was found in His body through the new spiritual birth, and which bears the form of the resurrection to come, of which we hope to partake with Him as partners in eternity, as we get baptized¹.

(Father Theodor, bishop of Messisa)

- ❖ Christ is the Head of the church, and the firstborn of those who have fallen asleep, through His Manhood; Here, Paul crosses over from talking about the divinity, to meditating in the ordinance of salvation².

(Father Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ We Christians, know that resurrection already happened to our Head; although in the rest of the body members it did not happen yet. The Head of the Church is Christ; and the members of Christ are the church. What happened to the Head, will consequently happen to the members of the body. That is our hope, and our faith; for whose sake we endure and persist amid the suppressions of this stubborn world, hoping for the comfort, and believing that hope will be transformed into fact³.

- ❖ *“If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you; He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in You”* (Romans 8: 11). That is why, the catholic church, navigating through this mortal life, anticipates at the end of time, what first appeared in the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, He who is *“the firstborn of those who have fallen asleep”*; on account of that the church is His body, and He is her Head⁴.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Being Man, *“He is the firstborn of those who have fallen asleep”*; For *“He loosed the pain of death”*, and gave to

¹ ACCS

² ACCS

³ *Commentary on the Psalms, 66: 1.*

⁴ *Letters, 55: 2-3.*

everyone the sweet hope in the life to come. Being Man, He suffered; but being God, He remained unchanged¹.

(Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ You certainly know that many have been born anew, that He became “*the firstborn among many brothers*” (Romans 8: 29); that “*He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*” (18); that “*He loosed the pains of death*”, and ordained the birth from the dead by His resurrection (see Acts 2: 24)².

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- ❖ That also supports our confession; While it is the natural and true body which is risen, yet it is risen free and purified of any corruption, according to the words of the apostle: “*It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body*” (1 Corinthians 15: 42-44). Being, therefore, a spiritual, glorious, and un-corrupted body, it is provided and adorned with members befitting of Him, not with members taken from another place; according to the glorious portrait, shown by Christ as a perpetual model, for the sake of our hope in resurrection, being the firstborn of those who have fallen asleep, and the Head of all creation³.

(Rophinius, bishop of Aquila)

- ❖ Christians will reign together with the heavenly King in the heavenly church; being “*the firstborn from the dead*” (18); Although they are firstborns as well, and they are chosen and well received before God; yet it is their second nature to consider themselves the least of all, unworthy, and as good as nothing⁴!

(St. Maccarius the Great)

¹ *Demonstrations by Syllogisms, Proof that the Divinity of the Savior is impassible.*

² *Homilies on Song of Songs, 13.* ترجمة الدكتور جورج نوار

³ *Rufinius of Aquileia: Apology for Origen, 1: 6-7.*

⁴ *Homilies, 27: 4.* ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة

❖ He is called “*the only begotten Son*”, according to the testimony of the Holy Scripture that, “*He is the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father*” (John 1: 18). But when He is called by the Holy Scripture: “*the firstborn*”, they directly add the reason, by saying: “*that He might be the firstborn among many brethren*” (Romans 8: 29). And He is also called: “*the firstborn from the dead*” (18). The former title, is on account of that He became like us in everything, except for sin; And the later one is on account of that He was the first to raise His body to a state of non-corruption¹.

(St. Cyril the Great)

❖ “Golgotha” is translated, by a prophetic spirit, as (the location of the skull); on account of that there, Christ, the true “Head” has endured crucifixion. The apostle says: “*He is the image of the invisible God*” (15); then follows up by saying: “He is the Head of the body of the church” (18). The apostle also says: “*The head of every man is Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11: 3); and, “*He is the Head of all principality and power*” (2: 10).

The head suffered (in the location of the skull). What a prophetic statement!

It is as though, that location says to you: [Do not think that He, who was crucified here, was merely a man; for He is “*the Head of all principality*”, whose Head is God the Father; for: “*The Head of every man is Christ; and the Head of Christ is God*” (1 Corinthians 11: 3)².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

c- In the Lord Christ, all the fullness should dwell:

“*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell*” (19)

It was the pleasure of God the Father that the Son Word should incarnate, and become a perfect man, while still being the perfect God “*the fullness of Godhead*”.

¹ Comm.. on The Gospel of Saint Luke, Sermon 1 . ترجمة: دكتور نصحي عبد الشهيد.

² مقالات لطالبي العماد 13: 23.

“It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell”.(19). For having become man, and the Godhead united with Manhood, His divinity did not change, nor Manhood separated from Him. But He proclaims that whoever unites with Him will enjoy fullness in everything; he will not become God, but will bear of the features of the incarnate Word, what renews his nature, through the work of His Holy Spirit, to be qualified for the heavenly glory. As according to **St. Athanasius the apostolic**, the Word of God, becoming Man, remained God; And He grants man the fellowship of His features, and remains Man.

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, his followers, and his disciple ‘Nestor’, misinterpreting this phrase, assumed that the Lord Christ carries two personalities: He is Jesus the Man, in whom the fullness of Godhead later dwelt, to become the full God; as though there was time, however long it was, when Jesus has been Man without the Godhead.

Responding to this misinterpretation, St. Cyril the Great clarified that there was never a time, even for the twinkle of an eye, when Godhead has been without Manhood. It would be unacceptable to believe in two natures of Christ: Godhead and Manhood, during any lapse of time.. The union between the Godhead and Manhood of the Lord Christ has been realized at the instant of incarnation with no time lapse separating between them¹.

❖ In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul calls the church “*the fullness*”; on account of that she is filled with divine talents. Through God’s care, you dwell in Christ, you are bound to Him, you are under His authority, and you follow His law².

(Father Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

❖ Concerning His Godhead, the Son of God has His own glory; As the glory of the Father and the Son is One, the Son is not less

¹ راجع للمؤلف: الاصطلاحان طبيعة وأقنوم في الكنيسة الأولى، 1987؛ طبيعة المسيح حسب مفهوم الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية غير الخلقونية.

² ACCS

exalted than the Father, nor less in Godhead, “*For in Christ the fullness of Godhead dwells*”¹.

(St. Ambrose)

3- THE ROLE OF THE LORD CHRIST, THE PRINCE OF OUR SALVATION:

a- The Lord Christ reconciled us with His blood:

“And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (20)

As sin entered into the life of man, it corrupted his nature, to bear enmity toward God, that went so far that man sometimes could not endure faith even in the existence of God, but fights and opposes Him; and even replaces Him with creatures. And if he happen to believe in God’s existence, he does not keep His commandment, denies His care, and counts Him as enslaving him, limiting his freedom, and depriving him of his personality. “*Every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Genesis 6: 5).

As it was not possible for man to seek reconciliation on his side, but persisted on turning his back to God, and not his face (Jeremiah 2: 27), God set His own plan for reconciliation by the cross, “*thereby putting to death the enmity*” (Ephesians 2: 16).

1- By the cross, God proclaimed His initiation of love without limit.

2- By the cross, God put to death the enmity, and broke down the middle wall of division between Him and man, as well as between man and his neighbor (Ephesians 2: 14-17).

3- By the cross, God gave man the possibility to enjoy the nature of love.

Heaven reconciled with earth; as the man of dust could put on non-corruption, and dwell in the bosom of the Holy heavenly Father.

And man reconciled with the angels, who for long have longed to see the salvation of men, to whom they were a multitude of times dispatched by heavenly messages from God. As

¹ *Of the Christian Faith*, 2: 9: 82.

messengers of love, they bore love toward man. And once the sacrifice of the cross was consummated, to them the secret hidden before time concerning the salvation of man, was revealed.

- ❖ It was necessary for my God and my Savior, not only to be born as man among men, but also to descend to Hades, as a Man, in readiness and ability to set forth a lot (portion) of atonement in the wilderness of Hades. And once He returned from there, He could ascend to the Father, having perfectly consummated His work on the heavenly altar, where He could offer the deposit of His body which He brought forth with Himself in perpetual purity. That was the true day of atonement, when God became an atonement for men; as according to the apostle: “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself*” (2 Corinthians 5: 19). And speaking about the Lord Christ, he says: “***By Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross***”¹ (20).

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Once peace started to dwell, the angels proclaimed: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace*” (Luke 2: 14). And when the lower beings received peace from the more exalted ones, they cried out: “*Glory on earth, and peace in heavens*” (see Luke 19: 38). When the Godhead descended clothed in Manhood, the angels cried out: “*On earth peace*”; And when the Manhood ascended to be swallowed by the Godhead (Without cancellation of Manhood) and to sit at the right hand of God, with “*peace in heaven*”, the little children cried out before Him, saying: “*Hosanna in the highest*” (Matthew 21: 9). Hence the apostle was committed to proclaim: “*having made peace through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven*”² (20).

(St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian)

¹ *Homilies on Leviticus, 9: 4.*

² *Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron, 14.*

❖ The true peace is high up. As long as we are bound to the body, we are carrying the yoke of many things that trouble us. Seek, therefore peace, and free yourselves from the troubles of this world. Acquire a tranquil mind and a soul, undisturbed by whims, nor drawn by vain teachings; but challenges their seductions; in order to be able to say: *“The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard (our) hearts and minds through Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 4: 7). He, who seeks peace, seeks Christ, who Himself is our peace, who has made both a new one man (Ephesians 2: 14), *“making peace through the blood of His cross, whether on things on earth or things in heaven”*¹.

(St. Basil the Great)

❖ The Savior endured all that, *“making peace through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven”* (20); Having been enemies of God through sin, and the verdict on the sinner is death; there was only one of two possibilities: Either God, in His justice would wipe out the whole humanity; Or, in His compassionate love, He would cancel the verdict.

But see the wisdom of God: keeping the verdict intact, at the same time, He realized His love! Christ came to bear our iniquities in His body on the cross, *“that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness”* (1 Peter 2: 24). He, who died for our sake was not literally a lamb, nor even a regular man, but was more exalted than an angel; He was the incarnate God.

The iniquities of men were not greater than the righteousness of Him who died because of them; were not too many compared to the righteousness of Him, who, through His own free will, put Himself, and by His own free will, He took it back².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled” (21)

¹ Homilies 16: 10.

² مقالات لطالبي العماد 13 : 33.

Stretching His arms on the cross, the Lord Christ embraced to His bosom all those who believed in Him from all peoples and nations, to carry them together with the spirit of love into the bosom of the father. Hence the apostle says: “*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*” (Ephesians 2: 19).

- ❖ By saying “*enemies in your mind*”, the apostle clarifies that the enmity on their part toward God was not out of necessity or commitment, but was “*in mind*”, and out of not wishing to return to God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Talking about God’s gifts to the Gentiles, Paul shows how they are indebted with appreciation to the grace of God. They were the enemies of His counsel by which He chose to visit mankind through His servant Moses, whose teachings they did not receive but rejected; practiced evil works, and worshipped gods, of their own handiworks².

(Ambrose)

b- The Lord Christ institutes us in His righteousness:

“... *in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight*” (22)

Having brought us forth to Himself as members in His body, we bore His features, and became saints, who have the right to stand irreproachable before the divine throne,

- ❖ Again, referring to the cross, he presents another benefit, saying: “*Through His death, He presents you holy, blameless, and irreproachable in His sight*”. He, not only saves us from sins, but justifies us as well. He endured all that, not only to save us from evil, but to reward us. It is like, not only releasing a criminal from punishment, but giving him honor. He gathers you, not only together with those without sin, but rather with

¹ St. Chrysostom: in Colos., hom 4.

² Commentary on the Letter to the Colossians.

those who have truly done great righteousness. He grants you sanctification and blamelessness in His sight¹.

(**St. John Chrysostom**)

- ❖ Intending to show to the Colossians in his epistle, that the body of Christ is material and not spiritual and ethereal, the apostle Paul said in a significant way: “*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled you in His flesh through death*” (22). And again, in the same epistle he says: “*In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh*” (2: 11)².

(**St. Jerome**)

“If indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister” (23)

In awe, **St. John Chrysostom** stands before this magnificent statement. Enjoying the death of Christ on the cross, man becomes as though in a ship, that no winds of the world could shake, but grounded and steadfast, for it is loaded with exalted divine merchandise. of which are faith and hope of the gospel³.

- ❖ What is “*hope of the gospel*”, but Christ? For He is our peace, who has done all those things ... Whoever does not believe in Christ, will lose everything⁴.

(**St. John Chrysostom**)

Wondering about how far these words are connected to the previous talk; and how he suffers for their sake, **St. John Chrysostom** responds by saying that there is a strong connection with the previous talk; showing that the apostle has clarified that the Lord Christ alone, and not the angels, did the reconciliation by His blood on the cross; and that he – Paul – as an apostle, had no

¹ *St. Chrysostom: In Colos., hom 4.*

² *Letter to Pamachius against John of Jerusalem, 27.*

³ *St. Chrysostom: In Colos., hom 4.*

⁴ *St. Chrysostom: In Colos., hom 4.*

role; for his own sufferings are the sufferings of Christ who works in and by him. He says: [See how Christ binds us to Him! ... Why do you make out of the angels intermediaries (for the reconciliation with the Father)?; He says: “*of which, I, Paul, became a minister*”... [If I am not more than a minister!]; Why would you include the angels into it¹?

c- The Lord Christ grants us joy in the midst of the sufferings:

“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and am completing in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church” (24)

St. Paul proclaims his longing for completing what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ; not His atonements afflictions, of which no one could partake; having “*gone alone through the winepress*”; which no one could present, except he who is without a sin; who is able to present as an atonement sacrifice on behalf of the whole world; but afflictions for the sake of the extension of the kingdom of God, endured by the Lord Christ dwelling in the life of His ministers and people, as being His own afflictions. That was what the Lord Christ Himself made clear to Saul of Tarsus, when He said to him: “*Why do you persecute Me?*” (Acts 9: 4), considering any persecution against the believers as though are personally against Him.

The apostle Paul was exulted in his afflictions, on account of that they are fellowship in those of Christ; and because they are necessary for the edification of the church; a divine gift granted to the ministers, as well as to the people: “*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same struggle that you saw I had, and now you hear that I still have*” (Philippians 1: 29-30).

He did not feel, in his afflictions for the sake of the church that the congregation awe him a favor, but he counts them is a necessity and a commitment on his part, considering himself a servant of the believers, saying: “*For we do not preach ourselves,*

¹ St. Chrysostom: *In Colos.*, hom 4.

but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4: 5).

- ❖ Being children, you heard that the body of the Lord Christ is the church; few are those who touch her, and many who throng and press her (see Luke 8: 45); and you also heard that "*Now you are the body of Christ and members individually*" (1 Corinthians 12: 27). If we are His body, what His body endured in the press of the crowd, the church now, though enduring pressing and thronging, few are those who touch her. She is pressed by the body, and touched by faith. I counsel you to lift your eyes up, for before you, there are things to see; lift up the eyes of faith; touching the fringe of His garment is enough to grant you health¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Because I believe that my sufferings are for His sake, I rejoice in my sufferings, looking forward to the hope to come; I suffer not for my own sake, but for yours².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ To preach to you, I am committed to suffer. As Christ is the Head of the body, troubles are developed through the word of truth for those in the church; which are naturally considered the afflictions of Christ.

(Father Severian, bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ Paul completes in his flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ; meaning, he endures the sufferings to preach salvation to the Gentiles.

(Father Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ Paul confesses that he rejoices in the sufferings he endures, on account of that he sees growth in the faith of believers. His sufferings, therefore, not being void; what he suffers is added to his life; he counts his sufferings as bound to those for Christ, by those who follow his teachings.

¹ *Sermon on N.T.lessons, 12: 5.*

² *St. Chrysostom: In Colos., hom 4.*

(Ambroseaster)

“Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God” (25)

What an amazing fatherly feeling by the apostle Paul. Although he has got the honor of fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, he considers himself a minister to the people, presented to them by God, according to His exalted stewardship; not as one of authority, but as their servant and slave.

What he practices is within God’s plan for them. He suffers, not because he is better than them, nor because he is more capable to endure the sufferings, but according to the ordinance of God toward them.

In some detail, **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this verse, showing that the apostle Paul’s ministry to the gentiles, is not according to his own choice, a favor on his part, or something that happened all of a sudden, but they were all in God’s plan, proclaimed and realized in the designated time.

d- The Lord Christ reveals to us the hidden mystery:

“The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints” (26)

Through the sufferings, the mystery which has been hidden from ages, has been revealed to him; the exalted mystery of God’s love for the whole world, a mystery that has been hidden even from the heavenlies; no heavenly rank, however exalted they are, could perceive or imagine the extent of God’s love for man. This mystery has been revealed to His saints (26), who saw and touched the work of the grace of God in the life of the Gentiles. Once they believed in salvation, it has become the subject of testimony and preaching of all, for men to enjoy the riches of the glory set for them (27); *“to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 3: 10).

❖ Having spoken about what we have reached, showing the compassion of God, and the honor in the greatness of the things

granted, he presented another aspect, namely, the exaltation of those things, that we find no one who can know Him (Christ); as he said in the epistle to the Ephesians, that not even the angels, nor the principalities or any other created power; only the Son of God can¹.

- ❖ So far, this mystery is still hidden, proclaimed only to the saints².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (27)

In the midst of His sufferings, the Lord Christ proclaims the riches of His exalted glory and His mercy, indiscriminately poured on all, Jews and Gentiles; without the least worthiness on man’s part.

By saying “*Christ in you*”, the apostle proclaims that He is closer to us than to any heavenly being. Although He is the Creator of all, yet He is inside us, and not far from us, whom we encounter directly, without need for the intermediation of (ions), as falsely claimed by the Gnostics..

He is in us, grants us everything; He is “*the hope of glory*”; In Him we enjoy the deposit of the heavenly glories; He is our wisdom, life, and hope.

In Him we perceive what we live, that in the midst of the passion of crucifixion, we are glorified in Him.

- ❖ “*The riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles*”. He became more shown among the Gentiles, according to his words to the Romans: “*that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy*” (Romans 15: 9). For although the riches of the glory of this mystery was made known among others as well, yet it was more so among the Gentiles. Those who were before harder than stones were suddenly transformed to the honor of angels. It was like taking a dog on the verge of dying out of hunger and

¹ St. Chrysostom: In Colos., hom 5.

² St. Chrysostom: In Colos., hom 5.

disease, and smelling terribly, and all of a sudden transforming it into man, and putting him on a throne. They were before on earth, but learned afterwards that they are better than heaven and the sun, and that the whole world is at their service. They were before captives of the devil, and suddenly became over his head, commanding and scourging him. They were transformed from captives and servants of the devil, to the body of the Lord of the angels and the archangels.. Do you want to know the steps they jumped?

- 1- They learned that stones are not gods.
- 2- That they are even less than men.
- 3- That they are even less than the irrational animals.
- 4- That they are even less than plants.
- 5- That they have fallen into exaggerations.

Having so perceived, in some kind of depth, they were committed to know that God is the Lord of all; to whom alone, worship is due; that the virtuous life is good; and that the present death is not death, nor the present life is life. They were committed to know that He who is above all, who has the authority over angels, principalities, and all powers, came down to earth, became Man, suffered much, resurrected and ascended back to heaven

That all is the mystery; He set together and commended, saying: “*which is Christ in you*”. So, if He is in you, why should you seek the angels¹?

(St. John Chrysostom)

e- The Lord Christ brings us forth perfect in Him:

“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (28)

The mission of St. Paul and his coworkers, was not confined to preaching and testifying to the Lord Christ as the Savior of the world, but extended to teaching by the wisdom in Christ Jesus; which no man of the wisdom of this age could reach; on account of that it is not a theoretical and philosophical wisdom,

¹ St. Chrysostom: *In Colos., hom 5.*

but is capable of carrying the believer up to an exalted perfect life – the fellowship with the divine nature. It is a wisdom, not confined to certain category of men, like the philosophers and their disciples, but presented to every man, to open his heart wide by the Holy Spirit to receive a flow of the divine love through receiving “*Christ the power and wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1: 24, 31), who is for all. This action is an unceasing perpetual movement, in the hope that the believer may reach the perfect man, the blameless icon of Christ; to cross over from childhood to complete maturity.

- ❖ We, and not the angels, teach and warn, with no haughtiness nor arrogance; which is, as well, through the compassion of God, to bring forth believers to Him, not as though to a tyrant, but through “*preaching and warning*”, like a father more than a teacher¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ “*that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*” (28); not in the law, nor in the angels, for that would not be perfection.

