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Dedication:

This book is dedicated to the soul of my father "Abu Osama" May he Rest in Eternal Peace

May this book heal all those facing temptation, and going through sorrow and distress. May it bring comfort to the sick, and to all those who have lost loved ones.

I hope that it will bring serenity to those who need it most, and all I ask in return is a prayer to the soul of my dearly departed father Karam Imseeh.

Osama's Introduction

What causes sickness? Is our body susceptible to it? Is it the doing of the devil? Is it God's way to punish sinners or those who deviate from his teachings?

Who causes our physical death, or the death of a loved one, be it a parent, a relative or a friend?

Does Satan possess such power, or is it God's will? Is it part of the law of nature created by God? So if God controls sickness, pain and death, why does He let us suffer?

I believe that it was not God's intention to inflict pain, or suffering on humans, because when he created Adam and Eve, his plan was for them to enjoy paradise and to procreate. He created life, health and wealth, then sickness came as a result of Adam's fall.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2: 16-17).

What is meant here by death, is the spiritual death (the separation of Adam and Eve from God for their sin and disobedience), not the physical death, since Adam lived tens and hundreds of years.

"To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded

you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken" (Genesis 3: 16-19)

This explains how sickness and death became an extinguished characteristic of the fallen nature. "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3: 19).

Thus it is only rational to conclude that the cause of sickness is man's susceptibility to disease, after the fall of Adam from God's state of grace. Had he not allowed his free will to steer him away from God's grace, he could have lived in the state that God had chosen for him.

As for man's spiritual death, the Holy Bible illustrates that God did not institute death in the beginning and He is not pleased with the death of the living "For God did not make death, neither does He have pleasure over the destruction of the living" (Wisdom 1: 13).

However, man's thirst for death and destruction is evident. In the second world war, 75 million people perished. This was done by man of his free will. God does not interfere in our free will, therefore He does not restrain man from killing his fellow human, or stop him from dropping nuclear bombs, as witnessed in Japan's Nagasaki and Hiroshima. God gave man free will, therefore he cannot restrain or control his actions, malicious as they might be. So why do we blame God for man's wrongdoings?

The enemy of good cannot attack humans with disease

It is through our fallen human nature that we become susceptible to sickness, disease, suffering, and death.

God does not abandon his children; so when a faithful follower is begotten with sickness or disease his faith helps heal him, and direct him in the righteous way. Therefore, pain becomes a path for his salvation from eternal death, which is more perilous than physical death. Contrary to a believers' path, when faced with the same situation, non-believers tend to refrain from God's grace, persisting in their denial of His existence.

We are destined to live up to 70-80 years, then our bodies become riddled with sickness and disease, and eventually we die. What is most notable here, is that our spiritual death, or our separation from God due to our actions, is far more dangerous than our physical death. That is why God cares lest we die spiritually and seek our salvation being His children. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3: 20).

It is for that reason, God became incarnate and with consented passion died on the Cross to conquer sin and death and to open the gates of Heaven for us, and to prepare the road for eternal salvation to those who seek it, in order to reunite with him in his Kingdom.

Dear reader, we believe in the might of God the Creator, the Pentocrator and His providence to all His creation, His dominion over life and death, sickness and good health. Through our faith according to the

Scripture we know that God is good and does not welcome sickness and death of His children, as both were not within His original plan. God knows of them beforehand, when Adam's free will steered him from His grace. However, through them God tries to transform man's belief toward the righteous path. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8: 28). In some cases, God inflicts immediate death upon aggravated sin as with Herod. "Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died (Acts 12:23).

Let's remember that God is merciful, passionate and tends to His children. Therefore, let us not relate sickness, pain and death to Him as though He is the source. Let us not attribute it to Him as His judgment. Let us always remember and relish one of the most beautiful verses of Scripture that shows His true love to us: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3: 16).

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Preface

Dear reader,

These spiritual thoughts were written over a span of eight years. I have shared some of these thoughts here, while some are in my previous publications. The topics range from pain, temptations, catastrophes, diseases, death, redemption and resurrection. I lived and felt these thoughts and experienced them in my heart and soul

These thoughts stem from personal experiences, which I deal with spiritually. I also tackled them in my day to day life by exploring books, meditating, and dealing with the pain of losing my dearly departed father, and the sad aftermath of that loss.

I hope that this book becomes a beacon of hope to all who read it, to help them overcome their personal torment whether it is pain, sickness and death. I also hope it answers the many questions of truth-seekers who want to know those.

Chapter one: God's wisdom

Where is God?

We often wonder about God's intervention in the world and why He allows all catastrophes, wars, suffering, and calamities to occur. Atheists deny God's existence, some disbelieve Him, some admonish Him, while others simply believe in the Lord's wisdom and providence for His creation.

God's providence is always present for He is the Pentocrator and shepherds His flock "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalms 23:1).

Yet, He does not work against man's will, rather, He respects it and allows for each freedom of action, even if it affects others like killing, stealing, starting wars, and committing perjury. Each person is responsible for his action and God transforms evil to good in due time according to His providence and wisdom.

However, He might interfere when some tend to do evil to His faithful and those who relinquish their lives to Him.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8: 28).

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord" (Isaiah 55: 8)

Questions arise in the minds of humans about complicated and incomprehensible issues. For example, one might wonder, why did God create us? Who created God? What is the origin of God? What is death? Where do we go after we die? Why is there war and destruction? Why do earthquakes, volcanoes and hurricanes happen? Why is there sickness and pain?

Some might find answers to some of these questions. However, it is important to know that we as humans are incapable of understanding the limitless matters related to the eternal and infinite God.

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory” (! Corinthians 2: 7).

The hunter and the birds

A hunter captured a bird that was flying and placed him in a cage with two other birds. The two caged birds started discussing who was to blame for the third birds' capture. One said “God is to blame for He let the hunter get him”, the other replied “we are to blame for we did not warn him”. The first said “maybe he himself is to blame for he did not avoid the hunter's rifle”. Upon overhearing their discussion, a wise friend said “God left the decision to the hunter and what to hunt, for he has free will. Similarly, the bird did not hide well from the hunter's rifle, and you two failed to warn him before it was too late. So, why put the blame on God. It is the hunter and the three of you that bare that responsibility”. It is in the same manner that we humans, charge God for all our mistakes and ill decisions. We blame Him for the natural causes of sickness and death, for earthquakes and volcanoes, for fires and epidemics. But what we fail to understand is that they are all of man's free will, or of nature's doing. God tends to the universe and He is the Pentocrator, for He knows the future as well as our decisions but does not interfere in our free will. Rather He interferes in the life of His children when they ask Him faithfully and when their will coincides with His: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Psalms 50: 15)

The world

It is joy and grief, rest and weariness, receiving and giving, warmth and coldness, light and darkness. Without grief, weariness, coldness and darkness we would never know the value of joy, rest, warmth and light. Without the Cross we would have never known Resurrection. Let's rejoice in calamities and have patience for we will get joy in return: “... you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy... Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16: 20-22).

Why does God permit us to sin?

God is the Pentocrator and shepherd to His sons. Nothing in the universe happens without His foreknowledge and approval, for He is Omnipotent and all mighty. Even Hades and the works of the devil are not beyond His control. He allows us to be tempted and leaves it up to our free will to choose to fall into temptation or to over come it willingly in order to become aware that with our own strength we cannot withstand trials and temptations. No man can be saved by his own power, rather by God's grace and redemption that was made on the Cross. “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3: 24).

Why God does not punish the evildoers immediately?

God is omnipotent and can punish the evildoers and uproot evil at once, but, He chooses, in His wisdom, to leave each one to act freely according to his free and accordingly will to be judged later on Judgment Day. The most eloquent explanation is the proverb of wheat and tares:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13: 24- 30).

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13: 36-43).

Through this proverb the Lord explains that the tares are the devil’s children and will be punished on Judgment Day. For if God’s punishment is immediate, then people will not commit sin or do evil, not out of their free will, but for fear of retribution. Therefore, they would not be worthy to enter His Kingdom, because their actions stem from fear not love of God. For that reason, in God’s great wisdom, He delayed punishment until Judgment Day.

Volcanoes, earthquakes and natural disasters-1

When Adam disobeyed God, he was cast out of paradise. The cosmic rules that God applied to the Devil and his wicked angels, were therefore applied upon Adam and the earth as a consequence of his free will, which resulted in cursing the earth. “Cursed is the ground for your sake” (Genesis 3: 17) and “Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you” (Genesis 3: 18). Man aggravated the situation with nuclear explosions and the like, underground and in the oceans, thus polluting oceans, soil and air, which also stirred up earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanoes.