“*In Christ Jesus*”, namely, in the knowledge of Christ; because the thoughts of him who knows what Christ does, will be higher than him who confines himself to the angels².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily*” (29)

- ❖ If I labor for your sake, you should see how much more you are committed to labor. And again, to let them know that this is the work of God, he says: “*according to His working which works in me mightily*”³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ St. Chrysostom: *In Colos., hom 5.*

² St. Chrysostom: *In Colos., hom 5.*

³ St. Chrysostom: *In Colos., hom 5.*

**AN INSPIRATION FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE
COLOSSIANS (Chapter 1)**

LET ME ENTER BY YOU TO THE DEPTHS

- ❖ By You alone I can enter into the depths of love;
Together with the apostle Paul, my heart is wide-open with love;
I love all mankind, for You are the Lover of mankind;
With every breath, I present to You unceasing thanks, for the
sake of Your work with mankind;
And I present, as well, unceasing cry-outs;
Hoping for the salvation of all by You.
- ❖ By You I enter into the depths;
Getting in touch with You, I recognize the Father through You;
For You are the image of the invisible Father;
The image of union with Him in His same essence;
Seeing You, I see Him
Recognizing You, I get filled with the treasures of wisdom and
understanding.
- ❖ By You, I recognize You;
O Creator of all universe, and the Almighty One;
O Care-giver of everything big and small;
- ❖ When I enter into the mystery of Your church;
I discover Your leadership of her, O the Head who loves His
body;
You grant her Your Holy Spirit, to prepare her for an eternal
encounter with You;
She will truly come to be the blameless heavenly bride; without
reproach;
She will come to have the right of fellowship in Your glory, for
she is Your holy body;
Every moment, she enjoys more and more fullness;
Until she comes to be Your living icon.
- ❖ By Your blood You reconciled us to the Father;
And by Your sufferings You turned our sufferings into glories;

By Your cross You revealed the hidden divine mystery;
By Your resurrection You brought us forth to perfection.

- ❖ Grant me the grace to set me forth from depth to depth;
For, whenever I encounter You,
I become more thirsty for You.

CHAPTER 2

CHRIST IS THE HEIGHT

In the previous chapter, the apostle Paul talked to us about the greatness of the Person of the Lord Christ, and about the greatness of His work in the life of humanity; How He is the **Depth**, who brings us forth into the knowledge of the eternally hidden mystery, and who grants us the hope to enjoy the exalted heavenlies. Now, in the present chapter, he talks to us about Him, being the **Height**; For, getting established in Him, we shall never be shaken, nor shall we be in need.

He exalts us above the false traditions of men, lifts us high above the vain wisdom, the deceptive philosophies; and the Jewish letter, to enjoy the spiritual circumcision which is realized by baptism, in order to have the sonhood to the Father. He wipes out the sin and its traces in us, to make us live by His Holy Spirit, and gain the wisdom of the conquest and victory on the hosts of darkness.

The goal of writing about this issue is the enjoyment by all, of the secret of knowledge of the Father, and the Son, to gain the treasures of wisdom inside us.

So the apostle writes, and so he strives for the sake of his love for those to whom he ministers.

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1- LOVE IS THE MOTIVE, WHEREAS THE RICHES OF KNOWLEDGE IS THE GOAL:

St. Paul reveals his great interest in the church of Colosse, as in all the other churches. He longs to see the Christians steadfast and well established in faith, and to be aware of the philosophers and the deceptive law scribes. He believed that the best way to be aware of the philosophies of the world and the deadly letter of the law, is to understand the secret of Christ, for being “*all in all*”; he asks them to abide to the Word (the Logos), lest they would be swept away by the false teachers.

Some of the well known philosophers in those days were teaching that man, being not worthy of directly reaching God, he needs the angels to help him approach Him (2: 18). In that they did not perceive the greatness of the power of the Lord Christ; and that He is the only intermediary between God and men, He who says: “*I am the Way ... no one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14: 6). . St. Paul rebuked the Colossians on their failure to recognize the Person of the Lord Christ, and to perceive that He is the supreme Head of the church, and the only Intermediary between God and men.

“For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh” (1)

Being in prison did not keep St. Paul from fervently praying for their sake, and from sending them an epistle with one of his co-ministers – Tychicus – to encourage them (4: 7-8).

‘Laodicea’ was a city 10 or 12 miles far from Colosse, yet more spacious and prosperous.

The word “*struggling*” mentioned here, is translated in the Greek origin as (wrestling), used in portraying the wrestling in arenas against the fierce beasts. That was how the apostle Paul described his struggle against the false teachings, as though wrestling against fierce beasts, for the sake of his fatherhood to his congregation, he would face death to save them from vanity.

“and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh”
(1), the same way he wrote to the Corinthians, saying: “*For I*

indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit” (1 Corinthians 5: 3), by which he refers to the unity of Christians in the body of Christ – the church; where the great distance could not separate them from each other; saying “Though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (5).

- ❖ His love for every church, and his longing to solve their problems, made him present in spirit with them all (1 Corinthians 5: 3).
- ❖ I pray fervently for our friendship to be steadfast in Christ, and not to be shaken because of the far distances¹.

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ Saying: “***Many have not seen my face in the flesh***”, he intends to make it clear in a divine way, how they perpetually see him by the Holy Spirit; and that he testifies to their great love².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the mystery of the knowledge of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (2)

The heart is the throne of feelings. If the evil lusts lead the mind to rough roads, bad results, and dissensions; the comfort of the heart is realized through union together. Love, together with humility motivate us to reconcile with one another, and to bear one true thought of faith.

The subject of the struggle of the apostle Paul, pertaining to prayers for their sake, for their brethren in Laodicea, as well as for those he have not seen nor known by name, is their enjoyment of inner divine comforts and true love, to perceive “***all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the mystery of the exalted knowledge of God***”, and to get a true knowledge of the secret of

¹ Letters, 1: 5.

² In Colos hom. 5.

the plan of God, the Father and His only begotten Son; so that doubt would have no place in them.

Despite the great danger of the storm caused by those false teachers, yet it was an opportunity for all to seek the riches of the grace of God; and to stand with one loving heart to confront the hosts of darkness; For, through such love and true unity, they would be qualified to proclaim the divine truth without foolish disputes and vain arguments (1 Timothy 6: 4).

The key to the rich treasures of Christ, is the faith working with love; for by practicing love, they would not be deprived of the entrance to Christ, the source of every true riches, wisdom, and understanding.

The apostle Paul often presents to us love as a key to the divine proclamations, and to the enjoyment of fullness, saying: *“that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3: 17-19).

Saul of Tarsus lived long under the shadows, with the assumption that the law of Moses was more than enough. But once he encountered the Lord Christ, who lifted him up from the shadow to the truth, he came to have knowledge of amazing secrets, of which he longs for us to partake..

In this epistle, the apostle Paul talks to us about a secret with three sides integrated together in the life of the believer:

a- The secret of the church, the body of Christ (1: 24); where the door of faith opens, as well, before the Gentiles.

b- The secret of life in Christ: *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (1: 27).

c- The secret of God the Father and of Christ: (2: 2). For in Christ dwells all the fullness of Godhead, who grants us the life of fullness. ... The

secret of God the Father and of Christ, is the secret of the plan of His work, the subject of pleasure of both the Father and the Son together; And the secret of the knowledge of the Father

through the proclamation by the Son of Him to the believers; according to the words of the Lord Christ: “*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*” (John 1: 18). Before the cross, it was impossible for men to perceive the secret of the relationship between the Father and the Son, which was revealed by the cross and the resurrection.

❖ He says “*I struggle*” – for what goal? To have you knit together, rooted and grounded in love, and to abide steadfast in faith; ... I want you to reach the goal of perfect assurance; not just by attaining the “riches”, but “all the riches” in everything¹.

(**St. John Chrysostom**)

“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (3)

Wisdom and knowledge are both, God’s proclamation of Himself to us, to acquire Him to bear the divine wisdom and the heavenly knowledge.

According to **St. Augustine**, wisdom is the ability to taste the spiritual facts, and to enjoy the truth which leads to the glory of God and to worship Him with the fear of children And according to **St. John Chrysostom**, wisdom is the gospel, namely, the enjoyment of God’s joyful salvation plan; While knowledge is the departure from evil (Job 28: 28), and the presentation of the word of salvation to men.

Here the apostle corrects the wrong concepts of the philosophers, who assume that they are able by their mere human strife and their self mental capabilities, to recognize the truth, and to reach salvation. Man, on his own, is unable to perceive God’s might and ordinance; unless He declares Himself to him; as according to the words of the Lord Christ: “*The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*” (John1: 18)..He promised His disciples to send to them His Holy Spirit, who takes what is His and declare it to them (John 16: 14-15).

¹ In Colos hom. 5.

The New Testament revealed the wisdom which became ours in Christ Jesus, which includes the following:

1- “*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1: 7).

2- “*Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more*” (Romans 5: 20).

3- “*faith working through love*” (Galatians 5: 6).

4- “*He will tell you things to come*” (John 16: 13).

5- The new heaven and the new earth, and Jerusalem, our heavenly mother (Revelation 21).

❖ He says: “*are hidden*” (3). lest you may think that you have perceived the whole truth, for the truth is hidden even from the angels, not just from you. You should ask Him about anything, for He alone gives the wisdom and knowledge¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ These things are granted by the Savior Himself, who says: “*It is given to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven*”. And the gospel says that the Savior told the disciples the word in a secret. And the prophecy says about Him: “*By proverbs, He opens His mouth, and utters secrets since the foundation of the world*”².

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

❖ Know then that this Man you see poor and needy, is Christ, in whom all the riches are treasured³.

❖ Having taken our poverty upon Himself, He lost nothing of his riches; as “*in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (3)... If I get hungry, I shall not ask you for anything, for I have got all the world and its fullness⁴.

❖ We know that no testimony to God is faster, shorter, higher, or surer than what is in Christ, “*in whom are hidden all the*

¹ In Colos hom. 5.

² Stromata, 5: 12.

³ On Ps. 12.

⁴ On Ps. 50.

treasures of wisdom and knowledge". Through these testimonies He attempts to prove to us how He loves so much¹.

(**St. Augustine**)

In the following debate with father Nesteros in the wilderness of Egypt, the later confirmed to Germanos, that this knowledge is granted by the

Lord Christ to the pure in heart:

❖ **Germanos:** If all those who did not receive faith in the Lord Christ, or those who were corrupted by the teachings of the evil heretics, are impure in heart, how would we find many of the Jews, the heretics,, and even some believers who belong to the catholic church, who have obvious sins, have knowledge of the Holy Book, and boast of the greatness of their spiritual teachings; while, on the other side, we find a limitless multitude of saints, whose hearts are free of every trace of sin, satisfied with their piety of simple faith, without having the secrets of the true knowledge?! ... How can this fact conform to your view, referring the spiritual knowledge, only to the pure in heart?!

Nesteros: No one can discover the value of what I confirm, except those who weigh every word I utter with an accurate balance. I began my talk by referring to some who, although clever in debate, yet unable to go deep into the Holy Book, to discover its spiritual meanings. For the spiritual knowledge is sought only by God-worshippers, and not by those about whom is written: "*Hear this now, O foolish people, without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not*" (Jeremiah 5: 21); And, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children*" (Hosea 4: 6).

Being said about the Lord Christ that "*in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (3); How could he who despises the recognition of the Lord Christ, blaspheme Him with

¹ On Ps. 119.

his unclean lips; or through defiling his faith by his evil works; How could such a man get any spiritual knowledge?!

“Wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul, or dwell in a body enslaved to sin. For a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit, and will leave foolish thoughts behind, and will be ashamed at the approach of uprightness” (Wisdom 1: 4, 5).

There is, therefore, no way to reach the spiritual knowledge except that way, elaborately described by the prophet, saying: *“Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you”* (Hosea 10: 12). .. So we are committed first to sow righteousness, namely, by the works of righteousness we widen the practical perfection; after which, it would be qualified to reap the hope of life. Through uprooting the body sins, we can reap the spiritual virtues, and succeed in enlightening our souls with the light of knowledge.

According to the psalmist, this is the right way we are committed to follow, saying: *“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord; Blessed are those who keep His testimonies”* (Psalm 119: 1, 2).. He does not start by those who keep His testimonies, then follow up by those who are undefiled in the way, but says: *“Blessed are the undefiled in the way”*, making it clear that man cannot, befittingly keep the Lord’s testimonies, unless he walks blamelessly in the way of Christ by his practical life¹.

If in the Lord Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”, Why does he say “No one knows that day and hour, but My Father only” (Matthew 24: 36).

- ❖ If we truly believe that He actually does not know the day or the hour, we would be contradicting the apostle’s statement, that *“in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (3). ... In Him knowledge is hidden; and in order for it to be treasured in Him, it would sometimes seem to be described as

¹ Cassia: Conferences, 14: 16.

(ignorance); For, if it is openly proclaimed, it would not be a secret any more.

Therefore, in order for it to stay hidden, He proclaims that He does not know. Ignorance could never be referred to His true nature, for He is the 'Omniscient', namely, who knows everything. He claims that he does not know, to keep knowledge treasured (hidden) in Him. He could not be ignorant of the day and the hour, but He intends to exhort us to perpetually watch in an ever alert faith. He hides certain knowledge from us, so that, through keeping our minds away from getting preoccupied with doubt, they would perpetually anticipate the day of His second coming, and watch in hope. Being sure that the day is near, and will definitely come, our lack of certainty of when it will do, would make us alert and not slothful. Hence the Lord says: "*Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him*" (Matthew 24: 44). ; And, "*Blessed is that servant whom his Master, when He comes, will find so doing*" (Matthew 24: 46)¹.

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers)

- ❖ Why should we marvel that despite their higher knowledge, those people are the least successful to perceive the mystery of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, "*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (3); the mystery that even the angels do not know; except by divine proclamation².

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ It is Christ who proclaims the hidden and the unrevealed (Mathew 11: 25-27); and sows the understanding in our hearts; for "*in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (3); and by, and with Him, are the glory and the might from the Father, with the Holy Spirit, from generation to generation, forever, Amen³.

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

¹ *On the Trinity*, 9: 67.

² *Of the Christian Faith*, 42: 1 ().

³ *Letters*, 41: 25.

“Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive (smooth) words” (4)

He warned them against anyone who intends to deceive them by false wisdom and vain philosophy, according to the traditions of men, whose Wisdom is based upon earthly elements, and not set upon Christ.

Instead of wasting the time in studying the vain philosophies, and the false teachings, it is befitting of us to study the truth, and to know it well, to be able to discern any possible perversion.

The church, since the first century A.D., suffered many attacks from within (Acts 15; 2 Peter 2: 1-3); when many denied the truth through canceling it in secret.

As our holy faith is set upon the apostles, the prophets, and Jesus Christ Himself , the Cornerstone (Ephesians 2: 20); it would not be fitting of us to be deceived by the vain philosophies. According to St. Jerome: [Do not believe anyone who tells you that Christ is present in the wilderness of the heathens, in the tents of the philosophers, or in the secret assemblies of the heretics; and that there, the knowledge of the secrets of God are presented; ... But you should have the faith of the catholic church that shines in the churches from east to west!; For *“thus says the Lord: ‘ Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it. Then you will find rest for your souls”* (Jeremiah 6: 16).

“Persuasive words” or (pithanologia), is a term used to describe the defense presented by some attorneys in the courts of law, in an attractive way, by which they portray vanity as though it is the truth. ... It is befitting of the believer to have the spirit of discernment, to be able to separate *“the persuasive words of human wisdom, from the demonstration of the spirit of power”* (1 Corinthians 2: 4).

❖ We should be specially aware, lest, while striving to seek wisdom, which exists only in Christ, *“in whom are hidden all*

¹ الإنجيل بحسب متى، 1982، ص 503.

the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” – I say, we should aware, lest in the name of Christ Himself, we may come to be deceived by the heretics, or any other world-loving and corrupt-minded party¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Let no one then, boast that he is highly knowledgeable in human knowledge; as it is well written in the book of Jeremiah: “*Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; Let not the mighty man glory in his might; Not let the rich man glory in his riches. But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord exercising loving- kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth*” (Jeremiah 9: 23, 24). And so as not to lean on ourselves but on the Lord who raises the dead, the apostle says: “He who saved us from such burden of death, so as not to lean on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God “; and, “*Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words*”² (4).

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

“For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (5)

That was not a new thing to hear from the men of God, as the heart of the prophet Elisha moaned when his servant Gehazi went after Naaman the Syrian to seek money and clothing from him behind his master’s back (2 Kings 5: 20-27). Again the apostle Paul confirms to the Corinthians: “*For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit ... when you are gathered together along with my spirit*” (1 Corinthians 5: 3-4).

The words “good order” and “steadfastness” are military terms, used in the time of war; the former refers to that every soldier knows his exact location and role, and carry out his responsibility in complete obedience to his superiors; And the later refers to the perfect readiness of a steadfast army to confront the

¹ *Stromata 1: 11.*

² *Sermon on the Mount, 25.*

probable sudden strikes by the enemy, in perfect alertness, and abilities in offense and defense. it is, likewise, befitting of the believer, being a good soldier of Christ, not to fight against his brethren in humanity, but against his real enemy, the devil, with all his evil spiritual hosts, his tricks, and deception.

“Your faith in Christ”; is an expression integral with **“your faith by Christ”**. As the subject of faith is Jesus Christ, and its goal is the enjoyment of Christ Himself, He is the beginning, and the end of faith; In Him the believers, as well as the soul of the apostle Paul, exult, in a living fellowship with them in the gladness of their salvation, and the exultation of their souls in the fellowship with Christ.

- ❖ Instead of a direct statement, saying: [For though I am absent in flesh, yet I know those who deceive], he ends it with commendation, saying, **“rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ”** (5); namely, to see that you are still on the way of fellowship. He does not say: “your faith”, but **“the steadfastness of your faith”**, as though he addresses soldiers standing alert, aright, and in good order. He who is steadfast, would not shaken by deception, nor by temptation¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Write down your names in the book of life, and never let it be wiped out, for many are those whose names are wiped out by falling. May you all be granted to believe in Him who is risen, to look at Him who ascended, and to anticipate His second coming. (yet, you should be aware of those liars who come from down here on earth); He who, though sitting high up, yet He is with us all, **“seeing your good order and the steadfastness of your faith”** (5).

Do not assume that, being absent in flesh, the Lord Christ is also absent in Spirit, for He is present among us, hearing what is said about Him, aware of your inner thought, and searching your hearts and minds (Psalm 7: 9); He, who is ready to bring forth the

¹ *Homilies on Colossians, homily 5.*

catechumens as well as you all, in the Holy Spirit, to the Father, saying: “*Here am I and the children whom God has given Me*” (Hebrew 2: 13; Isaiah 8: 18), to whom be glory, forever, Amen¹.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

2- THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE AND THE BEHAVIOR:

“*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him*” (6)

“*Walk in Him*”. He who receives the Lord Christ, walks in Him, being the divine Way, to be able to go through the world by his heart and mind, and cross over to the Father’s bosom, where his depths settle down with the hope in the resurrection of the body, and the perpetual presence in the eternal glory.

As the Lord Christ, the Icon of God, and the Creator of all, exalts above all, Why would there be in you a longing to seek other intermediaries?! ... Jesus is the Messiah, the Messiah of God, the Word, God’s Message to man; and He is as well, the Lord “Jehovah” of the new covenant (Philippians 2: 11).

They have received the Lord in simple faith; they received Him a Savior, a Source of life and gladness. If we need Him to save us from the eternal perdition, we need Him as well, to lead, and to guide us in all aspect of life (John 6: 39; Romans 8: 35-39). We are counseled to “*walk in Him*”, as we all live, move, and exist in Christ; we are all supported by Him (1: 17). In Colossians 3: 5-17, the apostle Paul makes it clear how a Christian should walk.

Having trusted in Christ to save you, trust in Him, as well, to solve your daily problems. Live in deep unity with Him; Let your roots go deep in Him; and draw nourishment from Him.

❖ “*Walk in Him*”. For He is the Way who leads us to the Father; Do not walk in the angels, who cannot do that².

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ مقالات لطالبي العماد 14 : 30.

² Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.

“*You have received*”. Receiving Christ is a perpetual union with Him in a mutual life.

Being a practical man, Paul tells them to translate what they believe into action... You have started well, keep it on! ... You trusted in Christ, “*continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast*”(1: 23). ... Live in a vital union with Him. St. Paul always desires to see our life perpetually harmonizing with our faith. For it would be sorrowful for a believer to believe in Christ and walk as a devil.