Volcanoes, earthquakes and natural disasters-2

God, the Pentocrator and creator sees and knows and watches man’s will and lets him fulfill it. He does not issue evil neither pain, sickness nor death to man though He is capable. He interferes to save His children who seek His help, according to His eternal wisdom, in the appropriate time for their salvation. The death of the faithful during catastrophes would be better for their salvation and their everlasting

life, even if some would look upon it as an evil doing. Yet, in the eyes of God and His knowledge, it is for man's good, as the Pentocrator directs the evil of man to become benefit for His children. God, the provident for His entire creation does not interfere every instant to cancel man's will in making wars or detonate nuclear weapons, rather He keeps him till judgment day, like He saves the tares to harvest at the same time of the wheat. "Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest" (Matthew 13: 30).

It's enough

Let us not pin our shortcomings on God and blame him for our faults and our ill made decisions. When someone has a car accident and gets paralyzed or dies we say "it's God's will". If one is poor and the other is rich, we say "God gives earrings to those who do not have ears". If a child does badly in school, we say "he is born lazy". Equally, we also blame the Lord for the famines in Africa, for all the wars and the injustices we face daily. Actually, it is we who drink alcohol, and drive irresponsibly, it is us who do not work hard and neglect at our work. It is us who are envious of others. We fail in our obligation to help each other, like, for example not donating to help the poor in Africa. We forget that governments fail in their obligation toward their people, much as has the African governments in failing its own people. We initiate wars, and destruction. It is all on us, and not caused by God. "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12: 47-48).

Chapter Two: Temptations and spiritual wars

Jesus and temptation

“Then Jesus, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing” (Luke 4:1-2). When Jesus’ body weakened (of hunger) the devil tempted Him (though His spirit was stronger) in an effort to make Jesus fall into his temptations.

Jesus Himself did not escape temptation, but conquered the devil in all his battles “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4: 15).

In addition, Jesus suffered during His life on earth of persecution, pain, hunger, grief and weeping. The high priests together with the Pharisees and Jews persecuted Him and tried to capture and kill Him more than once.

Was God tempting the incarnate son Jesus on the mountain? Did He instigate the devil to tempt Christ with spiritual temptations?

Indeed not, “for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone” (James 1: 13). Did God instigate the high priests to persecute Jesus or did He order Jesus be starved “Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry” (Matthew 21: 18), or caused Him grief and weeping? “Jesus wept (John 11: 35).

I think that it is within our nature, the devil (enemy of good) and our weaknesses that we face temptations. Therefore, it is not God that is tempting His children with evils but He sees and knows about them and permits them for their benefit, and changes them to good. “All things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8: 28), and as fire purifies gold, likewise, the believer is purified and prepared for the Kingdom.

God might test His faithful believers in His name for an insight He only knows is for their good and to test their will, as He did with Saul “For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's

sake" (Acts 9: 16), when He tested him and deprived him of his sight it was so that Saul might believe and experience God's grace. "Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one" (Acts 9: 8).

There is a big difference however, between testing a believer's faith for his salvation and the temptations of desires and wickedness that come from within a person's own self, or through the devil's temptation.

Therefore, we have to get close to the Throne of Grace to receive from God the Most Holy power to help us overcome all kinds of trials, temptations and tribulations. For without Him we cannot prevail "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15: 5), and "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4: 13).

Life is a spiritual battle

"When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it" (Ezekiel 33: 18-19). Life in its entirety is an endless spiritual battle every minute and every day "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3: 21). Let the sinner persevere no more in sin and not abandon hope in forgiveness. The Lord safeguards you of temptation.

Diamonds

Like raw diamonds that are not bright, but radiate light when polished, are the faithful. Believers are polished by hardships, trials and tribulations, and become pure, reflecting Christ's light all around them. This is a simple example of why God permits His children to face hardships, in order to benefit from them and strengthen their faith.

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15: 2).

"A ship is safe at bay, but it is not made for that"

Sitting by the port of Talabay, in Aqaba, I saw how serene the waters were compared to the rough seas just beyond. It is then that I remembered that old saying "a ship is safe at bay, but is not made for that." Many people attempt to sail through life, underestimating their own temptations and those of the devil. However, it is the wise that they realize they cannot sail through them alone, citing the Lord's prayer "do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6: 13). We might not have been born to stay at bay like the boats, but it would be wise to sail only when the boats are suitable to endure waves. Consequently, our destiny is to face our fate, conquer whatever we may, accept some losses, but my advice is to steer away from temptation whenever possible.