If we believe and trust in Christ, let us then live as Christ desires us to live. If we are rooted in Him, let us then grow in Him. Let us not stop at believing in facts about Christ; but let us trust in Him as well, if we desire life, which is not to be purchased, for it is free (2: 6). ... We are rooted in Christ, namely, we get nourishment from Him; for no plant can grow if not connected to the soil from which it draws life. Christian life starts in Christ, then continues to grow in His grace and gifts. Therefore, we should lean on Christ for the sake of the steadfastness of our life; For He is our surety as far as our salvation is concerned.

“Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving” (7)

“*Rooted*”. The apostle does not ask for mere walking, but to be rooted as well; for the believer’s life should turn into a temple, with hidden foundations on which stands the spiritual huge building, that reaches heaven itself. Let us then seek Him, as in Him alone, we shall find all our spiritual needs and satisfaction.

❖ By such a simple and steadfast faith, we, as believers, should be established in God, until He, Himself, reveals His secrets to us; according to the words of the apostle: “***In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and understanding***”¹ (3).

(St. Augustine)

❖ What is “*rooted*” could never be shaken. Just meditate in how he chooses the proper words: “*built up in Him*”, namely in mind

¹ *Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 1: 5.*

about Christ; “*established*” in faith, namely, built on foundation. ... Faith, being actually like a building, needs a strong foundation; otherwise the whole building will not hold ... but will collapse¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Beloved brethren, pay attention to what the apostle presents to you of precious counsel; saying: “*As you have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith*”. As in such simple and sure faith, it is befitting of us to be established, until He Himself open up to the believers hidden in Him; saying: “*In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*”; which He hides, to stir in them a longing for the hidden things².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Establishing the church is a creation of the world; as according to the prophet Isaiah: “*For behold, I create new heavens*” (Isaiah 65: 17); and according to the apostle Paul “Faith in Christ is steadfastness” (See 2: 5)³.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

3- TO BEWARE OF THE DECEPTION OF THE PHILOSOPHERS:

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world” (8)

After proclaiming his rejoice in their steadfastness in the tradition they received from the apostles concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, he started warning them against the deceit of the empty philosophies. Saying: “*Beware*”, he warns them against falling in the captivity or enslavement of philosophy. He considers the false teachers like the traders of slaves who catch their victims and carry them forth to the slave markets through their sweet and

¹ *Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.*

² *Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 1: 5.*

³ *Sermons on Song of Songs, 13.*

deceptive promises, depriving them thereby of the glorious liberty of the children of God.

He calls it “*empty deceit*”, because they only offer void, coming forth from the worldly human thought, and not carrying the power of God for salvation. As the world at that time has been captive of a vain claim that the issues of men run compulsory according to the movements of the stars, he says to them: “*You observe days and months and seasons and years*” (Galatians 4: 10); The philosophies were claimed to be capable of protecting man against those evil hosts.

This part of the epistle is set upon three warnings to the Colossians:

(1) Beware of being drawn to any worldly philosophy that replaces Christ.

(2) Do not allow anything to replace Christ who exalts above all.

(3) Do not let anyone make you deny Him. ... Open your eyes wide, and watch well (Ezekiel 3: 17-21), for it is only the slothful and foolish who get robbed of their possessions (Luke 12: 39).

Philosophy is a human effort to understand and reach God, and to perceive the universe He created by His might; Yet, as it mostly fail to achieve its goal (1 Corinthians 1: 21), it may, therefore, be very dangerous (see 1 Timothy 6: 20).

“*according to the tradition of men*”. ‘Tradition’ is not evil in itself, as basically referring to sayings and teachings delivered from generation to generation (Galatians 1: 14; 1 Corinthians 11L 2); it may probably be good (2 Thessalonians 2: 15; 3: 6), useless (1 Peter 1: 18), or even extremely evil, in case it contradicts the word of God (Matthew 15: 1-9). In the present case (2: 8), being contradictory to the sound teaching, as proclaimed in Christ, ‘tradition’ belongs to the last category,. From verse 20, we discover that the ‘basic principles’ and the ‘regulations’, refer to the religious ordinances of “do” and “do not” (2: 20-23). when it is up to man to reach God through self-denial and good works. The

common line in all philosophies is reaching God, yet not according to Christ, in and by whom alone, we can reach the Father.

- ❖ Meditate in how he warns against him as a “cheater”, “deceiver”, and a stranger who crawls in secret ... Yet, because the word ‘philosophy’ may carry the appearance of honor, he adds “*empty deceit*”. ... There may be what could be called ‘good deceit’, by which many are led astray; which could be rather called ‘inducement’ or enticement’, like when the prophet Jeremiah says: “*O Lord, You induced (enticed) me, and I was persuaded*” (Jeremiah 20: 7). And like what Jacob did to his father Isaac, which would not be called deceit, but rather ‘craftiness’.

St. Paul says: “*through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ*”. Here he rebukes them for observing specific days, according to the sun and the moon; referring to the “basic principles of the world”; as he also says to the Galatians: “*How is it that you turn to the weak and beggarly elements*” (see Galatians 4: 9). By saying: “observing days”, he means observing the issues of the present world as a whole, to reveal its futility; For if that is how the present world is, how much more would be its elements (days, months, and years).

He started by revealing the great benefits and compassion they have got; then followed up by his accusation, to show its danger, and to convince his listeners¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He then judges the philosophy, yet not all philosophies, but the ‘Epicurean’ philosophy, mentioned in the book of Acts (17: 18), on account of that it denies the Mighty God, and deifies pleasure².

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

¹ *Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.*

² *Stromata 1: 11.*

- ❖ Man would be called worldly, when he cheated through philosophy, according to the tradition of men, and not according to Christ in the fullness of Godhead¹.
- ❖ Lest the soul would be cheated by the heathen philosophy, it should receive the better example of the more perfect loyalty to the holy faith, taught by the apostle in well chosen words².

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers)

- ❖ Beware lest anyone would cheat you from faith in Christ through vain and deceitful philosophy, that disregards the divine care, “*according to the tradition of men*”. For the philosophy which is according to the divine tradition, conforms to, and follows the ordinance of the divine care³.
- ❖ Not attacking philosophy in his epistles, as much as considering it as debasing man to the level of the basic knowledge of the world; St. Paul says, that it is not befitting of man to go down and follow the ‘Hellenistic philosophy’ which he symbolically calls “the basic principles of the present world”, for being imperfect, and are no more than preliminary principles toward the truth⁴.
- ❖ Some among you may claim that the philosophy discovered by the Greeks has come as the result of human understanding; Yet I find the Holy book say that understanding is from God Himself. The psalmist considers understanding as the greatest divine free gift to man; and, despite his own experience and knowledge⁵, he writes: “*Teach me Your word, O Lord, I will walk in Your truth*” (Psalm 86: 11); teach me the wisdom and the knowledge⁶.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

4- LIFE OF FULLNESS IN CHRIST:

¹ *On the Trinity*, 8: 53.

² *On the Trinity*, 1: 13.

³ *Stromata* 1: 11.

⁴ *Stromata* 6: 8.

⁵ *Stromata* 6: 8.

⁶ *Stromata* 6: 15.

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (9)

According to some, the word came here as *Theotes*, and not *Theiotes*, as the former, not repeated in the New Testament, means God with His essence who is united to Manhood; Whereas the later means the shining of the glory of God that could reflect on the creation.

The author proclaims more clearly that, in Christ all the fullness should bodily dwell (1: 19); and that Christ is the Head (1: 18); Head of all principalities and powers (1: 16); all of which have their results in the society of the author, partaking of the fullness of Christ (1: 9), being His body. And as the circumcision for the Jews has been a sign of a covenant with God; For the Gentiles, baptism became the symbol of circumcision, spiritual and not in the flesh, by which they came to liken Christ, partaking of His circumcision, and the baptism of His death, buried with Him, and of His resurrection, as well (Romans 6: 3-5).

- ❖ He is the Arm of God; for He created all, the wisdom of the Father (1 Corinthians 1: 30), and His Might, as in Him the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells¹.

(St. Ambrose)

St. Cyril discerns between the fullness of Godhead, concerning the Lord Christ, and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believers.

- ❖ We believe that baptism that was consummated in Christ, was a perfect union... Whereas in us, although it is said that ***“He dwelt in us”***, yet it is, however, a relative dwelling, namely by ‘fellowship and grace’In Him alone. ***“dwells all the fullness of the Godhead”***(9); namely, the dwelling in Him was not a relative dwelling, or a mere fellowship, as it is in us, but was a true union between the limitless divine nature, and His body, born from the Virgin St. Mary².

¹ *Concerning Virgins, 3: 1 (3).*

² *PG 75: 1400.*

- ❖ As Man, the Anointed came to dwell among us, although He is the Giver of the Holy Spirit to those who are worthy to receive Him (Acts 10: 38); not “*by measure*”, as said by the blessed St. John the Evangelist (John 3: 34). ... We do not say that the Word of God dwelt in the One born from St. Mary; as though in a regular man, lest someone may assume that Christ is just a Man bearing God.

While it is written that the word (the Logos), “*dwelt among us*”(John 1: 14); About Christ it is written that: “*In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (2: 9).

We do not believe that He, having become a Body, the Word (the Logos) dwelt in Him, the same way He dwells in the saints; We do not believe that the dwelling of the Godhead in Christ is like His dwelling in men; As God united by Nature, and did not transform into man or a body¹.

(St. Cyril the Great)

- ❖ The mystery hidden since ages and generations, was recently revealed through the appearance of Christ. The mystery seen by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1), is the secret of the soul who was to receive her Lord, and was to become herself a throne for His glory².

(St. Maccarius the Great)

- ❖ The fullness of Godhead, dwelling in Him bodily, confirms the truth of His divine Nature, and the union of His living Nature; that would never be divided, neither by distinction, nor by a living natural birth³.
- ❖ The Son has no portion or part in the Father, but, according to Him: “ “ () And as testified by the apostle Paul: “*In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (2: 9). According to nature, the part cannot possess the fullness; He is the full Son of the full Father. For He who has all, to Him all is given. Yet, it would not be befitting of us to imagine that the Father did not

¹ Letters, 17: 9.

² Homilies, 1: 2 ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة

³ On the Trinity, 9: 1-2.

give, on account of that He still possess; nor that He lost what He gave to the Son¹.

(**St. Hilary. Bishop of Poitier**)

“And You are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power” (10)

As the incarnation, has been realized through the union of the Godhead with Manhood, we came to have the right to enjoy the riches of Christ, through our union with Him, having become full in Him; And through this fullness we have got the possibility of being risen together with Him, of sitting together with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2: 6); and also to reign together with Him (2 Timothy 2: 12). We would be in need of nothing, *“for all things will be ours”* (1 Corinthians 3: 21).

Commenting on the verse *“Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace”* (John 1: 16), **St. Augustine** says: The Lord granted us a free gift instead of our worthiness of punishment. By this grace, He granted us faith, by which we get the great rewards, of getting the knowledge of the truth; the justification from our sins, and the grace of eternity; Yet all that on condition that we keep those graces.

❖ Following his proclamation that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, he instantly reveals the secret of our (ascension) in the words: *“You are complete in Him”* (10). As the fullness of Godhead is in Him, we came to be complete in Him (Got from His fullness). The apostle does not say “You (became) complete in Him”, but *“You **are** complete in Him”*. For all those who are here today, and those who will be later on, who will be created anew with the hope of faith in the eternal life; All will be in the body of Christ, then, they will also be complete in themselves, in the time When the Lord *“will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* (Philippians 3: 21). Hence we are complete in

¹ *On the Trinity, 2: 8.*

Him, namely by the ascension of His body, for in Him will dwell the fullness of Godhead bodily¹.

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers)

- ❖ He supported the needy, and gave life to the dead, to let us perceive that it is from that body in which the fullness of Godhead dwells; the body in which life dwells, He supported the needy (2: 9)².

(St. Ephraim the Syrian)

- ❖ The word “fullness” means (the complete whole) ... For He is the Head, and in Him you are complete; meaning, what is yours is from Him, and not less than what is his³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And you are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power” (10)

Of the most important concepts of St. Paul, is the phrase indicating our being “*in Christ*”, of which there are 21 references to our relationship with the Lord Christ in the first and the second chapters (almost once in every second verse). The word “*complete*” could be interpreted as fullness, perfection, and flow, in every way (See Matthew 13: 48).

5- THE SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM:

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ” (11)

By Christ we are complete (10), and by Him, as well, we have a covenant with God.

In the old covenant, circumcision has been a sign that shows the covenant of man with God (Romans 4: 11-12). It was, as well, a sign of the separation of the Jews from the Gentiles. On the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ broke down the middle wall of division

¹ *On the Trinity, 9: 8.*

² *On our Lord, 11.*

³ *Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.*

(Ephesians 2: 14-18). Based on faith, we are all – Jews and Gentiles – enter into a covenant with God (Romans 3: 29, 30; Galatians 5: 6).

Being complete in Him, we came to enjoy the spiritual circumcision, namely **baptism**; to take off the old man, and to put on the new man, who is in the image of his Creator. In this circumcision, it is not the apparent foreskin of the flesh that is taken away, but that of the heart, which is contradictory to the will of God, and to the obedience of His commandments. St. Stevens rebuked the Jews as stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears (Acts 7: 51). And the apostle Paul again made clear the concept of being “a Jew”, as a member in the true body of Israel, the one circumcised in heart by the spirit (Romans 2: 28, 29).

In the literal bodily circumcision, a part of the flesh is cut off; whereas in the circumcision of Christ, it is the nature of sin that is taken away, so that the body is no more a temple for it, but a temple for the Lord. This cutting off is not done by a material knife, but made without a human hand; which is the work of Christ in us by faith.

❖ His death was for our sake; So was His resurrection, as well as His circumcision¹.

(St. Cyril the Great)

❖ Seek peace for your chastity by practical love. .. Until when will you be called a slave? ... When will you be a free man?!... When will you be a master on the unclean peoples around you?! ... When will you destroy the uncircumcised in your city?! ... When will you circumcise by the circumcision without human hand, those within you household (Genesis 17: 27)?!, by the circumcision in the spirit (Roman 2: 29)?¹ ... When will you be of authority and a king on the city of eternity?¹; and when will the five and ten cities, previously mentioned, submit to you?! ... When will you behold in yourself the new heavens, proclaiming

¹ *Comm.. on Luke, Sermon 2.*

in you, by the system of its ranks, the “holiness” of the hidden essence!?!

(St. John El-Deliaty)

- ❖ By “*the body of sins*”, he means (the old life). To which he often refers in several ways. As he said before: “*He who saved us from the dominion of darkness, and reconciled us, we who were strangers before*” (1: 22; to become “*blameless saints*”. You are no more in need to be circumcised by the edge of a knife, but in Christ Himself; for no human hand can ever grant such a circumcision, but the Holy Spirit; who does not circumcise a particular part; but in one it would be a carnal circumcision, and in another it would be spiritual; yet not like with the Jews; for you have not take off the body, but the sins. When and where?! ... in baptism. And the circumcision, he calls (burial)².
- ❖ He talks about something more exalted than circumcision; not just discussing why they were circumcised, but completely destroying and wiping it out³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ We have been circumcised, not a carnal circumcision, but in Christ; namely we are born anew Having been buried together with Him by His baptism, we are committed to die for the old man; For the renewal of baptism has the power of resurrection; and the circumcision in Christ is not by cutting the skin, but by the complete death together with Him. By this death we completely live for Him, for we shall be raised again by Him in the faith in God who has risen Him from death. We should, therefore believe in God, by whose work Christ is risen from death, for our faith is set in and by Christ⁴.

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitier)

¹ الأب سليم دكاش اليسوعي: الشيخ الروحاني - مجموعة الرسائل الروحية، بيروت 1992، ص 83.

² *Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.*

³ *Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.*

⁴ *On the Trinity, 1: 9.*

“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead” (12)

This circumcision is realized by the knife of the Spirit through baptism, when the believer is buried together with Christ, to be raised with Him in the newness of the resurrected life.

By saying: ***“in which”***, the apostle confirms that baptism is not just a symbol, but an actual work, by which burial and resurrection with Christ are realized.

Death is not abolishment, but a separation from God. We were born in the dead image of Adam (Genesis 5: 3), and will so stay until we “live” by God.

However, the uncircumcised body is better than the uncircumcised heart (2: 11; Romans 2: 25-29). For *“it is the Spirit who gives life, while the flesh profits nothing”* (John 6: 63).

❖ We have been buried with Christ in baptism, and been raised again by faith through the work of God who raised Him from the dead ... I need time to tell you all the texts in the Holy Book which refer to the activity of baptism; Or to explain the secret (sacramental) doctrine of the second birth; which, though called the second birth, yet it is actually the first birth for us in Christ¹.

(St. Jerome)

❖ Our faith will be followed by receiving the spiritual seal, being circumcised by the Holy Spirit through baptism, not in the foreskin of the flesh but in the heart, according to the words of the prophet Jeremiah: *“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts”* (Jeremiah 4: 4)., and the words of the apostle *By “the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism”* (11, 12)².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

The expression *“buried with Him in baptism”* testifies to the fact that baptism in the time of At. Paul has been by plunging in the font of baptism. ... Jesus was called the “First fruit of those

¹ Letters, 69: 7.

² مقالات لطالبي العماد 5: 6.

who have fallen asleep”, namely, He is a surety of our resurrection (1 Corinthians 15: 20).

- ❖ He died once, but He dies in everyone baptized in the death of Christ; so that all would be buried with Him, and be raised by Him, and walk in the newness of His life¹.

(St. Ambrose)

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all your trespasses” (13)

The fruit of sin is death, resulting from the separation from God, the Source of life; Whereas faith and the enjoyment of baptism, have the experience of life with Christ, the Forgiver of sins; and consequently the Grantor of reconciliation with the Father.

6- THE CONQUEST ON THE DARKNESS:

“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (14)

This handwriting of requirement proclaims the disobedience of the Jews of the written law, and the disobedience of the Gentile of the natural law. As it came in the book of Jeremiah: *“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart”* (Jeremiah 17: 1)

Having been crucified, our Lord Jesus took with Him that handwriting of requirement, and nailed it to His cross, and by His blood, He cancelled its effect, by which the case against us fell, and the enmity and the judgment were wiped out.

- ❖ Death, being actually nothing but a burial of the iniquities, and giving life to the virtues, it is written: *“Let me die the death of the righteous”* (Numbers 23: 10), namely, let my soul be buried together with them; let her sins be buried, and let her put on the grace of the righteous, who *“always carry about in the body the*

¹ *Isaac or Soul, 6: 53.*

dying of the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4: 10); and carry it in their souls as well¹.

- ❖ It would be befitting of the soul that is about to receive the Word (The Logos), to die to the world (Galatians 6: 14), and to be buried in Christ (Romans 6: 4; Colossians 2: 12); for that is the befitting reception He seeks from her for Himself².

(St. Ambrose)

“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (15)

It did not stop at wiping out the handwriting of requirement against us, which we earned by our disobedience of the divine commandment, but, by the cross, the dominion of the hosts of darkness on us was taken away as well. And the devil who has long been *“a murderer from the beginning”* (John 8: 44), *“who accused the righteous before our God day and night”* (Revelation 12: 10), has no more might, having destroyed himself by himself, when he assumed that he could aim his darts against Jesus Christ during His trial and crucifixion, which turned back and struck him. By His death, the Lord Christ *“brought to death him who had the power of death, that is the devil”* (Hebrew 2: 14); The way the whale swallowed Junah, and could not kill him, the ancient serpent lost her venomous fang, and was denied her sting of death.

The Lord Christ did not disarm the devil of his dominion in a hidden corner, but before all the heavenly creatures. In the ancient Roman empire the conquering king, together with his leaders, dressed in purple adorned with gold, and with the crowns of victory on their heads, used to disarm the defeated kings and their leaders, then drag them along publicly in their procession of victory, in humiliation.

That was what happened when the Lord Christ was crucified, and His soul went down to the pit of Hades, broke its gates, proclaimed the defeat of the devil, and took away every authority he used to have over the true believers (Ephesians 4: 8-8), He then carried out the spoils who anticipated His coming. The

¹ *Death is Good, 4: 15.*

² *Escape from the World, 9: 55.*

graves were opened, many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised (Matthew 27: 53); And by His name, the demons came out of the bodies of many in humiliation (Acts 16: 18); In the surety of conquest, the apostle sang: “*O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” (1 Corinthians 15: 55); And, “*Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ*” (2 Corinthians 2: 14).

❖ That was the goal for which the Lord came to the world, to cast away the hosts of darkness, and restore His House and His temple to Himself, namely, man. And that is why the soul is called “the darkness of iniquity”, or as called by the apostle: “*the body of sin*” or “*the body of death*”, saying: “*Knowing that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin*” (Romans 6: 6)¹.