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10: 13).

Our Father

“Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6: 13).

A better translation would be “do not let us fall into temptation, rather deliver us from the evil one”.

For God does not bring us into temptations of His own, but rather allows us to be tempted by our own inner desires and weaknesses or by the devil himself. God forbid that He tempts us with evil.

For example Peter denied Christ for fear of death. Likewise, Judas the Iscariot willingly delivered Christ, not by His orders. So did doubtful Thomas, Ananias and Sapphira and prophet David who responded to his lusts, and the list goes on. The Gospel does not mention any incident whereby the Lord tempted anybody, He only permitted the devil to put righteous Job to test, but not the Lord himself did it. ???

“And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22: 31-32).

Wars around us

The devil not only fights us through our body and soul, but also chooses to fight us through everything and everyone around us, often through surroundings like family, relatives, friends and colleagues. He attacks the weakest link so as to lose our peace, and consequently our salvation. He ignites quarrels, grudges, envy, and contradictions when he fails to tempt our soul (through our thoughts and in heart).

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” (James 4: 1).

God does not tempt anyone by evil

Everyone is prone to different kinds of spiritual temptations and their effect differ from person to another.

Some are tempted with sexual desire and seductions from the other sex.

Some are tempted with gambling

Some are weak and hunger for money and become trade themselves for greed rather than principle.

Some get envious and hurt others with words and deeds.

All this stems from man’s desires and personal weakness. It is also the work of the devil that he wages against man. However, the Lord is innocent of them.

For God does not tempt us by evils, that's why we pray to Him "Do not lead us into temptation" which means do not allow the evil one to lead us into temptation.

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1: 12).

The first step in fighting him is to realize that those external or internal temptations are alien to us or those around us and it is the devil's work.. Prayer is the most important weapon we can use in addition to attending Liturgy, Communion and the rest of the Sacraments all of which supply us with power to resist and fight. Try also to treat those who fight you with the Sacred Sacraments. "Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" (1 Peter 5: 9).

Temptations

Evil and temptation come to us sometimes through those around us and often through our own corrupt will and desires. Therefore, it is best to train oneself to distinguish between the two knowing that the devil plays a major part of it. "We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5: 3-5).

The war is not over yet

As long as one breathes, the spiritual wars are endless. The battle field and soldiers might change, but the enemy is still the same, the devil and his assistants. He would fight us through our desires and if he fails, he would fight us through money or self-esteem, anger or envy. However, if he does not conquer, he empowers those around us to fight us. It is also through our own weak human corporeal that the devil finds his work. "Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" (1 Peter 5: 9). "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5: 8).

Distresses and trials

I was pleasantly surprised to see a shift in some people's attitudes in the last few years. I was curious to understand this change, only to realize that it was through personal trials, like sickness, family problems, and financial distress, that they changed.. Sometimes these trials and tribulations are far better than a thousand spiritual eulogies. God permits them for His children but He never tempts us with evil. During these times of distress and temptation, He helps those trusting in Him to overcome them and benefit of them as well. "Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be

given to posterity of his patience, as also of holy Job” (Tobias 2: 12). “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1: 12).

Is pain a blessing or an indignation?

For many sick people, pain killers numb their pain, yet they still ache, and wish they did not have it. But without pain we would unaware or known we are sick,, and could easily die of the most curable disease.

Likewise, the pain of sin is the guilt feeling. Without it the sinner would have persisted in his sins reaching eternal death unknowingly. God permitted pain and feeling of guilt for our earthly and everlasting benefits. “When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Mark 2: 17).

Overcoming temptation and seduction

I recall an incident not long ago, when I stopped a garbage collector in my neighborhood for a quick chat, to ask him about his family and wish him a Merry feast. As is our tradition, especially around holidays, I gave him a small tip. It was then that he informed me that he saw a neglected gas container in my garage next to the garbage bin, about 15 days ago. I thanked him for his honesty, and gave him another tip.

Walking away from this incident, I realized that we are faced with temptation. For this man had struggled for 15 days before telling me about the gas container. Part of his struggle was whether he should take it and sell it and make a small profit, or leave it and tell us about it. He could have taken the decision of telling me immediately rather than wait all that time in order not to allow himself to be tested by temptation and seduction.

“Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1: 3-4).

Distress and the Lord’s help

Many, including myself, suffer from different types of stress and are faced with daily difficulties, so we pray faithfully to the Lord to guide us and give us peace of mind. However, in many instances, the solution is late, but the Lord’s words are a source of relief to his believers “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8: 28).

Lord Jesus asked His Heavenly Father that the cup of passion, pain, crucifixion and death pass from Him “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” (Matthew 26:39).

Yet, He went on and submitted His own will and destiny in the Lord’s hands when he prayed as a human “nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26: 39).

In submitting to His heavenly Father, He conquered death through resurrection and the heaven and earth rejoiced in our Lord's salvation for all humanity.

Likewise, we are crowned with the crown of glory and triumph after every distress when we endure in faithful patience and look forward for the Lord's help "He who keeps you will not slumber" (Psalms 121: 3).

God is merciful, yet just on Judgment Day

God is merciful while we are on earth, but when the hour of judgment comes then He is a just judge.

God accepts those who renounce from sin now, through repentance and retraction of the wrong that was done, either through thought, action or words. But on Judgment Day, He will justly hold every one accountable for their deeds and will punish those who did not repent, (the thief, the adulterer and the murderer.)

"And come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5: 29).

Beware my beloved

The devil knows exactly how to fight man and make him fall, for they have been doing that for thousands of years. They use different methods with different people according to the situation.

They fight some with depression, others with grief and hopelessness, sometimes they also use, and sow mistrust and suspicion in people's minds.

The battles of desire, theft and murder are clear to the trained spiritual man, however, they are effective with those far from God and His Bible.

Therefore, we have to be watchful, and careful in not allowing the devil to trap us and capture our soul because we become more desperate riddled with countless problems. This will deprive us of joy, peace and hope in the Lord.

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26: 41).

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 5: 13).

Temptations are from the devil and we decide to accept or refuse

"And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22: 31- 32).

Temptations and evils are not of God but of the devil the enemy of good. He asks God for permission according to the universal Divine rule and takes advantage of man's free will.

And God gives permission to crown those who conquer and allows them to enter His Kingdom. So, let the arrogant, and the self-confident who mocks others when they fall, humble himself, to be amongst those granted God's grace.

God also grants His Grace and crowns those who strive under temptation and pray for His help that they shall not fall, but rather get up after a fall.

God's wisdom rises above our comprehension of the reasons He permits the devil to tempt us.

Right hand blows

The more one draws nearer to God, the more the devil gets enraged and the more he seizes the opportunity to heap strong blows to him, which are called right hand blows. When we pray more fervently, fast more and do more charity work then we'll expect fiercer spiritual wars. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1: 12).

O Lord pardon us of the right hand blows.

A truth meant to be false

When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness he used a biblical verse "In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Matthew 4: 6). The saying is true, but used to justify falsehood. Therefore, let us not quote the bible, for although it is a true saying it is meant to be used as falsehood. Let's not use proper sayings from the Bible or life to attain personal goals as this might lead to evil.

Invisible war

Spirits communicate amongst themselves, similarly do the devil and human spirits, in such a manner that allows him to spread his temptations to humans naturally. Accordingly, the Lord warned us in His Bible that our war is not with similar humans?? "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6: 12), hence we have to be prepared all the time with prayer, fasting and Holy Communion to triumph over this evil.

Dreams' temptations

The believer cannot escape the devil's wars, even in dreams. However, if your conscious decision is clear and sincere about those temptations, then the enemy of good cannot overthrow you even in your dreams. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6: 12).

How the devil wages the war against us in:

1- The sacraments of baptism and Chrism

The believer is under unceasing wars with the devil during his life time, mainly when he draws near the Holy Sacraments as the devil tries to turn him away from them. At baptism, we see most of the children crying and opposing it. Some sects do not baptize children deciding that it is more appropriate to baptize them when they are grown up based on the verse "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16: 16). In that belief is a prerequisite for baptism. Thus depriving those children of the very necessary Chrism, is all the devil's manipulations. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3: 27), "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6: 4).

2- The sacraments of repentance and confession

The devil also wages war against the believer in the sacraments of repentance and confession, thus planting the seed of doubt in one's mind and heart to make him abstain from performing them. In some instances, he makes the believer doubt the secrecy of the priest during confession, or tries to circumvent confession as that between man and God, therefore eliminating the need for the priest. The devil can also manipulate one's thoughts by not allowing them to open up to their sins during confession thus depriving them of redemption. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20: 23).