(St. Maccarius the Great)

❖ While in Christ, the apostle knows nothing about the fear of suffering; Whenever he intends to talk about it, he includes it in the secret of the Godhead of Christ, He who forgives us all our sins, tears off the handwriting of requirements of our iniquities, nails it to the cross, and casts it away from us. Having been bodily bared, He made a spectacle of the principalities and powers, triumphing over them in Him.

Just meditate with me, What power could bear the horrible wound of the nail! ... What nature could endure such pain!

Talking, as though on the tongue of the Lord Christ, showing the work of salvation, St. Paul, describing the death of the Lord, said that, with His naked body, He put to shame the hosts of darkness, triumphing over them in Himself.

If His suffering was a necessity dictated by his nature, and not a free gift for your salvation; And if the cross was mere suffering of the pain of wounds, and not to nail in Himself, the law of death issued against you; And if His death was anything but making a spectacle of, and dishonoring the evil hosts, a daring act, and a conquest; ... He would be referring helplessness to himself!;

¹ Homilies, 1: 7. ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة

for having been under the authority of the necessity of nature, to be stricken and dishonored..... But if it is contrary to all that, concerning the secret of the sufferings, as preached to us, Who could have such lack of feeling to reject the faith taught to us by the apostles; and, contrary to all our religious feelings, casts such humiliating accusation against the human weakness, instead of considering it an act of free will, a secret, and a show off of might and victory?!

What greater conquest would it be, when, introducing Himself to those who came to crucify Him, they could not endure His presence; ... When He, who stood to receive the verdict of death, after a little while, sat on the right hand of the Might of the God the Father. ...When He, who prayed for the sake of His persecutors, while the nails were piercing His holy body; consummated the secret tasting the bitterness of the vinegar; was counted among the transgressors; and at the same time granted the paradise to the robber; ... When He was nailed to the cross (the tree), the earth was shaken, the sun darkened, and the day was terrified; ... When He forsook His own body, while granting life to the bodies of others; ... When He was bodily buried, and was risen a God! ... When as Man, He endured the sufferings and weaknesses for our sake, While as God, He triumphed over all of them!¹

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitier)

- ❖ If it is so written that He has forgiven all our transgressions, tearing off the handwriting of requirements of sins against us, Why then, while we enjoy the forgiveness of our debts, would we hold it against our brethren, and persist on being paid back all what is due to us?! ... He who forgave all, seeks from everyone of us to remember how he was forgiven, and in his turn, would forgive the others².

(St. Ambrose)

Twice, he repeats the expression “against us”; as the law that was given to us came to be as though our enemy! How? ...

¹ *On the Trinity, 10: 48.*

² *Letters, 41: 8.*

Because it opened our eyes wide on the meaning of sin, and yet, it did not give us the power to fulfill its requirements (see Romans 7: 7-25). The Lord Jesus Christ, alone, is able to expose the sin, to reveal its depths, and to grant us the power to overcome it. According to St. Paul, including himself among those granted the grace, the law is put to an end, even for the Jews.

The law stood as an un-crossable separating wall and a barrier between the Jews and the gentiles; and between them both, and God. But Jesus Christ broke it down, and took it away, unified the Jews and the Gentiles, and gave them the possibility to reach God by Christ (Ephesians 2: 14-18). He consummated this reconciliation by nailing the verdict of the law to His cross (1: 20). The same nails that pierced the hands and feet of our Lord; have nailed as well the verdict of the law to the cross, by which the law has no more authority on us.

- ❖ The Lord Christ was sold through taking our place, though not taking on Himself our sins; He was not held by the debt of sin, having committed no sin (2 Corinthians 5: 21). That is why He took away the chains of the debtor (2: 14), and sent away the creditor.

He cancelled the debt by paying it all back; and on our behalf He put it on Himself, to lift up the bondage of the world, to restore the liberty of paradise, and to grant us a new grace by the honor we have got when He partook of our nature with the secret of His incarnation¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ At the birth of His Son, the earthly King invited all men to celebrate it by distributing money, and making all indebted to him; But our heavenly King came down to pay back all our debts (2: 14); and wrote them down in His name to pay them back on our behalf to our creditor².

(St. Ephraim the Syrian)

¹ *On Joseph, 4: 19.*

² *Hymns on Nativity, 4.*

❖ According to the prophet; the Lord Himself carried our sins, and was numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53: 4, 12; Col 2: 14); To justify us by Himself, He tore off the handwriting of requirements that was against us, and nailed it on His cross.... Being God, Holy by nature; while humanity is supported and sanctified by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Yet, for our sake, He was sanctified by the Holy Spirit; yet not by anyone, but He Himself sanctified His own body¹.

❖ For our sake, He endured the cross; so that by death He destroyed death. ... For our sake He was tried to save all men from the verdict of sin; By faith He destroyed the dominion of sin, and nailed to His cross the handwriting of requirements that was against us².

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

❖ Let us then always remember how the handwriting of requirements that was against us (2: 14), and was held by the devil, was torn and wiped out by the blood of Christ³.

(St. Augustine)

❖ Through Jesus Christ, the descendant of the blessed St. Mary, the thorns were uprooted, the branch dried up, the olive tree was cursed (Matthew 21: 19), the dust became salt, the curse was nailed to the cross (2: 14), the edge of the sword was taken away from the tree of life, and it was given as food to the believers, and the paradise was promised to the blessed virgins and saints⁴.

(St. Afrahat)

❖ That is why David previously said: “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity*” (Psalm 32: 1-2) , referring to the forgiveness of sins that followed His coming, by which He tore off “*the handwriting of requirements of our sins*” and nailed it to the cross. So it was by a tree (in the

¹ *Sermons On John, Book 2, 17.*

² *Sermons On John, Book 6, 10*

³ *Hom. On 1 John, 1: 5.*

⁴ *Demonstrations 4 on Monks, 6.*

garden of Eden) that we became indebted to God; and by a tree (the cross), we were forgiven our sins¹.

(St. Erinaos)

- ❖ You have been wounded and wounded others as well; For when Your blood was shed to wipe out the handwriting of the requirements of our sins, it would only be shed from Your wound².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Let us then present, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, the fruit of the lips; an offering, not according to the law that was lifted up and cancelled by the Lord; but according to the Holy Spirit. For we should worship God by the Spirit and the Truth by the offering of the Eucharist, which, being not carnal, but spiritual, is pure³.

(St. Erinaos)

- ❖ According to the inspired St. Paul, this chain against us, the Lord nailed to His cross, by which He has overcome the principalities and the powers (2: 14, 15)⁴.

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

We should not fear the hosts of the demons nor bow to them; and we should not, as well, underestimate their power, for they are still stronger than any saint who separate himself from the power of God. But we thank God who made us conquer (Romans 8: 37).

- ❖ Ask the devil himself: [When was you struck with such an incurable strike? ... Are you no more powerful? ... Where were you made captive? ... Who caught you while attempting to get away?]. He will give you one answer to all these questions: {the crucified Body}. By it he was torn apart, by it his head was crushed; for "*He Himself disarmed all the principalities and*

¹ *Against Heresies*, 5: 17: 2.

² *On Ps.*, 89

³ *Fragments on his Lost Works*, 37.

⁴ *Hom. On John*, 12: 19.

powers, and made spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (2: 15)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ For the Lord has got in touch with every part of the creation, and has set it free from all the deceptions of falsification and fantasy; and, according to the apostle Paul: “*He Himself disarmed all the principalities and powers, triumphing over them on the cross*” ; lest anyone would, afterwards, be deceived, but would, everywhere find the true Word of God².

(Pope St. Athanasius the apostolic)

- ❖ “*He, by Himself, disarmed all the principalities and powers*” .meaning that He disarmed the hosts of the devil, to whom the human nature submitted; and wiped out the handwriting of requirements against it, by which He (Christ), even when He became a Man was not indebted.... But what does he mean by saying: “*He made a spectacle of them*” ?

That was truly what He did to the devil, who has put himself to shame and scorn; because, having expected to triumph over the Lord, he even lost what was his; For, once the holy body was nailed on the cross the dead were risen.

So, death itself has got a knock out by a dead body; and being cast down to the ground by a deadly hold, death was brought to death. ... The death of the Lord Christ was therefore, a shame and reproach to the devil.

The angels have never experienced such a thing; for the Lord, Himself has done everything; His death was a great and mighty achievement.

Death has wounded Christ – But the wounded Christ brought death to death³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *Homilies on 1 Cor., homily 24: 7.*

² *De. Uncarn. 45.*

³ *Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.*

- ❖ Whoever is ashamed of the cross of Christ, is actually ashamed of the ordinance by which Christ has triumphed over the evil hosts¹.

(The scholar Origen)

7- NO GOING BACK TO THE SHADOWS:

“Therefore, let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival, or a new moon, or Sabbaths” (16)

The old Jewish rites of food or drink, or concerning festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths, were all symbols that refer to the salvation work of Christ. And having been all consummated by the Lord, their job came to an end. When the Light came, the shadows disappeared. As an example, When Christ, our Passover, who was slain for our sake, came, *“we no more keep the feast with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Corinthians 5: 7-8).

There is no going back to the literal Jewish shadows, as long as we consummate what came in the law in spirit; as Christ has become our salvation and fulfillment; and our Liberator from the servitude of the letter, *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke and bondage”* *Galatians 5: 1).

Concerning food, some items were banned by the Jewish statutes, as being unclean, not in their material, but in what they symbolize; which we have already dealt with in our interpretation of the book of Numbers. On another aspect, some Gnostic systems have done likewise. But our abstaining from eating some kinds of food during fasting, has nothing to do with those concepts, because all food are pure, but it is meant to control the lust and greed, and to proclaim our longing to sanctify our bodies, to join the soul in her setting forth toward the heavenly places.

- ❖ *“Let no one judge you in food or drink...”*, on account of that *“the law is spiritual”* (Romans 7: 14)².

(St. Ambrose)

¹ Hom. On Matt., 12: 18.

² On Resurrectio, 2: 108.

- ❖ If the apostle counsels us to let no one judge us in food or in drink, or regarding a festival, or a new moon or Sabbath, Why then are these controversies and dissensions? ... Yes we keep the feast, yet with the conscience of malice and wickedness, tearing apart the church of God. We keep what is outside, disregarding the better things like faith and love; giving no pleasure to the Lord¹.

(St. Erinaos)

- ❖ He is the Light who came and scattered the darkness. For the Sabbath that was commanded by God, was kept by Christ Himself, who, together with the Father gave the law. "The food, drinks, festival, new moon, and Sabbaths, were all shadows of the things to come. Now He, whom those things proclaimed, have already come, Why should we then still rejoice in the shadows²?!"

(St. Augustine)

"which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (17)

The shadow is just a reflection and a copy of something real. It includes the truth, and has prophetic value (Hebrew 8: 5; 9: 9; 10: 1). But once the perfection of the truth is realized, there would be no more need for the shadows³.

- ❖ The shadow shows the truth ahead, but it cannot minister to the spirit. Moses could not, by his body, enter into the heart, and take off the defiled garment of darkness. No one can wipe out and loosen the evil force of darkness, except a Spirit from Spirit, and a fire from fire⁴.

(St. Maccarius the Great)

- ❖ The Light of the world came and scattered the shadows. The commandment of the Sabbath was done through Christ Himself,

¹ *Fragments on his Lost Works*, 38

² *Homilies on New Testament Lessons*, 86: 3.

³ *Homilies on Colossians*, homily 7.

⁴ *Homilies*, 32: 4. ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة

who was together with the Father when the law was given. He commanded it, though it has been a shadow of what is to come later on ... Now, as He, by whom these things were proclaimed, has come; Why would we rejoice in the shadows? ... Open up your eyes, O Jews, for the Sun has risen¹.

(St. Augustine)

8- WORSHIPPING THE ANGELS:

“Let no one defraud you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy mind” (18)

Some Gnostic principles have crawled to the Jews; The Babylonian Talmud, commenting on the words of God, saying: “*I am going to send an angel in front of you, ... be attentive to him, ... for my name is in him*” (Exodus 23: 20-21); says that this angel is the minor Jehovah². Consequently the Jewish Gnostics adopted the worship of angels, claiming to perceive this through their philosophy; and in their pride they boast to have knowledge of the angels.

- ❖ In short, in case some intend to approach the angels, and not Christ; which is rather difficult for us to believe, the apostle draws their attention to what Christ has done by the blood of His cross (1: 20), saying: “*He suffered for our sake*”; for “*He loved us*”³ (1 Peter 2: 21)

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ If you hold fast to the Head, you would never disregard those for whose sake Christ died. If you hold fast to the Head, you would never forsake the rest of the members, but, instead of scattering them, you would hold them together with the bond of love.

(St. Ambrose)

¹ *Sermons on N.T. Lessons*, 86: 3.

² F. C. Bruce: *The Epistle of Colossians*, 1988, p. 119.

³ *On Repentance*, I: 6.

- ❖ Proclaiming that we should approach God through the angels instead of Christ, some destroy what Christ has done for our sake by the blood of His cross, and His sufferings.

(St. John Chrysostom)

A Christian is committed not to mix between this heresy set upon the intercession of the angels, for the reconciliation between God and men, without the blood of Christ; and the love of angels as ministers of Christ serving those for whose sake He died, raising prayers and supplications on their behalf.... He is committed not to mix between that work and the unique salvation work of Christ.

Angels have no atonement intercession, but one of supplication; according to what came in the book of the Revelation, saying: *“Then another angel, having a golden censor, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the angel’s hand”* (Revelation 8: 3-4).... They would not be able to offer this incense or this prayer on our behalf, except in the worthiness of the blood of Christ; saying with a loud voice: *“Worthy is the Lamb who is slain”* (Revelation 5: 12).

“and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase which is from God” (19)

With their pride, false humility, and their worship of angels, they lost their union with the Head, Jesus our Lord, and lost their life, having become a body without Head; And they consequently lost even their connection to one another. As, how could the joints bind a body with no head; and how could it live, or grow without the Lord God, the Head of all?!

The phrase: *“not holding fast to the head”* conforms to the one saying: *“not according to Christ”* in verse 8; As it is not possible to exclude Christ from the center of our life. And the word “body” here, refers to the church in a general way.

- ❖ The Lord in the temple of His Sanctuary; embraces several members, each performs specific jobs and duties; and, by love, they all form one building¹.

(St. Augustine)

9- HOW GREAT IT IS TO DIE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST:

“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world do you subject yourselves to regulations...” (20)

Turning from his negative warnings (8, 16, 18), St. Paul presents some positive aspects of our relationship with Christ. The fellowship in the passion and death of Christ is a union with His reconciliation work which was realized on the cross; And the fellowship in His resurrection is a union with all the glories of His Person.

The teachings of men were rejected, and the weight of the law of the old covenant was lifted up (14). Are we free now to obey or reject as we like? No! ... Instead of being committed to a huge number of statutes, we came to be free to keep the commandments of Christ (John 15: 10).

“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle” (21)

- ❖ Yes indeed, we often are deceived by seeing things, or hearing things, contrary to their actuality in most case. If we wish not to be so deceived, let us meditate, not in what is seen, but in what is not seen.

But when would our souls not be deceived? Where will they acquire the throne of the truth; except when they separate from our bodies, so as not to be deceived, or go astray by them? For the soul, is deceived by the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears ... That is why the apostle proclaims, saying: *“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish”* (2: 21, 22). As the body cares for things to its corruption, the apostle shows us that he finds the truth, not through the interests of the

¹ On Ps. 11.

body, but through lifting the soul up and exalting it, and the humility of the heart. And he goes on to say: “*As for our citizen, it is in heaven*” (Philippians 3: 20)¹.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ He says: You are not of this world; How then, would you submit to its element, or its measures? Notice how he scornfully say: “*Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle*”. It is as though they foolishly preoccupy themselves, not with serious issues, but with nonsense, “*with things which perish with the using*”. And to belittle the pride of some, he adds: “*according to the commandments and doctrines of men*”².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and doctrines of men” (22)

The law is given to be kept, but its use may lead to perdition! It is unbecoming of our spiritual life to depend on do and do not, but on our love for the Lord Jesus. When the control of the soul, and its compulsory practices, become the goal in themselves, we would be gone beyond the depth of value in it, to follow the heretic views.

“These things indeed have appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humanity, and neglect of the body, but of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (23)

The practices to control the soul and body have blessings and importance, if presented in Jesus Christ, for the sake of inner edification, through leaning on the chest of the Lord, the enjoyment of the gift of the Spirit, and the work of the divine grace. But, if they turn into an appearance of wisdom, together with humiliation of the body, and bringing it into submission with violence, it would become of no real value, on account of that it provides no inner fulfillment.

¹ *Death is Good, 3: 10.*

² *Homilies on Colossians, homily 7.*

- ❖ Virginitly in itself is not worthy of commendation, if it does not come out of love for God. The blessed Paul says about those who reject matrimony: “*In the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons ... forbidding to marry*” (1 Timothy 4: 1-3).; And says, [Let no one commit you to faithfulness, through compulsion and humiliation of the body¹].

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

According to **the scholar Origen**, some, in ignorance tend to practice what Simon Peter did, when he refused to let the Lord Christ stretch His hands to wash his feet (John 13: 6-8); and with such good intention to have his inner heart washed instead, and with his noble wish to honor His Lord, he could have lost His portion with the Savior. Some are preoccupied with extreme control of their body and soul, without the preoccupation of the heart with getting attached to the Savior, and having a portion with Him².

- ❖ Even if they have the appearance of wisdom though putting their bodies violently under control, ; and even if they look religious and humble, let us keep away from them... For according to the apostle, they actually insult the body by denying it its reasonable freedom; when God Himself cares for the body³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ To become a virgin, it would not be enough to refrain from marriage; but virginitly should be spiritual. In other words chastity is not an absence of evil and shameful lust; nor doing without adornment and excessive cares; but, besides, it involves not caring for issues of the world. For without this, the purity of the body would be of little value⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *Stromata* 3: 51. 1-3.

² *Commentary on John*, 32: 57-59.

³ *Homilies on Colossians*, homily 7.

⁴ *On Virginitly*, 77: 2.

AN INSPIRATION FROM COLOSSIANS 2

LET ME ATTACH TO YOU TO BRING ME FORTH TO YOUR GLORIES

- ❖ Grant me to attach to You;
To be raised above the limits of the body;
I truly say that, although I may be absent in the body,
Yet, by You, I am present by the spirit.
- ❖ I enjoy being attached to You, O Wisdom of God;
All the deceptions of the philosophers will not be able to
captivate my mind;
Nor shall I find sweetness in the wisdom of men;
Nor the human deception will be able to catch me in their
snares;
By You, my mind and thoughts are sanctified;
By You, I fly and soar from glory to glory.
- ❖ For my sake You became Man;
When with Your Godhead, You fill the heavens and earth;
Attached to You, I get filled with the riches of Your love;
Granting me Your grace, I would need nothing more.
- ❖ Attached to You, I am raised above the letter of the law;
I do not seek the circumcision of the flesh;
But, by Your Spirit I bear the spiritual circumcision.
- ❖ By You, I enjoy sonhood to God;
And I enjoy a royal seal;
I wholly become Your possession;
And a good soldier in the salvation army;
The devil and all his hosts will not be able to stand before me;
For I am hidden in You;
I tread with my feet over the forces of darkness;
For Your light shines in my depths.
- ❖ You alone carry me to the bosoms of Your Father;
Your precious blood intercedes for me;
And Your cross is the ladder to heaven.

❖ Let me be crucified with You;
For to be crucified with You is life;
By Your resurrection, I shall rise, and death would not be able to
overcome me;
By Your ascension, my heart will find a place in heaven;
You are in truth, the secret of the exaltation of those who believe
in You;
You are the secret of the fulfillment of all who are attached to
You;
How can I live without You?!

CHAPTER 3

CHRIST IS OUR LIFE (CHRIST DWELLS IN US)

In the two previous chapter the apostle Paul spoke to us about the exaltation of the Lord Christ; that he is the **Depth** who carries us by the spirit of hope up to heaven; And He is the **Height**, if we are rooted and grounded in Him, our building will never shake. Now he speaks to us about the Heavenly Christ who raises us to experience the heavenlies, to renew our life in Him every day, and to lead all our feelings and behavior at home, as well as among others..

Our life would never grow in its depths, nor arise up high, unless it grows inside. You should know that **Christ is our life, and dwells in us**; that the Lord Christ is the law of our life, and the guide of our outer and inner behavior.