3- The sacrament of Holy Communion

As the devil sows in the faithful fear of Communion thus sets him aside of the most important means of Divine Grace which is the Holy body and blood of the Lord. In addition, he cultivates in the mind of the believer sceptical thoughts that he is an unrepentant sinner for he has not confessed his sins, sometimes using Biblical verses like "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11: 27). The devil also misinterprets the scripture to prevent the faithful from communion. Nevertheless, we stress on the importance of repentance and confession and that worthiness for Communion is based on the explanations of the Church Fathers, not the devil's scepticism. Our Communion is based on our need for it, not as being worthy, for no one is worthy, no one is completely righteous or sinless.

4- The sacrament of holy matrimony

Beware you husbands and wives. For the devil cultivates unrest between husband and wife to dismantle the Christian family and destroy the sacrament of matrimony "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10: 9), he magnifies the wrongdoings of each spouse and sows self-pride as well as comparison with other spouses. He spreads the virus of irritation and intolerance between them that lead to sinful relations outside the bond of marriage, hence adultery spreads and the sacred bond of marriage breaks and divorce becomes the norm. Children suffer, for they become dislodged from a

normal family life “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5: 9).

5- The sacrament of priesthood

As the devil fights priesthood, likewise he fights anyone thinking of becoming a priest or a monk or a nun and instigates the opposition of parents of their child’s decision of sworn celibacy rather than marriage and children. He also fights priests and monks with numerous temptations to make them fall in sin, since they are Christ’s soldiers and his worst enemies “On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16: 18).

6- The sacrament of Holy Unction

The devil also fights the believer in the sacrament of Holy Unction when the priest anoints the patient with holy oil and prays with him and grants him forgiveness and Holy Communion as the Gospel says “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5: 14). In addition, the devil whispers to the patient and his family that the coming of the priest is a bad omen and that the anointed will soon die. Thus, some believers connect the priest’s anointment to death, hence they refrain from calling the priest and the patient loses the important opportunity of sacrament.

7- With money and family

The devil and his assistants are souls and are privy to the man’s previous life, his sins, weaknesses and secrets and they take advantage to whisper their poisonous thoughts in his mind. Thus they sow disunity among brothers especially in cases of money and inheritance. The devil has successfully conquered man with this temptation over thousands of years knowing man’s greed and love of money. His aim is to demolish the Christian family who bare the salvation mission. Likewise, he fights husbands and wives, brothers, parents with sons and daughters, at work and in management “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6: 12).

Do not despair

When we encounter problems in our lives, sometimes bigger than we can bear like death, cancer, losing ones fortune or going to prison we often fall into despair. We also fall in despair when we sin and give up and lose our confidence and ability to triumph. In any case, those are the wars of the devil, to lead the faithful into despair away from God’s mercy and help. However, God’s words are clear, comforting and assuring without any doubt “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isaiah 49: 15). “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you” (Jeremiah 31: 3).

“I fear what’s inside me more than what comes from outside”

Any outside devilish war, if not kindled with an internal desire vibrating at same frequency, will not be accepted by a man. A person’s weakness and the trials he encounters during his life polish his needs, desires and internal cravings. A man’s external problems at work, in business or in politics are not greater than those within “Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man” (Matthew 15: 17- 18).

Triumph in the war with the enemy of good

Job fought the devil and triumphed. His loyalty and faith in God conquered his weakness in the trial even when he blamed God for trying him although he was righteous. We, as believers, are called to triumph like Job. For we are Christ’s soldiers and our triumph is a crown of glory and a deposit in heaven. Never doubt God’s providence and do not blame Him for He is always ready for those who call upon Him and believe in Him “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Psalms 50: 15).

Sin

The devil wants to throw us in the deep pit of sin. Yet, the Lord is merciful and makes the pit like a trampoline which lifts us spiritually higher than our previous status before sinning. Every lesson we learn from our sins lifts us a spiritual step higher, so let’s learn from the feeling of being in sin so that we do not return to it again “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6: 23). “Jesus said I am coming to take the believer with me, what you are going to do you sinner, when Jesus comes”.