1- Life with the Heavenly One	1 - 4
2- Putting to death the works of the old man	5 - 9
3- Enjoyment of the new man	10 - 15
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5- Christ is the law of the household	18 – 25

1- LIFE WITH THE HEAVENLY ONE:

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are high above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (1)

After warning them against the heresies that belittle the Lord Christ and His salvation work, the apostle revealed to them the blessings of the union with Christ, risen from the dead, and ascending up to heaven. The believer seeks what is above, namely, he longs for, asks about, and strives with the divine grace to enjoy what is for the kingdom of Christ. This would require from him to lift his mind up to seek those things which are high above, to settle down there.

Lifting the heart and mind up is a divine gift, yet we are committed to seek to get it. We have already dealt with the issue of being buried with Christ in baptism, not to stay there as though in a grave, but to be risen with Him according to His divine promise, saying: "*Because I live, you will also live*" (John 14: 19). He is alive in heavens, drawing our hearts and minds to Him, to live with Him exultant in the heavenlies.

After watching the Lord ascending to heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy, praising and blessing Him (Luke 24: 51-53). Risen with Him, and ascended with our hearts to Him, we are set free from the dominion of sin which has no place in heavens, singing together with the apostle: "*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).

Being rooted in Christ, and having our life in Him, We not only die with Him, but enjoy union with Him in His resurrection, and our hearts ascend with Him. In the death of Christ, we died to sin; In His resurrection, we are risen to live a new life; and by His ascension we come to behold the treasures of the riches and joys of the heavenlies. Our new life in Christ sets us free from the care for the issues of this world, to become "*dead to the world*", and to find out that our true life is in Christ ascending to heaven. The more we get to know our Lord Jesus Christ, the more we gradually discover the beauty pertaining to the fellowship with Him, to enjoy the fellowship in His features: namely: love, mercy, compassion, meekness, and longsuffering.

As Joshua has entered with the people of God into Canaan, where everyone got his portion of the promised land (Joshua 11: 23); We, as well, will be brought forth by our Lord Jesus Christ into the heavenly Canaan, as the Leader of the victory procession, where every believer will get His portion in the heavenly glory.

Although the submarine was designed to travel under water, yet it is provided with a periscope to help survey the things up there on the surface of the sea; on account of that its safety depends to a great extent on the knowledge of its skipper of what goes on up there We, likewise, although living down in the world, yet, wishing

that heaven would fill our thoughts, we concentrate our sight on Christ who draws us up there.

Christianity is not a series of forsaking works, but is rather an enjoyment of a new life. The more and better we get to know Christ, the less are the things that draw our attention; for Christ adds a multitude of things to our life, that it would not be able to accommodate more of the old things. By Christ we have lost the enjoyment of the pleasure in the works of the old man, and came to be utterly preoccupied with the new life in Him.

Some may wonder: “*If we were raised with Christ, and are seeking things which are above*”, Why then would we continue falling into sin?

(1) Leaning on ourselves without seeking the help of the divine grace, through the continuous and unceasing fellowship with God.

(2) Slothfulness in little things, may lead to losing most of the divine gifts.

(3) According to St. James: “*Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed*” (James 1: 14). We should never have any more bond with our old nature. St. Paul exhorts us to bring to death our evil lusts. Gaining our new life in Jesus Christ, we should take off the old life with all its wickedness and iniquities, which he includes in one list; namely, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is adultery (5); all of which are possible to do in Christ. ... Can you imagine how silly we would look if we purchase a nice new dress, but we refuse to take off the ugly old one, and insist on putting the new dress over it! ... Unfortunately, many Christians do that; they put on the dress of the new life over their old nature, which would never be possible.... We have to forsake the sin, while we put on the new life.

(4) Ceasing to grow. Together with every day, enjoying what is new to learn, it would be befitting of us to follow the lead of the apostle Paul, and desire to keep on growing to reach the full measure of the stature of Christ.

Your behavior as a Christian is what people see you practice; the same way your attire would refer to your person, whether you are tidy or untidy; soldier or civil; king or common. The outer expression shows to whom you belong, and whom you serve (Acts 27: 23).

This new life we receive from Christ, is perpetually renewed as we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Yet, it would be befitting of us while being preoccupied with these great privileges we have in Christ, not to be slothful in our duties toward our brethren. Our knowledge of Christ should make us think more of the others, to get to learn more about the features of the new life, like tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another (12 – 14). Yes, these are the things with which we should be adorned. If we so live, we would have perfection while still being on earth; something that would fill our life with the peace of God.

St. Paul counsels us to “*seek what is above*”, namely, the exultant Christian life on an exalted level. For the heart of a Christian is a singing heart (16), Christ wants us to learn His words, and wants us, as well, to express our joy by singing praise, to partake of the life of the heavenly creatures.

The heavenly life is not easy, but requires continuous strife and persistent seeking to consummate. We are committed to seek the heavenly will of God, for His own sake.

❖ Let us “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matthew 6: 33). Let us meditate in the heavenly places, where Christ ascended. But let us first forsake the world which is not ours; to reach the place to which we are invited. Let us lift up our eyes high, to behold the splendor proclaimed. Let us spread our wings like angels, to behold the holy body laid there¹.

(Father Afrahat)

¹ *Demonstrations 6 on Monks, 1.*

- ❖ We have been risen with Christ, Let us then live in Him, and ascend with Him, so that the serpent would not find our heal to sting on earth¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ It is amazing how the apostle Paul lifted our minds high up; and how he filled them with mighty inspiration! ... Saying: “*things that are above*”; “*where Christ is*”, “*sitting at the right hand of God*’, From this point on, he prepared us to look down on earth².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Some, assuming that the resurrection concerns only the body, say that the first resurrection mentioned in the book of Revelation, is only carnal, basing their claim on that he, who is raised, is one who has fallen; And as bodies now fall through death; hence, there could not be resurrection for the souls, but only for the bodies. ... But what would they say to the apostle who speaks about the resurrection of the souls? whose words were surely addressed to the inner, and not to the outer man; when he says: “*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above*” (1); And in the same meaning he says: “As Christ is risen from the dead in the glory of the Father, we also walk in the newness of life”³.
- ❖ Although He has preceded us, and we have been already raised with Him, yet we are still on hope⁴.
- ❖ “*The heavens proclaim the glory of God*” ... Who are “*the heavens*”? ... Those who have become His throne. For the same way the Lord sits in heaven, He sits in His disciples, in those who preach the gospel; and even in you, if you so desire, you can become heavens.

Are you longing to become heavens? ... Purify your hearts from earth! For when you have no earthly lusts, and do not say in vain: “Our hearts are up in heaven”, you would indeed become

¹ *Escape from the World* 7: 44.

² *Homilies on Col.*, hom 7.

³ *City of God*, 20: 10.

⁴ *On Ps.* 71.

heavens. “*If you were raised with Christ*”, as the apostle says to the believers, covet for what is above , and not for what is down on earth, you would then become heavens? You bear a body; but in your behavior, you live the life of heaven. ... So being, You proclaim Christ to men; for, who among the believers would not proclaim Christ’?

- ❖ The church now is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heavens; hence, up till now the saints reign together with Him, although in a way different from reigning with Him after their death. As the tares grow in the church together with the wheat, no one will reign with Him, except those about whom the apostle, says: “*If you were raised with Christ, seek these things which are above, where Christ, sitting at the right hand of God, not the things on earth*” (1, 2); and about whom he says as well: “*Their citizenship is in heaven*” (Philippians 3: 20). They will reign together with Him, those who are as such in His kingdom, for they, themselves, are His kingdom. ... But in what concept are they counted the kingdom of Christ, except that, despite the existence of all iniquities in the world, until it comes to an end, they seek, not the things of this world, but the things of Christ².
- ❖ It is not in vain that the priest in the holy liturgy, reminds the congregation to lift up their heart; And it was not in vain that it is written: “*If you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*” ... They did seek the things which are above, and not the things which are on earth, as long as their citizenship is there in heavens; for, bearing God, they are heaven; they are the throne of God; and consequently, they proclaim the words of God, saying: “*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament show His handiwork*” (Psalm 19: 1)³.

(St. Augustine)

¹ On Ps. 97.

² City of God, 20: 9.

³ Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 3: 14.

- ❖ Being called for more exalted and honorable interests: “*things which are above, where Christ is sitting ...*” (1), Raise yourselves above the level of the earthly things; Holdfast to your citizenship in heaven, for your true home is the heavenly Jerusalem (Philippians 3: 20), and your fellow citizens are “*the firstborn who are registered in heaven*” (Hebrew 12: 23)¹.

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ According to St. Paul: “*If you are raised with Christ, seek the things which are above*”, then he adds: “*For you dies and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then also you will appear with Him in glory*” (3, 4).

In us, life according to the flesh disappears, if we put to death our lowly nature, then transform our life ambitions from earth to heavens; according to the proverb: “*Wise people store up knowledge*” (Proverb 10: 14); Then we would anticipate the true life; Christ would appear in us, We would get filled with His glory, and be transformed into a holy life... Let us now listen to the words of the song, as though we died according to the flesh, and are not any more drawn to the carnal meaning of the words. He who died to lusts would be transformed to the life of holiness; and from the literal meaning of the words to pure and undefiled meanings. Emptying his mind of the earthly things, it would be preoccupied only with the higher things where Christ is, sitting on the right hand of God (1). ... Let us now listen to the words of the song describing the pure beauty of the bride. I wish we could listen, as though we do not partake of the nature of the flesh, and move up to the circle of the Spirit².

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- ❖ When the mind meditate inside itself, it beholds all people in the image of God (See Genesis 1: 26-27), according to which they were created. In such specific vision, there will be no sinner and

¹ Hexmarion, Hom. 9: 2.

² Homilies on Song of Songs, 9. ترجمة الدكتور جورج نوار

righteous, slave and free, circumcised and uncircumcised, nor male and female; but it will only behold Christ, who is all in all¹.

(**St. John El-deliaty**)

Seek the things which are above, not the things which are on earth” (2)

Adam represented the human nature, and everything earthy; Whereas Christ, the second Adam, represents the heavelies (1 Corinthians 15: 45-49). So, where shall we holdfast our mind and heart?

According to **St. Jerome**, he who raises his heart and mind up to heaven, will become like a bird flying in the sky, where the serpent crawling on the ground cannot swallow it. And according to St. Augustine, such a believer is transformed from being dust, to become heaven, and would not be food for the serpent that feeds on the dust of the ground.

- ❖ The body is earthy (of dust); but we should refuse to be earth. How can we do that?... “*Seek the things which are above, not the things which are on earth*”. In you do not covet the earthly things, you are not earth; and if you are not earth, the serpent will not approach you, for its favorite food is the dust of the earth².

(**St. Augustine**)

When our hearts are lifted up to heaven, all our reactions, senses, emotions, and energies, will soar up in the heavenlies, and would not be absorbed by the bodily things.

- ❖ When reason, therefore, prevails upon all those reactions, they will transform to some kind of virtue; for anger will produce courage, fear will produce caution, and obedience; hatred will be replaced by the power of love, as a desire for everything truly beautiful. Our spirit in us will be lifted up above our thoughts and our desires, keeping them away from bondage to what is lowly.... Yes, the great apostle, commending such exaltation of

¹ الأب سليم دكاش اليسوعي: الشيخ الروحاني - مجموعة الرسائل الروحية، بيروت 1992، رسالة 49: 9.

² On Ps. 104.

mind, always exhorts us to “*seek the things which are above*”; For, we shall find that whenever an emotion exalts with the exaltation of our minds, it will liken the beauty of the divine icon¹.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- ❖ Notice how he sets forth with their senses up to the heavenlies. As I already said, the apostle, perpetually repeating that they have what Christ has; and, in all his epistles, concentrating on this issue, to make it clear that, in everything, they are partners of Christ, he uses the terms “Head and body”, and does his best to bring this meaning forth to them².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ In order to (taste) such exalted issues, you have to believe that Christ, in “sitting” does not obey like someone receiving orders and commands, but He is glorified, being the only begotten Son, to whom the Father says: “*Sit on My right hand, till I make Your enemiest your footstool*”³ (Hebrew 1: 13).

(St. Ambrose)

“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (3)

By “death”, here, he does not mean the death of the body, nor the separation from God; (as death being a separation); but the separation here, is from the world and its evils; and it also involves giving our backs to the old ways of our life.

According to **St. John Chrysostom**, the Lord Christ is like a pearl that remains hidden, as long as it is inside its shell.

- ❖ Nothing is more blessed than to be buried with Christ, where the angels, the Lord of angels, and men, all would rejoice. In this burial, we need no shroud!. Can you see the symbols of this? ... In the Red Sea, the Egyptians drowned to the bottom, whereas the Israelites got out safe. So it here: one is buried, and another

¹ *On Creation of Man, 5.*

² *Homilies on Col., Hom. 7.*

³ *On Christian Faith 2: 12 (103).*

is raised. So do not marvel to see birth and death at the same time in the font of baptism¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Narrow is the way of repentance (Matthew 7: 14); Yet it leads to the kingdom, to be together “*with Christ in God*”; and wide is the way of comfort and pleasure, yet it leads to the darkness of the devil, to be together with him in Hades².

(St. John el-deliaty)

- ❖ It was said to Peter: “*Rise, Peter, kill and eat*” (Acts 10: 13), but do not swallow in haste; for no man enter the body of the church, except him who was first slain, namely, unless he dies, to become as he has never been. He, who is not slain and not swallowed by the church, although he may be among those apparently counted of the congregation of the church, yet he will not be counted among those known to God; for, according to the apostle: “*God knows His own*”³.

(St. Augustine)

“*And your life is hidden with Christ in God*” (3). What life? It would, no doubt, not be that of our bodies, but our spiritual relationship with God, and doing His will in us. Christ, being our life, we have to “*walk the way He did*” (1 John 2: 6).

“*When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*” (4)

- ❖ Here, on earth, Paul, himself, was not living in glory; for he truly moaned in the body of death, as we listen to him, saying: “*For our life now is hidden with Christ in God; and when Christ who is our life appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory*” (3-4)⁴.

(St. Ambrose)

¹ Homilies on Col., Hom. 7.

² الرسالة 43 عن التوبة ومواساة الخطاة، 24.

³ On Ps.124.

⁴ Death is Good, 12: 56.

- ❖ Hoping for the things to come, and moaning for the sake of the future happiness; And as it is not yet clear how we shall be, although we are actually counted as the “children of God”; for **“our life is hidden with Christ in God”**, . we become victims of great despair because of those who seek, or who enjoy happiness in this world¹.
- ❖ The origin extends deep down inside; and where the root is, there is our life as well, there our love holds fast, and our life is hidden with Christ in God. . How would we, being so deeply rooted, ever wither? ... When will be our spring? ...When will be our summer? ... When will the honor of leaves cover us around?... When will we be enriched with the flow of fruition? ... When will all that be? ... Listen to what follows: **“When Christ, who is our life appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory”**. What should we do now? ... **“Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb”** (Psalm 37: 1, 2)².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The apostle says: **“Our life now is hidden with Christ in God”** (1). Let no one then strive to shine; let no one boast, nor be proud. Christ never intended to be well known to anyone, and did not seek for His name to be preached in the gospel while still on earth, but came to be hidden from this world. Let us, as well, hide our life the way He did; Let us stop being haughty; Let us stop trying to be well known. It would be better for us to live down here with humility, to be there in glory; for so he says: **“When Christ, who is our life, appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory”**³.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ The apostle did not, actually, say much about things of this life, but most of his meditations were in things of heaven. **“For our**

¹ On Ps. 123.

² On Ps. 37.

³ Duties of Clergies, 3: 5. (36).

citizenship is in heavens” (Philippians 3: 20); “*For our life now is hidden with Christ in God*” (3); Our crown (reward) are there; and our strife is for the sake of those crowns. As such life does not end with death, but shines more and more, those who follow such principle, have greater honor than the bearers of crowns, knowing for sure that they seek greater goals¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ One would say (which is the truth), that man dies to this world if he rejects its pleasures for God’s sake? So proclaims the apostle Paul, saying: “*God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world*” (Galatians 6: 14). Becoming His partners through the Holy Spirit who circumcises every uncleanness in us without hands, to die to this world, and to live the life of exaltation of God².

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

- ❖ Listen to the apostle say about this body: “*It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory*” (1 Corinthians 15: 43)³; And, “***When Christ, who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory***” (4). ... In what glory? ... This may refer either to the second coming, or His transfiguration in glory in the believer’s life; the verb “*appear*” means (revealed), or (come to light) (Romans 3: 21).

By using the pronoun “*you*”, the apostle refers to that what he means is, not the second coming, but rather the exaltation and glorification of the life of the believer. The apostle Paul uses this pronoun, on account of that he, himself, has likened Christ; hence he says: “*Imitate me*” (1 Corinthians 11: 1). And here, he seeks the same grace for the Colossians.

- ❖ To someone who may ask: What are we promised to have in this world? I say: the forgiveness of sins, and the cleaning of renewal by Baptism which, in the first place, has its main role in

¹ *Homilies on 2 Cor., Hom. 5: 15.*

² *Sermons on John, 4: 7.*

³ *Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 66: 2.*

the things to come. When Paul says: *“For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God; When Christ ... appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory”* (3, 4). They may respond by saying: [But, our life in this time, as well, has its privileges]. This issue has been a subject of great controversy, until they came to be convinced, and to have the ability to convince the others, who used to practice a multitude of evil, to do what they have never done before – to get cleansed of all their sins, and to forget all their iniquities.... What is truly amazing is that they were convinced¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

2- PUTTING TO DEATH THE WORKS OF THE OLD MAN:

“Therefore put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (5)

“Put to death your members” does not mean here to destroy your body members, but to put to death the old man, namely, the corrupt nature, which we inherited from Adam, flourished in us, reigned upon our depths, and corrupted our will, thoughts, emotions, and senses. Their traces, appearing on all aspects of man’s inner life and his behavior; hence are called “the old man”. It is the corrupt nature that stirs up adultery, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, greed, etc; if not in the apparent behavior, it would be in the mind, and if not in the mind, it would lie hidden in the subconscious, until the chance comes, to take over and leads all the being of man.

The apostle parades all these iniquities, as he did in his first epistle to the Thessalonians (4: 3-8). But here he adds covetousness which is “idolatry”. Actually, anything that fills our hearts and minds, and replace God, would be called “idolatry”.

It is unbecoming of us to be slothful and disregard any evil thought; which, even though it may seem as dead, yet some of them

¹ *Homilies on 1 Cor., Hom. 7: 20.*

has a huge power of resurrection. Yes we can put it to death, but in an instant it would resume life anew.

- ❖ Greed or covetousness is the source of all evil, hence called “idolatry”. Do not, then, prefer idolatry to Christ; and do not imitate Judas, and betray Him who was crucified for your sake, for few pieces of silver (bribe), by which the land purchased, as well as the hands of those who acquired such a profit, are called “Aceldama’, that is “field of blood” (Acts 1: 19)¹.

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ The blessed Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, he wrote that he “always carries about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Corinthians 4: 10), not boasting that he is the only one to do that, but to exhort them, as well as us, to follow his lead, and to have this as the subject of our boasting, all the time. Partaking of that, David says: “*For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter*” (Psalm 44: 22). That is how we came to be, particularly at this time of the year, when we celebrate the feast of the death of our Savior; For whoever has become like Him in His death, and strove to practice the virtues, would put to death his member which are on earth, crucify the body with its evil desires and lusts, and live the life of the Holy Spirit (in the Spirit), imitating Him.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Those who died to the world, and despised its trade, have gained an honorable death, for: “*Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints*” (Psalm 116: 15).
- ❖ By the members which are on earth, he means the human weakness; for he adds: “*fornication, covetousness,² ... etc.*”.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Those who have become true followers of Christ our Savior, all crucify their bodies, and put them to death, through being

¹ Letters, 53: 2.

² 10 Homilies on Epistles of John, 9: 2.

always preoccupied with labor and strife for the sake of piety, and through putting their natural carnal covetousness to death¹.

- ❖ In Him is our being; for, He proclaimed Himself Man, to put to death the members which are on earth (5; Romans 7: 23); namely the body lusts, to quench the fire of the law of sin, kindling in our members; and to sanctify our nature; So as to become for us a role model and a guide along the way of piety; and to consummate the proclamation of the truth according to knowledge, and according to the way of life that surpasses our own possibilities. All that, Christ has consummated when He became Man².

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

- ❖ What could be worse than covetousness?

It is worse than any lust; provoking sorrow more than any mental sickness, and more serious than that silly weakness before boredom. He says: “*Covetousness which is idolatry*”. Do you see where evil leads? ... I say this for your salvation; For He will destroy those who did not feed Christ...

Tell me now!... When he said: “*Put to death your members which are on earth*”; Is he accusing the earth as well?! Or does he talk about the earthly things, as though sins?

Here, parading the whole list together; for envy, anger, and lusts, are all evil covetousness; He did not say “*upon you*”, but: “*upon the sons of disobedience*” (6).

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He, who intends to dedicate his life to worship God, cannot be perfumed with the holy herbs, unless he himself turns into bitterness; namely, unless he puts to death his members which are on earth (5), through being buried together with Him, who died for our sake; And he takes from the myrrh on the body of Christ in His grave, to anoint his own body members; And once he so does, all the oils resulting from practicing virtue during

¹ *Comm.. on Luke, Sermon 118.*

² *Sermons on John, 1: 16.*

³ *Homilies on Col., Hom 8.*

life, will be mixed together to produce the “fragrant mix”, to anoint whoever smells it with the spirit of fragrance¹.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- ❖ It is befitting of us to present to Him the offering that would bring pleasure and joy to Him on the day of His resurrection. St. Gregory provides us with the reason, why God no longer finds pleasure in the animal sacrifices, in the words of the apostle Paul: “*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*” (Romans 12: 1). We can present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, when we do not practice our evil covetousness, “*walk in the Spirit, and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*” (Galatians 5: 16); through controlling the covetousness of our body members².

(St. Dorotheos of Gaza)

- ❖ That is why, while you are lying in bed, keep on uttering: “***By night on my bed I sought the one I love***” (Song 3: 1). And the words of the apostle: “*Put to death your members which are on earth*”; on account of that he himself has so done, to be able to say with confidence: “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*” (Galatians 2: 20). He who puts his members to death, would not fear to say: “*For I have become like a wineskin in smoke, for I do not forget Your statutes*” (Psalm 119: 83); for whatever humidity of covetousness was in me, dried up; And to say as well: “*My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness*” (Psalm 109: 24); and, “*So that I forget to eat my bread; because of the sound of my groaning, my bones cling to my skin*” (Psalm 102: 4)³.

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ As in Adam we all die, as though to the animal nature, So we all live in Christ, as spiritual, not despising the workmanship of God’s hands, but forsaking the covetousness of the flesh, and

¹ Homilies on Song of Songs, 6. ترجمة الدكتور جورج نوار.

² تأملات في مديحه للقديس غريغوريوس النريزي (ترجمة القمص إشعيا ميخائيل).

³ Letters, 22: 17.

receiving the Holy Spirit, according to the words of the apostle in his epistle to the Colossians: “**Put to death your members which are on earth**”, which are as he himself explains as: “**fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry**” (5). Forsaking these things is what the apostle preaches, saying that those who practice them are carnal, as though, only built of flesh and blood, and hence, would never inherit the kingdom of heaven; For, with their souls going down to the lusts of dust, they, themselves are called “of dust”. About these evil things, the apostle, in the same epistle, exhorts us saying: “*Put off the old man with his deeds*” (9). Yet saying that, he does not mean to get rid of the old form of man, or he would be provoking us to commit suicide¹.

(St. Erinaos)

- ❖ Idolatry is not confined to offering incense on the altar of the idols, or poring doses of wine in a certain container, but it is the ‘covetousness’, or rather selling the Lord for thirty pieces of silver; and counting oneself as doing righteousness.

Covetousness includes uncleanness, defiling the members of Christ, which should be “*a living sacrifice acceptable before God*”.

‘Deception’ is, as well, a form of idolatry. In the book of acts we read about those who donated their possessions under the feet of the apostles, yet some of them kept a part of its price; and have instantly gone to perdition.

You should then know, brethren, that nothing is yours to keep, for the Lord says: “*He who does not forsake all he has cannot be one of my disciple*”., Why would you, therefore, be a ‘half-hearted’ Christian²?

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ We should, not only beware of having money, but should also uproot from our souls any longing for it. ... We should, not only avoid the results of greed, but rather uproot every tendency

¹ *Adv. Haer. 5: 12; 3.*

² *Letters, 14: 5.*

toward it. For possessing no wealth would be of no benefit to us as long as we still have the desire to have it¹.

- ❖ He who owns nothing could probably be enslaved to greed, and would get no benefit of having the grace of poverty, on account of that he could not uproot from himself the sin of greed; receiving the privileges of poverty, not for the sake of its virtues, and content with the heavy burden of need; but still with a lukewarm heart. For according to the proclamation of the word of the gospel, those who are not defiled in their body, may commit adultery in their heart; and those who are not burdened with the weight of wealth, are weighed down by the curse of greed, longing for it. They only lacked the opportunity of possession, and not the will to. For the later is the one crowned by God. Hence, we are committed to use every caution possible, lest all our efforts should be wasted in vain. It would be truly sorrowful for someone to endure poverty and need, only to lose their fruits, because of his shaken will².
- ❖ He has despised all the possessions of the world, who utterly uprooted from his heart the desire to possess them³.

(St. John Cassian)

“Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience” (6)

What does he mean by *“the wrath of God”*? ... God, the wholly loving and compassionate, would never intend to destroy anyone. But, when given the back and not the face, man destroys himself by himself; as sin produces death and corruption. By the *“the wrath of God coming upon the sons of disobedience”*, the Holy Book means forsaking them. For when man chooses corruption, God gives him up to the lusts of his heart *“God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves”* (Romans 1: 24).

¹ الدساتير، كتاب 7، فصل 21،

² الدساتير، كتاب 7، فصل 22.

³ الدساتير، كتاب 7، فصل 27.

The most obvious contemporary example for this is the venereal diseases like Aids, which destroys man's life, physically, psychologically, and spiritually; unless he, who has got it through abnormal sexual practices, presents repentance and return to God, the Source of his life.

The word refers to God's position toward those who rebel against Him, who reject the most cherished of His gifts.

“in which you also once walked when you lived in them”
(7)

He gives them as a practical example, their life before receiving faith, when they used to live in sin, until the grace of God entered into their life, loosed their chains, and set them free. But it remains for them to strive by grace to continue living as it is befitting of the saintly children of God.

❖ *“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous”* (Romans 5: 19). Let each of us who is born from Adam, cross over to Jerusalem, uproot the old, to be built anew. It was said to the 'Jebusites' -- the old inhabitants of Jerusalem: *“Take off the old man and put on the new”*. And to those well established in Jerusalem, and enlightened by the light of grace, it is said: *“You were before in the darkness, but now you are light in the Lord”*.

The evil city from the beginning to the end, collapsed, and in its place a good city that wiped out evil was established. Those two cities are mingled with one another at the same time, but at the end, they separate. They wrestle against one another, one for the sake of iniquity, and the other for the sake of the truth¹.

(St. Augustine)

“But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth” (8)

The apostle seeks from them to put off from themselves what is unfitting of them.

¹ On Ps. 62.

“Anger”: is the reaction of man to events. Concentrating his sight on the events surrounding him, instead of getting preoccupied with Christ dwelling in him, he loses his dominion in Christ Jesus; giving excuse that he is naturally reactive; and forgetting that: *“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city”* (Proverb 16: 32).

“Wrath”: When anger turns into a reactive flare-up.

“Malice”: Which is worse than anger and wrath; when man puts on the deceptive image of tranquility and quietness, while inside, he bears the spirit of hatred and revenge. This way, Absalom the son of king David plotted to kill his brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13).

“Blasphemy”: Charging against God, His ordinances, and plan toward humanity, and His glories prepared for the saints.

“The filthy language”: Making unwarranted fun against others; expressed by the apostle Paul, as: *“obscene, silly, and vulgar talk, but instead there be thanksgiving”* (Ephesians 5: 4).

❖ The deadly venom of anger should be uprooted from the depths of the soul; because in case the spirit of anger remains in our hearts, our minds would be darkened, and would lose their ability of vision. Anger bring forth blindness, which makes the spiritual vision and the sound decisions in any matter impossible; would deny us the good meditation that brings wisdom forth to us, and we would even be unable to abide to goodness, or to receive the true spiritual light; for it is written: *“My eye wastes away because of grief”* (Psalm 6: 7)

Others may commend us as wise; but we would never be wise if we persist on getting angry; for it is written: *“Anger rests in the bosom of fools”* (Ecclesiastes 7: 9); which may lead us to lose the inheritance of the eternal life. It may seem to us that we have an understanding of the human nature, and a perception of its secrets; yet, if anger persists in us, the words saying *“Anger destroys the wise”*, would apply to us; and anger would deny us the perception of *“the righteousness of God”*, because it makes us lose the ability of discernment. Although we may be seen by others as saints and

perfect, yet it is written: “*The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*” (James 1: 20)¹.

- ❖ Attempting to justify anger, such a sickness deadly to the soul, some may quote proofs from the Holy Scripture, which they wrongly interpret. They claim that anger is not harmful, even if we direct it against brethren who sin; on account of that God, Himself, sometimes goes through fits of anger and wrath, on those who do not tend to know Him; or those who know Him, yet they reject Him. As proofs of their claim they quote the words of the psalm: “*The wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people*” (Psalm 106: 40); Or those of the prophet praying: “*Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure*” (Psalm 6: 1). They do not perceive that when they persist on such a justification of their anger, they lead others to holdfast to a harmful habit, and at the same time, they mix the limitless purity of God, who is the Source of every purity².
- ❖ When we read that God had anger and wrath, we should not perceive that these reactions are the same like human reaction which are unbefitting to refer to God who is above and beyond them. In other words, we should think of God as a Judge who try and condemn the evil works, and bring evil back upon its doer. . He should be described by specific terms that bring the fear of God, who will judge every work done against His will. But we should also take into consideration that man naturally fears those who get angry, and tend to avoid confronting their wrath. The wicked usually have fear of the judge known to be firm and strict in following the letter of the law. judges are not supposed to judge under the influence of reactions of anger, which would make them unable to issue fair judgments, Yet the wicked, because of their guilty conscience, expect anger even from the

¹ *De institutis caenoborum, Book 8: 1.*

² *De institutis caenoborum, Book 8: 2.*

moderate and meek judges, and usually feel wrath against any verdict issued against them, whatever it is¹.

(St. John Cassian)

“Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds” (9)

The Lord Christ being the “truth”, the devil “*does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it*” (John 8: 44).

- ❖ There is no fellowship between lies and the truth, as there is no fellowship between light and darkness. The presence of one sends the other away².

(St. Erinaos)

- ❖ Truth is light; If we do not walk according to the truth, we are in the darkness³.

(Hillary, bishop of Arle)

“Putting off the old man”: The verb “put off” in Greek, although it came in the past tense, yet its action is continuous. Putting off happened in baptism, yet man keeps on practicing it by repentance, being a second baptism. Man keeps on in a state of continuous putting off of his corrupt nature, for fear that its reins would eventually get loosed, and become active again. The new man persists on growing in Christ’s righteousness and holiness.

According to **St. John Chrysostom**, baptism, being the start of the way and not its end, in it man is born like a little infant, if it does not grow daily, it will die. Baptism is more like a new plant that needs continuous watering, yet, is God who gives the increase; “*We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 3: 18).

¹ *De institutis caenoborum, Book 8: 4.*

² *Adv. Haer 3: 5: 1.*

³ *Introductory Commentary on 1 John.*

❖ Meditating in this point, listen to John the Baptist addressing the scribes and Pharisees who came to be baptized by him, saying: “*Broods of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*” (Matthew 3: 7)..... So do not be a viper. If you happen to have the old skin of a viper, namely your old life, put it off from yourself; for a viper normally crawls into a hole, where it gets rid of its old skin, to renew its youth. Like it, you should “*enter through the narrow gate*” (Matthew 7: 13, and put off your old skin by fasting; and forsaking what would lead you into perdition. Put off the old man with his deeds (9); and say together with the bride of the song: “*I have taken off my robe, How can I put it on again*”¹ (Song 5: 3)²

^ (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

❖ Listen to the apostle who says: “*You have put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man*” (9; Ephesians 4: 22-24). As you may see, even the viper has got what you should imitate!. When you rid yourself of that old man, you are imitating the wisdom of the viper³!

(St. Augustine)

❖ The evil devil defiled man wholly, soul and body, made him in enmity with God, and not in submission to His law. Having, therefore come to be wholly a sin; man looks through a sinful eye, hears through a sinful ear, his legs hasten to do evil, his hands hasten to do iniquity, and his heart invents evil. Let us then supplicate to God to help us put off the old man; for He alone can take sin away from us⁴.

(St. Maccarius the Great)

❖ “*You have put off the old man with his deed*” (9). When the early creation wore out, and grew old, man became in need of

¹ في سفر النشيد (5: 3) يشير النص إلى الانتظار إلى عدم القيام من السرير مع الرب، لكن القديس يستخدمه هنا بمعنى مغاير.

² مقالات لطالبي العماد 3: 7.

³ Sermons on N.T. Lessons. 14: 3.

⁴ Homilies, 2: 2. ترجمة مركز الدراسات الآباء بالقاهرة.

renewal in Christ; as according to the apostle, it is unbefitting of the new creation to have any trace of the old one, saying: “*Since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the old man who is renewed in the knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*” ; and, “*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new*” (2 Corinthians 5: 17)

The Creator of human nature, at the beginning and the end, being One, who will never change: He, initially took dust from the ground and created man; then, later on, He took dust from the holy Virgin Mary, and did not create a mere man, but “formed man about Himself”.... In the beginning, “He created”, then, later on “He was created”; ... In the beginning, the Word created a body (for Adam); Then later on, “*The Word became a body Himself, to change our body to a Spirit; having partaken of our body and blood*”. ... Concerning that new creation in Christ, which He has started by Himself, He was called “Firstborn”, the Firstborn of all, of those who are born into life, and of those who live by the resurrection of the dead¹.

- ❖ The apostle, therefore, exhorting those among his listeners who are able to reach perfection, makes it clear to them how to reach such a goal, by counseling them “*to put off the old man and to put on the new man, who is renewed in the knowledge according to the image of His Creator*”. ... Let us then, all return to the divine grace, in which God created the early man, when He said: “ (Check).; To Him be the glory, forever, Amen².

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- ❖ As the Lord Christ loves His Church to be holy, chaste, and blameless, Let the husbands, as well, love their wives chaste; Let each of them learn how to keep his vessel holy and in honor, and not in evil defilement like the Gentiles, who did not know God; “*For God did not call us to defilement, but to sanctification; knowing that, since you have put off the old man*

¹ *Against Eunomius* 4: 3.

² *In Creation of Man*, 33.

with his deeds, and put on the new man who is continuously renewed according to the image of his Creator”¹.

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ Forsaking sin and the old man behind him, the believer comes to be a new man in the knowledge of God, and reaches perfection; For he, through the knowledge of his God, becomes a perfect image, and an icon of Him; And by good deeds he may acquire non-death; through which he may live eternally in the image of His Creator².

(St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers)

3- ENJOYMENT OF THE NEW MAN:

“And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (10)

The renewal of the new man in knowledge is a sign of life; for there is no life in Christ without growth; and no growth without an enlightenment by the power of the Holy Spirit; to have the inner man conform to the image of his Creator, to become a living icon of the Lord Christ, the heavenly Groom.

- ❖ This is the secret code; As, by the new birth from above, our nature changes from corruption to non-corruption; through renewal from the old man to the image of Him, who has created him in the beginning according to the image of the Godhead³.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- ❖ Anyone among you, a slave of sin, Let him through faith, be completely prepared for the new birth in freedom and adoption; By putting off his bondage to his evil sins; and, by putting on the blessed bondage to the Lord, he would become worthy of the inheritance of the kingdom of heavens.

By confession, *“Put off your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”* (Ephesians 4:

¹ *Against Jovinianus 1: 16.*

² *On Trinity 11: 49.*

³ *Against Eunomius, 2: 1.*

22), “to put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (10).

And by faith, “take the spirit in your hearts as a deposit” (2 Corinthians 1: 22); “so that they may receive you into everlasting habitations” (Luke 16: 9)¹.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ Receiving the eternal life is something; while putting it on, and walking in it, is something else (Romans 6: 4); For “*the new man, being created, according to God, in righteousness and holiness*” (Ephesians 4: 24), he has to live “*to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4: 13); by which he shall be judged.
- ❖ Since the coming of the Lord, by whom the transformation from the circumcision of the body to the circumcision of the heart took place; the call has been for man to live according to the spirit, namely, according to the inner man, who is also called “the new man”, on account of his new birth, and the renewal of his spiritual way of life².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ That rational creature on earth, namely man, has been, according to the Holy Book, originally created according to the image of Him who created him (10). This image may have several meanings, and according to several kinds, beside the model element, namely the image of God who created man, which is the most clearly proclaimed of all the elements; the element of non-corruption and of non-death³.

(Ct. Cyril of Alexandria)

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free; but Christ is all and in all” (11)

¹مقالات لطالبي العماد 1 : 2

² On Ps. 6.

³ Sermons on John, 9: 14

- ❖ This new nature (the new man) given to us, would teach us to override the hurdles that separate between men; For Christ came to be in all of us; or we have rather become one in Him; on account of that we are His body.

(St. John Chrusostom)

The most serious of those hurdles is probably the racial one, concerning the “Jews and Gentiles”, namely, “the circumcised and the uncircumcised”; as well as the social hurdles, namely, “the slaves and the free”.

In the new covenant, the term “Greek” refers to the Gentiles (Romans 1: 16); and the “barbarians” refer to those who do not speak in Greek, the language of culture at that time. The “Scythians”, counted as being primitive, violent and wild, were scoffed and ridiculed by the Greeks. Now, after the coming of the Lord Christ, He gave His grace to all men with no discrimination.

As the grace of the Lord Christ took away all the differences between men, no marvel that St. Paul wrote a message to Philemon concerning Onesimus, his escapee slave, who robbed him and flew away, saying: “*I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, ... who departed from you for a while, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother*” (Philemon 10, 15). The maidservant ‘Blandina’, was martyred side by side with her mistress, and was even more of a heroin; And ‘Phelicia was martyred side by side with her mistress in the spirit of sisterhood.

Christ is “all and in all”; not in the literal meaning of the ‘Existentialistic’¹, term, but He is everything concerning us, and for our sake; the Creator, the Savior, the Brother, the Intercessor, the Intermediary, and the Goal; that we are in no need to seek another.

- ❖ Some may assume that, on account of their wealth, they should be treated in a different way than others. But in the church, wealth is in faith. What would be the marvel for the believer to possess the whole world, if he possesses the inheritance of Christ, which is immeasurably more valuable than the world:

¹الوجودي هو الذي يتبع المذهب القائل بأن الله والوجود أو الإنسان والطبيعة كيان واحد.

“*You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ*” (1 Peter 1: 18, 19). Therefore, if you are rich, then obey Him who says: “*Be holy in all your conduct*” (1 Peter 1: 15). Here, he does not address the rich alone, but all; For he judges without looking at persons, according to the apostle, His faithful witness¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Therefore, let all our words, and our deeds be according to, and about Christ, He who brought life forth from the dead, and who created the light from darkness².

(St. Ambrose)

Positive commands:

“*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering*” (12)

“*As the elect of God*”; We, who are in Christ are holy and beloved, as is the Holy Son, the object of pleasure and love of the Father, which requires from us to put on the attires of virtue, whose list of items is here paraded here by the apostle, to be like a garment for the Christian in his life. Mentioning certain advises concerning perseverance and forgiveness; he refers to love as the greatest of virtues, which supports and consummates the other virtues (1 Corinthians 13: 13; 1 Peter 4: 8).

On the negative aspect, he seeks from us to put off the old man with his deeds; And on the positive aspect he commands us to put on what befit the new man, whom we have gained in baptism. Being qualified to gain a multitude of graces, on account of that the Lord does not give the Spirit with a measure, and being the elect of God, to be beloved saints, we are committed to put on the Lord Jesus (Romans 13: 14), to bear the fellowship of His features, of “*tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering*” (12).

“*tender mercies*”, Compassion is set upon the new nature that came to be ours, to have our hearts wide open with love and

¹ Letters 63: 36.

² On Virgins 3: 5 (24).

compassion toward everyone, as a fellowship in the features of the Philanthropic Lord.

❖ He introduces the virtue as an easy thing to seek and to perpetually have as the greatest adornment... he says “*tender mercies*” and not just “mercies”, not just as the bond between brethren, but as that of fathers toward their children¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“**kindness**”, If compassion implies love and gentleness toward others, “kindness” bears a tendency to cover up the faults and sins of the others, in the spirit of wisdom for the sake of their salvation.

“**humbleness**”. With humbleness, our Christ united with our manhood, and hid His Godhead to become less than angels (Hebrew 2: 7, 9), and became even a servant like the least of men (Philippians 2: 6, 7). As for us, humbleness is to discover our actual truth; to perceive that without the divine grace we can do nothing.

“**meekness**”; is a reflection of the inner tranquility of the soul, once it trusts in its Savior in complete delivery of its life into His hands, together with trust in His divine ordinance. On another aspect, it is a fellowship with Jesus Christ in His meekness even at the time of His trial (1 Peter 2: 21-23). He who called on us to follow his lead, saying: “*Learn from Me for I am gentle and lowly in heart*” (Matthew 11: 29).

“**longsuffering**”; namely, the fellowship with our Christ in His longsuffering anticipation of the salvation of the sinners.

”Bearing one another, and forgiving one another. If anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave us, so you also may do” (13)

In longsuffering, we bear one another, as our Christ forgave us. In so doing, we bear the same goal of Christ, namely seeking the salvation of every soul for the glory of the Father, and for the edification of our souls.

Concentrating our eyes on the Lord Christ who wishes to dwell in us, and among us, we shall find no difficulty in bearing

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom 8.*

and in longsuffering, but we shall find in them the pleasure of God and the pleasure of ourselves to bear those who do us harm, however often they repeat their action, desiring to gain the honor of fellowship with our Christ, through putting ourselves for the sake of our brethren.

The Lord paid a huge price for the forgiveness of our sins, with no commitment upon Himself, but He did it out of love. He paid the complete cost of the “grievance” raised against us, and cancelled the written requirements; Hence the apostle Paul asks us to forgive the others in the same way, saying: “*so you also do*”.

- ❖ He always exhorts us to follow the lead of our Lord Jesus Christ through giving such great examples¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Here you have the basic principle: If Christ forgave you your sins just “seventy times seven times”, and no further; You, therefore, may reach this limit, and no further. But if Christ forgave thousands and thousands of your sins; You then, should not set a limit for your compassion, but seek to forgive as much as that huge number of sins².

- ❖ Lest you may think that it is beyond your ability to follow the lead of the Lord in forgiving sins, listen to the apostle say: “*Forgiving one another, ... as Christ forgave you*” (3: 13; Ephesians 4: 32); And, “*Be followers of God as dear children*” (Ephesians 5: 1). ... You were called a son of God; If you refuse to follow His lead, why should you then seek His inheritance³?!

(St. Augustine)

“But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (14)

“**Love**” is the crown of all virtues, and the true reference to putting on the new man; It is the bond of perfection; And,

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom 8.*

² *Sermons on N.T. Lessons 33: 3.*

³ *Sermons on N.T. Lessons 64: 3.*

according to **St. John Chrysostom**, without love, all the previously mentioned virtues would become of no value nor benefit.

Love embraces all the graces together in the new man, and draws the Christian through it to perfection. The word translated as “bond”, is the same word mentioned in Ephesians 4: 3, and Acts 8: 3; meaning: (binding together as though by a chain). Such is the greatness of love; without which all the other virtues would be a subject of ridicule.

- ❖ Love is the mother of all virtues; and the words of the apostle about faith, hope, and love, are like a triple rope which is unbreakable (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, 13). We believe and hope; and through our faith and hope, we are bound together with the bond of love¹.

(**St. Jerome**)

- ❖ He means to say that all those things are without benefit, and will collapse unless they are done with love, which binds them together with one bond, All the good we do, if not done with love, will soon go away without a trace, and will come to nothing².

(**St. John Chrysostom**)

- ❖ Originally, there was nothing evil in our nature; for God did not create covetousness, but put in us a multitude of natural virtues, among which, no doubt, was **mercy**; that even the atheists may have by nature; Then **love**; for several of the irrational animals grieve on the departure of their partners; Then **faith**, which we find natural in ourselves; Then **hope**; according to which we borrow, plant, and travel ... Therefore, if **love** is a virtue, natural in us, which is the “*bond of perfection*” (Ephesians 4: 3; Colossians 3: 14; Romans 13: 10). all the other virtues are consequently not far from our nature. ... Let them be ashamed, those who make excuses for themselves of being unable to gain³.

(**St. John Climacus**)

¹ Letters 82: 11.

² Homilies on Col., Hom. 8.

³ Ladder, 26: 67.

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful” (15)

When we are adorned with the previously mentioned virtues, “love” in particular, the steadfast and unchangeable **peace** of God will dwell in us.

The peace that dwells between the soul and God, will reflect on the peace between the soul and the body; so that man becomes in harmony, with no conflict between the body and the soul; and this peace will set forth to others, so that the believer lives in peace with his brethren under all circumstances.

Such peace which dwells in the heart with God, with the body, with men, and even with all creatures, will turn man’s heart into a harp on which the Holy Spirit plays an unceasing song of thanksgiving.

- ❖ *“The peace of God”* is the steadfast and perpetual peace. If the peace in you is according to men, it will soon come to an end, but not if it is according to God.

Do not get angry, and do not submit to hate, nor to peace according to men; for revenge is a human feature with horrible results. You should, instead, have the kind of peace left to us by the Lord Himself (John 14: 27).

Through peace, we are one body; and being one body, we are in peace ... He did well by adding: *“and be thankful”* (15); For the thankful and those filled with love, deal with their brethren, the way God deals with them. They submit to the Lord, obedient, giving thanks for everything, even when reviled or physically stricken by someone¹.

- ❖ He says *“be thankful”*, for that is what is sought by everyone; Thanksgiving is the greatest of the good things. Let us then give thanks for everything and in every situation².
- ❖ There is nothing holier than the tongue that gives thanks to God, It is not far less than martyrdom, for each has its own crown³.

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 8.*

² *Homilies on Col., Hom. 8.*

³ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 8.*

(St. John Chrysostom)

4- PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (16)

The desire of the apostle’s heart is that the word of Christ would dwell richly in the believers, to receive the divine truth; not only to be mentally convinced by it, but to live according to it, as the constitution of their life, and an inner leader of the mind, words, and behavior; according to the words of the psalmist: *“Your words I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You”*. (Psalm 119: 11) ... **St. John Chrysostom** seeks from us to acquire the Word, and to go deep in it; saying that the lack of knowledge of the Holy Book is the reason of all evil; which is like going into battle with no weapon. *“The sword of the Spirit is the word of God”* (Ephesians 6: 17).

If the word of God is the weapon of the believer in his battle against the hosts of darkness; the life of praise is the banquet fulfilling to the soul, which turns our life into a continuous inner feast, and which sanctifies all our works and words, to give to the account of Christ (7).

Praise stirs up in the soul the heavenly joy of the Spirit: *“For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”* *Romans 14: 17). And according to St. Anthony the Great: [The soul subsists on and rejoices in the spiritual joy, and ascends with it up to heaven]. And the scholar Tertullian, describing the meetings of the Christians, wrote: [After washing their hands (following the Aghabi banquets), they hold candles, and call everyone present to sing a praise of his own writin, he quotes from the words of the gospel, to express his personal feelings toward God].

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” . This is the ultimate commandment concerning the growth of the Christian personality.

St. Paul presents the following three ways by which we can teach and admonish one another: by psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The **psalms** refer to the holy songs quoted from the Old Testament; in particular the book of psalms; The **hymns** refer to the songs of praise and church worship to God (Acts 16: 25; Hebrew 2: 12); Whereas the **spiritual songs** refer to the songs uttered naturally by the believer; and all of them God seeks to be sung with grace from the heart.

❖ Good is the soul in the depths of which the Word (the Logos) dwells¹.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*”. God the Word chooses the times and the ways that are convenient for His dwelling in us; according to the words added by the apostle: “*teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*”².

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

❖ “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*”. Namely, the teachings, the doctrines, and the spiritual counsels; ... he says that the present life is nothing, even in its good issues. Meditate in the wisdom of this blessed man; he not only says: “Let the word of Christ *dwell in you*”, but “*richly*”.

The lack of knowledge of the Holy Book is the reason behind all evil, which is like going unarmed into a battle!; how could you expect to return unharmed? ... Instead of learning from us, and your spouses and children learning from you, you cast all responsibilities on us, which doubles our burdens and labor.

Meditate, as well in the wisdom of St. Paul; Knowing how reading may be a heavy burden to some, he drew their attention, not to the historical books of the Holy Scripture, but to the psalms, the hymns, and the spiritual songs, by which they can teach and admonish one another. ... Yet he Knows that the only songs their

¹ *Isaac or the Soul*, 8: 70.

² *Paedagogus*, 2: 4.

children and all the helping hands in their households utter, are those of the devil, that they know no psalms, and that they even ridicule and scoff those who do.

He counsels us to teach and admonish our children to sing the psalms, that, being full of wisdom, and exhorts to chastity, they will motivate them to keep away from the wicked. Learning about the psalms, he will also get to know the hymns as something holy; sung, as well, by the higher hosts; for according to the wise Solomon: “*A hymn is not sweet in the mouth of the sinner*” . “.

What do the cherubim and the angels sing: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*” (Luke 2: 14).

Even while you are in the market, you can sing to God in secret, without being heard by anyone. Moses did just that, and was heard by God who said to him: “*Why do you cry out to Me?*” (Exodus 14: 15), though he was inaudibly crying out to God with a contrite heart. Man therefore can pray to God even while walking, having his mind dwell high up¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him”
(17)

The essence of life, being the fellowship with the Lord Christ, the believer should have his words and deeds sealed by the name of Jesus Christ, to let them smell of the fragrance of thanksgiving, the object of pleasure to God the Father.

“*In the name of ...*” means (for the glory of ...) (John 14: 13).

It is befitting of us to be exultant and thankful to God, in order to walk the way that qualifies us to the worthiness of Christ (1: 12). As away from Christ, we have no entrance to God, nor even to thanking Him.

❖ Wherever the name of Jesus is called, there would be no defilement nor uncleanness ... If you eat, drink, walk or get

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 9.*

married, “*do all in the name of the Lord*”, namely, call Him and pray to Him to help you, ... Let this be the foremost in everything you do. We start our letters with the name of the Lord; for wherever the name of the Lord is, everything will be good and well. ... Never let any other name, even those of the angels precede the Lord’s name.... If saying the name of the Lord drives out the evil spirits, and heals the ailments, how much more would it make the work more successful!

Read how, in the name of the Lord, Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac; And how David killed Goliath! ... How amazing and great is the name of the Lord!

Nothing in the world equals that name, amazing everywhere. .. “*His name is ointment poured forth*” (Song 1: 3); He who utters it will be instantly filled with its fragrance, for is written: “*No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12: 3). This name, indeed, performs wonders. If you, by faith, say: “*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*”, how great will be the things you will be able to achieve.

We have been renewed (created anew) by this name. By such a name we shine before others; ... It makes martyrs and confessors; ... It grants us a great gift to live in glory, to bring pleasure to God, to be counted qualified for the good things, that He promised to give to those who love Him, through His grace and compassion¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

5- CHRIST IS THE LAW OF THE HOUSEHOLD:

“*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord*” (18)

Lifting us up to heaven, to have the deposit of the heavenly things, the apostle translated this life in the actuality of the household; to let it be an icon of the heavenly household.

The apostle demands from the wife to liken the church in her submission to Christ, her Groom; Yet this submission is not absolute, but “*as is fitting in the Lord*”.

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 9.*

This submission by the wife is partaking of the exalted features of the church; and, at the same time, is a natural reaction to the honor, love, and appreciation, given to her by her husband. As it is befitting of men *“to give honor to the wives as being heirs together of the grace of life”* (1 Peter 3: 7). And even in case the man does not behave as is befitting, the wife is, nevertheless, asked by our Lord Jesus to submit to him, not in humility, but as a witness to the gospel of Christ. According to the apostle: *“Wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives”* (1 Peter 3: 1-2).

❖ Being submissive for the sake of the Lord, is an honor to the wives.

It is not the kind of submission of servants to their masters; nor a submission dictated by their nature, but it is for the sake of the Lord. As the one who loves, could be somewhat harsh; What he means here, ‘Do not fight each other’, for there is nothing worse than that, particularly when it happens from the husband against his wife.

Seeing that she is beloved by her husband, the wife will love him in return, and submits to him; which makes him deliver himself to her more and more. Meditate in how nature runs its course: One submits, and the other loves; ... Yet, when your wives submit to you, it would be unbecoming of you, husbands, to become tyrants, and haughty. And, when your husbands love you, it would be unbecoming of you, wives, to become puffed up with pride.... Wives!... do not fear to submit to your husbands who love you. And husbands! ... do not fear to love your wives, because your love will make them submit to you; And in both cases, the marital relationship will grow stronger¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Husbands, love your wives, and never treat them harshly” (19)

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

He seeks from the husband to deal with his wife as an ambassador of Christ, to make the house a holy church, the two would become sanctified, and each of them would have a good influence on the other. According to **St. John Chrysostom**, The loving and submissive wife makes her husband lenient.

The wife's submission as a natural tendency, would often fails when her husband misunderstands the significance of how the Lord Christ loved the church – His bride -- to the extent to deliver His life for her sake. “*So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself*” (Ephesians 5: 28, 29). He who loves his wife like this, would never be harsh toward her.

“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord” (20)

The children obey their parents, not because it would be well pleasing to them, but to the Lord, as in that, they partake of the feature of obedience of the Lord Christ, which to them would not be humiliation nor a destruction of their personality, but a fellowship with the features of the Lord Christ.

Moreover, the children, seeing the obedience of their mother to her husband, and the love of their father for his wife, would live as though in heaven, and obedience would become a natural feature of the heavenly atmosphere in which they live.

The apostle counsels us to listen, obey, and receive the commandment in submission, and not with grumbling; ... God would rather see us obey His commandment by our own free will.

❖ Do you notice how he wishes us to do all that, not just as a response to nature, but for a more exalted motive, namely, for the fact that this is well pleasing to the Lord, and to get a reward thereof¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” (21)

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

In the old societies, the father used to be unquestionably the head of the family, and anyone of the household who disobeys him was considered guilty.

Do not provoke them, namely, do not burden them with orders, commands, and regulations, beyond their endurance; that would probably lead them to violent reactions; Treat them as human beings; Respect their views, and do not anticipate unreasonable things from them.

According to the wise Solomon: *“Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die”* (Proverb 23: 13). Yet it is not befitting of the parents to go beyond reason in chastisement, even though the motive would be to raise them in the fear of God; for, according to psalmist: *“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him”* (Psalm 103: 13). Let us therefore, imitate God in His compassionate fatherhood, even in chastening His children; for *“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in mercy; He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever”* (Psalm 103: 8, 9). Punishment is for the sake of teaching and improving the conduct of the child, and not to subdue him, nor to make him lose his trust and respect of his parents.

The word *“provoke”* here, implies to despise, threaten, bitterly criticize, revile, or destroy his personality as a failure; for that would be contradictory to what is required by *“the meekness of wisdom”* (James 3: 13). About the fathers who are extreme in firmness, it is written: *“The worst thing for youth is breaking their hearts”*.

- ❖ He does not say: “Love your children”, on account of that nature instigate them to do just that; but what he means is to set aright what needs to be¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Commands for servants:

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

“Servants, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord”(22)

Here, the apostle give special commands to the servants (the slaves), whose hearts, in the old times, were destroyed through being sold and purchased as possessions, with no rights whatsoever, that may reach to being killed if his master so wishes.

The slaves would never have dreamt to find a free man, a Roman citizen, like the apostle Paul, care to address them personally; and to count himself as one of them, saying: *“For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake”* (2 Corinthians 4: 5).

Again, joining the ranks of servants, the apostle Paul lifts their eyes up to the Lord Christ, by letting them perceive that when they obey their earthly masters, it would not be to please them, but to please the Master of all mankind; not for the sake of any wages from Him, but, being His children, they would expect an eternal inheritance. As to the oppressive masters, they will be judged by Him who does not look at the appearance.

“not only while being watched”; for there are those who, being only preoccupied with making their work visible, they do it in the least time, and with the least quality possible.

❖ What he says to the slaves here, is not only for the sake of their masters, but for their own sake as well, to make them the object of their masters’ love. Yet he does not openly proclaim it, lest they would lose heart in serving their masters. Yet he was keen to say: *“Your earthly masters”*, namely, according to the flesh, to let them know that their souls, their better parts, are free.

Listen to the prophet David say: *“God has scattered the bones of (the pleasers of men)”* (Psalm 53: 6 – Septuagint). Do you see how he, both observes their feelings, and commands them to obey the existing system; all *“wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord”*. For it would not be done wholeheartedly, but with hypocrisy, to pretend doing something while meaning something else; Or to

appear in a way when the master watches, then reverse your conduct when he goes away¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men” (23)

Someone may be a boss or a judge for a day or two; but God is our Head and our Judge, who resides forever on the throne; and that is our only interest.

- ❖ Intending to let them be free, not just of hypocrisy, but of slothfulness, he addressed them as free and not slaves, who need to be watched by their masters; For the expression “wholeheartedly” means (by free will), and not compulsory as slaves².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (24)

“But he who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong which he has done; and there is no partiality” (25)

God has no partiality, sin is sin, even if committed by a believer (see Hebrew 12: 29, 29).

- ❖ What if you are a slave (a servant); there is nothing to be ashamed of! He, likewise addresses the masters in his epistle to the Ephesians 6: 9. But it so seems that he is hinting to the Greek masters (the Gentiles)... What if your master is a Greek, and you are a Christian? ... What is judged is not the person but the deeds, You, accordingly should serve wholeheartedly, and with good will³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

² *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

³ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

**AS INSPIRATION FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE
COLOSSIANS (Chapter 3)**

**LET ME PUT OFF THE GARMENT OF HUMILIATION
AND PUT ON THAT OF THE WEDDING**

- ❖ O Heavenly One, You have been clothed with our Manhood;
You have not been ashamed of our humanity;
To us, You presented Yourself a splendid divine garment.
- ❖ By Your Holy Spirit, I shall put off the old man;
For I have no pleasure in me for his works;
Nor his covetousness has dominion on my depths;
You are my strength and salvation;
You dwell in my depths.
- ❖ Let me put off the garment I weaved with the corruption of my
will;
Let me flee to You, O Unique Mountain;
Let me flee with my life, so as not to face perdition of Sodom
and Gomorrah.
- ❖ You are the garment of my wedding;
I put You on, and hide in You;
Instead of my dust, Your splendor shines in me;
Instead of the earth with its mire;
I enjoy the heavenlies with their glory.
- ❖ By Your Spirit I put on the garment of joy;
Instead of anxiety and failure;
My soul exults with praise and thanksgiving
- ❖ I present to you a song of praise, that no one will hear except
You;
My heart meditates with the language of thanksgiving
understood only by You;
I partake of the songs of praises, sung by the heavenly hosts;
And utter in my depths the language of heaven.
- ❖ Dwelling in me, You become the law of my life;

In every behavior you lead me by yourself;
I see You in my household, Your holy church;
I walk in You and for Your sake;
And my life turns into a new heaven

CHAPTER 4

CHRIST IS THE GUIDE OF OUR BEHAVIOR CHRIST AND OUR OUTER LIFE

The Lord Christ is the Law of our life, and the Guide of our outer and inner behavior. This last chapter of the epistle to the Colossians presents another stage of our life in Christ – the outer life. We know that we have to grow inside, and that in us the virtue of the new life have to give fruit in Christ; Yet there is something more; our new life has to be seen and felt by others (4: 5); for by that, we present the Lord Christ to the world; as the name “Christian” means (little Christs united with the Lord Christ). The life of the Lord Christ did not come to an end by the consummation of the writing of the gospels; but Christ continues to live in us; and His life is written by the living letters, known and read by all men.

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1- A COMMANDMENT TO THE MASTERS:

“Masters, give your servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven” (1)

Having exhorted the servants to serve their masters in obedience for the sake of the Lord, He now exhorts the masters to walk, not with the spirit of authority, but in submission to the Master of all; remembering that they will eventually present an account to Him; for it is written: *“For the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them”* (Ecclesiastes 5: 8), it is befitting of them, in dealing with their servants to recognize the heavenly law, saying: *“For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you”* (Matthew 7: 2); and, *“For judgment*

is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy” (James 2: 13).

- ❖ Giving our servants what is “*just*” and “*fair*”, is to provide them with abundance, let them in need of nothing from others; and reward them for their labor and work. Knowing that they will have their reward in heaven, the masters should not deprive their servants of it here. Somewhere else he says: “*Give up threatening*” (Ephesians 6: 9); meaning, treat them with more compassion; remembering that “*With the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you*” (Matthew 7: 2) ¹.

(St. John Chrysostom

2- PRAYERS FOR THE SAKE OF THE MINISTRY:

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (2)

Here the apostle presents to us four important features of prayers:

1- **Persistence**, or continuity, or praying without ceasing; for it would be like the perpetual burnt offering, day and night, the fire on the altar that was never quenched, which God smells a fragrance of pleasure (Exodus 39: 28, 29); “*Men always ought to pray and not lose heart*” (Luke 18: 1). Persistence on praying would enable us to reach God’s purpose, to get attached to Him, and would help us increase our knowledge of Him; which is the eternal life.

2- **Watching**, or spiritual vigilance, namely, presenting prayers with understanding and spiritual alertness; remembering the words by which the Lord admonished his disciples, saying: “*Could you not watch with Me one hour?!*” (Matthew 26: 40).

3- **Praying for the sake of the ministers:** “*that God would open to them a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ*” (3), namely, the mystery of the exalted love of God for the whole world.

4- **Thanksgiving**, by which the believer presents a thanksgiving sacrifice to God; according to the words of the

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

apostle, saying: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4: 6-7).

- ❖ Being aware of the greatness of prayer, the devil tends to apply strong pressure on the believers to make them pray slothfully; Hence the apostle Paul says: *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving”* (3); For this is how the saints do for the benefit of all¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The spiritual blessings are not just for the soul, but for the benefit of the body as well².

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

- ❖ We read in the gospel how the Lord used to spend whole nights praying; and how the apostles, as well, while in prison, spent whole nights singing psalms, that the earth quaked, and the guards and the other prisoners were greatly terrified. The apostle says: *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it”* (2). The watcher may fall asleep, but let him say, together with David: *“Behold, He who keeps Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep”* (Psalm 121: 4). But in case it so happens that our Keeper, the Holy One sleeps, because of our sins, let us say to Him: *“Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord?”* (Psalm 44: 23). And if our boat is stricken by the mighty waves, let us say to Him: *“Lord, save us, we are perishing”* (Matthew 8: 25)³.

(St. Jerome)

“that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains” (3)

Wasn't the Apostle Paul filled with the Spirit? ... Wasn't he experienced with the mysteries of the kingdom?.... Wasn't he

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

² *Stromata, 5: 10.*

³ *Letters, 109: 3.*

capable of speaking the word of God? ... Why then, did he ask the Colossians to pray for his sake, that God would open to him a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ? ... He believed that every minister was in need of the prayers of his congregation for his sake; and that all should partake of preaching together, whether by prayers or by speaking the word; for the congregation “*are partakers with him of grace*” (Philippians 1: 7).

“***The mystery of Christ***” is “*the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages*” (1 Corinthians 2: 7-8). And by it, he also means the mystery of Christ “*revealed in the apostle himself, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles*” (Galatians 1: 16); It is the mystery of the “Word”, which the apostle sought to proclaim; the message of the gospel in general, and the Person of Christ in particular. Here, the apostle specifically refers to the truth proclaimed about our Lord Christ, His Person, and His work as the Christ of God.

“***For which I am also in chains***”. For the sake of this mystery, the apostle endured much sufferings from the Jews, to whom became “*an ambassador in chains*” (Ephesians 6: 20). But, he modestly asks the Colossians to pray for his sake; and says to the Corinthians: “*Most gladly, I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12: 9-10).

Paul did not ask them to pray to God to appease his burdens, to set him free from prison, and not even to save his life; but in that dark hour, his thoughts were only confined in that “*God would open to him a door, to speak the word*”, for our sake.

❖ How amazing, that the great hero, did not say “to be released from my chains”; but, while in chains, he exhorted and instigated the others for a great cause, to pray for his sake, that he would have more daring to proclaim the word of God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

“that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak” (4)

Having been satisfied with *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Ephesians 3: 8); ... Having perceived that *“the message of the cross is the power of God for salvation”* (1 Corinthians 1: 18); ... Having enjoyed reconciliation with God; ... and having seen the gates of heaven opened before him; ... and having the kingdom of God set in his depths, the saint felt the commitment to speak and not to keep quiet.

❖ My chains support, and do not hinder me ... Yes, my chains give me more daring, yet, I pray for the help of God, because I hear the voice of the Lord, saying: *“When they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak; for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak”* (Matthew 11: 19).

A prisoner would normally be terrified when put in chains; but he who despises death, how could he fear the chains?! ... That is what they did when they put Paul in chains, with the intention to shut his mouth up!¹

(St. John Chrysostom)

3- CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE OUTSIDE:

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time” (5)

Seeing all men through his Christ; the way the Word of God came down to bring Paul forth into the new heavenly life, he, with the Spirit of God, imitating his Lord, says: *“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (1 Corinthians 9: 22).

The apostle demands from us, as well, to walk with the others with wisdom to acquire them to the account of the kingdom of God. For by the fitting behavior, we can testify to our Christ, and draw the hearts to the cross, to let the others enjoy the power of God for the salvation, and to have the gate of hope open before them.

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 10.*

As every moment of our life has its value, and could be, either the secret of blessing, or of bitterness and perdition, hence he says: “*redeeming the time*” (5).

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (5)

Let our words always be seasoned with heavenly salt, anointed with the oil of meekness, and the fear of God. Hence the psalmist cries out, saying: “*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth, Keep watch over the door of my lips*” (Psalm 141: 3). Let our words always reflect the sanctification of our hearts by the Holy Spirit of God; according to the words of the wise Solomon: “*The preparation of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord*” (Proverb 16: 1).

- ❖ No one is happier than the Christian, to whom is given the promise of the kingdom of heaven. No one strives with such daring as his; for, every day, he confronts the line that dictates his life. And no one is stronger than him, for he overcomes the devil¹.
- ❖ The salt is good; and every offering should be seasoned by salt; Hence the apostle says: “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt*”. But if the salt becomes corrupt, it would be of no value, and would be cast away, to be treaded upon under the feet of men. The believers, therefore should seek to fertilize the soil of their souls².

(St. Jerome)

4- ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS COWORKERS:

“Tychicus who is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord” (7)

Although in prison, St. Paul was moving with his whole inner being in the glorious liberty of the children of God, for the preaching and shepherding work.

¹ Letters, 125: 1.

² Letters, 125: 1.

In all his epistles he wrote while in prison, the apostle Paul reveals that prison for him was not an obstacle, but an opportunity for shepherding preaching, and the encouragement of his disciples to work to the account of the kingdom in several countries.

- ❖ How amazing! And how great was the wisdom of St. Paul! ... Meditate in how he did not put everything in writing, but just the urgent and necessary; first, not to distract their attention by too much material, and secondly, intending to make his messenger ‘Tychicus’ a subject of reverence through describing him with such expressions of prominence; and thirdly, to show how much he loved and cherished him, or else he would not entrust him with such great mission¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Seeing how Paul calls the servant a brother, and even calls himself “*your servant for Jesus Christ*” (2 Corinthians 4: 5), it is befitting of us, in our turn, to bring our pride down, and to tread with our feet upon our boasting².
- ❖ To show his great love, writing to the Thessalonians, he says: “*Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy our brother*” (1Thessalonians 3: 1, 2). He sent the same person ‘Tychicus’, and for the same purpose to the Ephesians, saying: “*that he may know your circumstances, and that he may comfort your hearts*” (Ephesians 6: 21, 22); Meditate in how he does not say: “to let you know my circumstances”, but “*that I may know your circumstances*”; he was not preoccupied with his own circumstances, as much as with theirs; Adding: “*and that he may comfort your hearts*” indicates, that they were enduring much troubles³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

² *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

³ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

“I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances, and comfort your hearts” (8)

All the epistles he wrote to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, his second epistle to his disciple Timothy, and that to Philemon, as well as the oral messages he sent with Tychicus and Onesimus, were, and still are, along the generations, the cause for comfort for the church.

“With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you; they will make known to you all things which are happening here” (9)

Onesimus, was the escapee slave, who stole his master’s money and fled to Rome. There he encountered the apostle Paul, who preached the gospel to him, and *“has begotten while in his chains”* (Philemon 10). St. Paul sent him back to his master Philemon’s with a message to draw his attention that he is no longer his slave but has become a faithful and beloved brother in the Lord; And here he testifies to the Colossians about the riches of God’s grace, that turned the escapee slave and thief, into a son of God, holy, bearing a new nature, that he even eventually got qualified to become a bishop.

“Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabus (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)” (10)

Being in prison, did not isolate the apostle from the church; For, by the Spirit, he was in union with all the members, being the one body of Christ. In prison, faithful ministers surrounded him

‘Aristarchus’ the Thessalonian, who endured the dangers of the mighty sea, confronted the wild mob of Ephesus, when the city was stirred up because of St. Paul, ran together, seized Paul, and dragged Gaius and Aristarchus the Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions from Jerusalem to Rome, then the later volunteered to serve Paul in prison. Aristarchus, having been filled with the love of Christ, his soul was of no value to him, until he consummated the ministry he received from our Lord Jesus Christ in peace and joy, following the lead of his friend St. Paul.

“Mark, the cousin of Barnabus”. Was himself, St. Mark, the apostle, and the preacher of the land of Egypt. He was of a prominent Jewish family in Jerusalem, who, as a young man, joined the ministry of Paul and Barnabus in their first preaching journey, but soon departed from them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 12: 5, 13, 25; 13: 5, 13); which was the cause for a controversy between the two apostles Paul and Barnabus; the former took Silas, and the later took Mark.(Acts 15: 38). Mark, however, eventually reconciled with St. Paul, who said to his disciple Timothy about him: *“He is useful to me for ministry”* (2 Timothy 4: 11); and requested from the Colossians to welcome him, if he comes to them (10). (probably on account of that they knew that the apostle Paul, ten years ago, happened to refuse to take him along in his second preaching journey).

- ❖ Calling Aristarchus “a fellow prisoner” (10), was a commendation surpassing what the prophets used to call themselves, as “sojourners and strangers”; on account of that a “prisoner” is dragged along here and there against his own will¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And Jesus who is called Justus, these are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me”(11)

“Jesus who is called Justus”, not the same “Justus” mentioned in (Acts 1: 23), although an unknown soldier, yet, his name, together with others, is written in the records of heaven.

Here St. Paul talks to us about the “comfort” he got from his coworkers. He who, in his darkest moments often confirmed that the Lord Jesus Christ was his strength and the secret of his comfort and pleasure, has never denied the role of those beloved coworkers.... *“When the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as ‘Appi Forum’, close to the entrance to Rome, When we saw them we thanked God and took courage”* (Acts 28: 15). Another time, he says: *“I had no rest in my spirit because I did not find Titus, my brother”*, Being unable to endure staying in

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

the city without Titus, “*he took his leave from them and departed from Macedonia*” (2 Corinthians 2: 13). All his epistles, and in particular (chapter 16 to the Romans), reveal the role of his beloved coworkers in his life and ministry.

- ❖ He mention three Jewish names: (Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus), and three Gentile names: (Epaphras, Luke, and Demas). Timothy was a mixture of both.
- ❖ He calls them: “*My fellow workers for the kingdom of God*”; for they were partakers of his labor and strife, and of the Kingdom, as well¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*” (12)

“**Epaphras**” was a man of prayers, laboring together with St. Paul for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. For him, prayers were not a routine work, nor a duty he is committed to do; but a battle against the hosts of darkness, seeking the riches of God’s grace to work in the life of many. God seeks a man of prayer. Beside his strife in prayers, he was a faithful servant of Christ who preached the churches of River ‘Lycus’ (Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis) (7), Now, he was not preoccupied with his visit to St. Paul, to labor fervently in prayers for his congregation.

- ❖ The prayers of the incarnate Word of God, Himself, were described as having been “*vehement cries and tears*” Hebrew 5: 7); and “*in great agony*” (Luke 22: 41, 44).

Men of God did not cease to pray for the sake of the people (Ezra 9: 5-7; Exodus 32: 11-14; Jeremiah 14: 7-9).

At the beginning of this epistle he commends the man whom he loved; for commendation is a sign of love; hence he says: “*who also declared to us your love in the spirit*” (1: 8). Praying for someone is also a sign of, and a renewal of love ... ; he says:

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 11.*

“always laboring fervently for you in prayers”; he does not only say: “praying for you”, but “labors fervently for you in prayers”¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis” (13)

The three cities: Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, were so close to one another that they could be visited in a single day. This epistle was sent to the Colossians and the Laodiceans (4: 15), but not to those in Hierapolis, an indication that what happened in the two former cities did not then, reach the later.

“Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you” (14)

Luke the beloved physician accompanied St. Paul in his second and third journeys, and he is now beside him in his last journey before his trial before Caesar. “Only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4: 11). He faithfully ministered to the Lord, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and departed from this world at the age of 84 years

5- A CONCLUSION:

“Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house” (15)

Who was ‘Nymphas’?, and where did he live? The church in his house was probably the same church that was in Hierapolis, as long as that city was not mentioned here.

During the early days of the new covenant, a rich man used to open his spacious house to receive the believers at the time of public prayers.

The epistle written by St. John to the Laodiceans, 30 years later, reveals that church during the last stages of apostasy (Revelation 3: 14-19).

- ❖ Meditate in how he unifies them together, not just by greeting, but by exchanging messages as well; then follows up again by greeting to everyone individually, which he did by purpose to exhort the others to follow his lead in his fervent zeal; as it

¹ Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.

would be a great deal for someone to be ignored by others. ... Meditate in how he proclaims the greatness of the role of that man (Nymphas) for having a church in his house¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea” (16)

St. Paul cared specifically for those churches, although he has not got the chance to know the majority of their people (2: 1).

Paul’s epistle to the Laodiceans has been a subject of great controversy, as according to **St. John Chrysostom**: [Some say that it was not an epistle from Paul to them, but it as theirs to him; on account of that he does not say (in verse 16), “the epistle to the Laodiceans”, but “*epistle from Laodicea*”².

According to others the epistle to Laodicea was itself the epistle to the Ephesians, having been the capital of Asia Minor, and that it was a periodic epistle sent to all the churches of the province, including Laodicea.

“And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it’ (17)

‘**Archippus**’ was not in Colosse, but he was rather a minister in the church in Philemon’s house (Philemon 2). Yet he was so near to where they were that delivering the message was no problem in the least. In Philemon 2 he says: “*Archippus our fellow soldier*”, and here he reminds him of the ministry he received in the Lord. That was how St. Paul used to remind his disciples and his coworkers of their call, lest their love would become lukewarm and weaken before the persistent oppression of the devil. That was what he did with Timothy his disciple of genuine faith, to whom he says: “*But you, be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry*” (2 Timothy 4: 5); And what he also did with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 18-32).

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

² *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

- ❖ Paul did not write to ‘Archippus’, on account of that he probably only needed to be reminded, to become more watchful and active¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

By saying “*in the Lord*”, St. Paul reminds ‘Archippus’ that his ministry is a spiritual gift, rather than an official job (Compare Romans 12: 6-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 5; Ephesians 4: 12).

“*This salutation by my own hand – Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen*” (18)

He writes the epistle while his hands were in chains; not with his pen as a philosophical thought, but with his chains as an afflicted minister, for the salvation of all. What he seeks from his readers, he, himself, has consummated and experienced. He, as though writes: [I do not write to you from void, but rather from the practical podium of the cross, where I experience the rich grace of the crucified Christ. I wish that you, as well, enjoy His grace the same way I do, even in my chains]. St. Paul reminds his readers that whoever suffers for the sake of Christ, will have the right to talk on behalf of Christ; and by such a note, he concludes his epistle.

After dictating his epistle, Paul used to draw the attention to its authenticity (Compare 1 Corinthians 16: 21; Galatians 6: 11; 2 Thessalonians 3: 17; Philippians 4: 19), by writing a salutation by his own hands.

- ❖ As a sign of their loyalty, his readers always, lovingly, looked forward to read his own handwriting.

“*Remember my chains. Grace be with you*”. By this he set them free of fear; for despite the fact that their mentor was in chains, grace supported their fear, for he is in chains because of the grace of ministry. Listen to the words said by St. Luke in the book of Acts: “*They (the apostles) departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name*” (Acts 5: 41).

In case you happen to feel puffed up on account of your good works; if you remember the chains of Paul, and that you have

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

not suffered as he did; you will then cease to be puffed up. Have your hearts plunged in pleasure, remember his prison, for you are his disciples, fellow soldiers, and companions in strife¹.

(**St. John Chrysostom**)

St. Paul used to remind his people that he earnestly continues praying and shedding tears for their sake, and for whoever does the same for the salvation of others. Commending St. Paul's chains and tears, **St. John Chrysostom** says in his last sermon about this epistle:

- ❖ *“Remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears”* (Acts 20: 31). I do not mean for you to weep for the sake of others (although I wish you could do, but this is beyond your ability); But I mean for you to weep for the sake of your own sins; which I urge you to do.
- ❖ What fountain or spring you would liken those tears that water the souls, and not the earth?! ... To watch Paul moaning and shedding teats, would be better than watching a multitude of saints getting their crowns in vehement joy!
- ❖ Shedding these tears would make the soul more beautiful; would rein the urge of the stomach; would fill the heart with the love of wisdom and compassion; and would be even soften the solid rock. By such tears the church is watered; However strong is the fire of human evil reactions, these tears would quench them.
- ❖ Remembering Paul's tears would make us despise the things of this life. Such tears were blessed by the Lord Christ, saying: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”* (Matthew 5: 4; Luke 6: 21). Such tears were shed by the prophet Isaiah who said: *“Look away from me, I will weep bitterly”* (Isaiah 22: 4 – Septuagint); and were also shed by the prophet Jeremiah who said: *“Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes are fountains of tears”* (Jeremiah 9: 1); as though the natural fountains were not enough for him.

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

- ❖ Nothing is sweeter than those tears, they are even sweeter than laughs; It is difficult to imagine the extent of comfort they bring.... It is actually something for which we should vehemently pray, not for others to sin, but that if they do, we would with contrition feel sorrow for their sake.

Those two eyes of Paul the apostle which have seen the paradise, and the three heavens, I do not count them blessed because of that vision, as much as they are for those tears which made him see Christ in truth, for by the later vision, he himself was glorified, saying: *“Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?”* (1 Corinthians 9: 1)

- ❖ The Lord Christ, Himself also wept.
- ❖ Let us shed tears of sorrow when we see our daughters and sons in evil. For the tears, shed because of this sorrow are sweeter than those shed because of worldly pleasures. Listen to the blessed psalmist say: *“The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping; the Lord has heard my supplication”* (Psalm 6: 8).
- ❖ We should weep, moan, and sigh; when we encounter a sinful man; who does not heed our counsel and goes to perdition; For those are the tears of heavenly wisdom. But, when he is in poverty, in sickness, or even dead, we should abstain from weeping; for all these things are not worthy of our tears.
- ❖ Nothing would wipe out sins like tears.
- ❖ Nothing is sweeter than tears, being the daughters of the soul, we bow before them, as though we see the soul herself wail¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Although this epistle is written by the hands of Tychicus and Onesimus, yet it was signed by the apostle Paul’s own hands, as he himself confirms, and used to do in all his epistles (2 Thessalonians 3: 17), having discovered that some people wrote messages in his name.

¹ *Homilies on Col., Hom. 12.*

**AN INSPRATION FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE
COLOSSIANS 4**

YOUR DWELLING IN ME TESTIFIES TO YOUR GOSPEL

- ❖ Your dwelling brings forth pleasure to all;
The husband sees You in his wife, and the wife in her man;
The parents see You in their children, and those in their parents;
The life of servants turns to sweetness;
When they see You, the Lord of all, has become a servant for
their sake.
Your disciples coveted to be enslaved for their sake;
Seeing You, the Master of heavens,
The masters deal with their servants with love;
They desire to see You in them;
By truth and love, You broke down the walls separating
humans;
Instead of diverse ranks and races, all men became like heavenly
creatures..
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of prayer;
Make me seek, not what is my own, but the salvation of all men;
My soul keeps moaning inside me;
Until all souls cease to moan;
My depths will exult when all men do in Your salvation.
- ❖ By Your grace, grant me to labor in Your vineyard;
Grant me to work together with Your ministers with the spirit of
love and humility;
Grant me to see You in all.

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A commandment to the masters; Prayers for the sake of the ministry; Care for those who are outside; Encouragement to his co-workers; A conclusion.

-- An inspiration from the epistle of Paul the apostle to the Colossians: Your dwelling in me testifies to Your gospel.

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