God’s Body is the solution

When you are depressed or spiritually and bodily weary, haste to the Liturgy, confess and have Communion and you will see amazing things! Most of the marital and family problems are caused by the enemy of good, the devil. These are spiritual wars and their remedy is to have refuge in the Lord. I have witnessed acute depressions and marital conflicts that quickly disappeared, sometimes instantly, at confession and Communion in faith. The devil's wars are exposed to the Church and the faithful and the cure is well known and proven, do not hesitate and trust the Lord “the demons believe and tremble!” (James 2: 19). “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6: 12).

Chapter Three: evil and the devil

The origin of sin

Sin springs from man's will and freedom of choice. God did not sow the evil seed in us for He does not tempt with evil for He is the "Father of lights". "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31). But if we depart from the light and truth and choose darkness and evil then we cross the threshold into darkness, under the control of the master of darkness, the devil. Adhere to the Lord, the words of Bible and the Church Sacraments to be safe of the devil's malice.

The Heaven rejoices in one repentant sinner

"Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live'" (Ezekiel 33: 11). The Lord is like the shepherd who searches for His lost sheep to bring them back into his flock lest the wolf prey on them. We

are His children and He fears to prevent the devil from preying on us condemning us to eternal death.

The devil was the master of the world

“Now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12: 31). The devil was the master of the world before Christ’s redemption and was enchained after the Lord of Glory descended into hades, for death was caught by the life’s hook. “O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15: 55). The devil then had no dominion over us except through our thoughts “Resist him, steadfast in the faith” (1 Peter 5:9).

A Divine prescription to fight the devils

“This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17: 21). Our Heavenly Father’s advise is that if your temptation leads you to sin, then fast and pray, for the devil prefers to stop tempting you, if he feels that his temptation drew you closer to God through prayer and fasting.

God and evil

God did not create evil, it was the devil and his assistants’ fall that did. His arrogance in trying to lift his throne over God’s, with his free will, that led him to be expelled from God’s presence. So he chose evil, pitting himself against God and His creation.

It was also the free will of Adam and Eve, by disobeying God, that led to their expulsion from paradise. Thus, they along with their offspring had to face the consequence of that free-will decision over the ages.

Some chose to be carried away by their desires and the devil's temptations like Cain, while others chose the path of righteousness like Job, Ibrahim and Joseph...

Every human is free to choose and God foreknows all that will happen, yet He respects the will of His created and their choice.

Christ then came to redeem those who chose faith and all men of pious will.

“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30: 19).

Jesus bound the devil while on the Cross

While the Roman soldiers were nailing Jesus' hands and feet to the Cross, Jesus was also binding the devil at the same time. While the devil waited for Jesus to die, in order to bring him under his dominion, it was God who bound the devil and broke through hell, by His Resurrection, thus illuminating the world and releasing man from death and darkness, by granting him life. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15: 19).

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life

The devil is bound

“He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and he cast him into the bottomless pit” (Revelation 20: 2). One day I went to a farm with my wife and children. A chained dog started barking savagely, scaring my

family. I turned to my wife and said, do not fear the dog for he is chained. Like a chained dog who barks to scare intruders, the devil uses temptation to make us fall in sin. Yet the devil cannot harm the faithful who reject him, like a chained dog cannot harm man. So together lets chain the devil and fight temptation.

Be truthful

“Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor” (Ephesians 4: 25). The liar and father of all lies, is one of the many names of the devil. As believers we have to rid ourselves from the gown of lies, and put on the gown of truth so we are recognized among men as truthful in word and action. Let’s talk to others with the same truth we want them to talk to us.

Disgrace the devil

“If you have been foolish in exalting yourself, or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth” (Proverbs 30: 32). Do not boast and be vain, rather hold your tongue and do not speak evil and rid your heart from envy and spite so you do not plot against others.

Thoughts and the devil

The devil never ceases to block the path of the righteous, and tempts them even in their dreams. He also whispers to God’s children to commit sin. Yet he flees when we approach the Holy Sacraments. So beware of the devil’s wars and realize that temptation is not from within, therefore you can defeat it because it is not imbedded in you. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1Peter 5: 8).

The judgment

The devil protested in the presence of the Divine Throne saying: I have sinned and fell and you cast me in the depths of hell, and though man sins every day why do you not cast him in the epitome of hell? The Divine mercy replied: man repented and hence deserved to freely wash his sins with Christ's blood. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3: 24). But the devil has decided not to repent.

God's mill grinds slow but sure

A close friend was plotted against in the most vicious, and sometimes illegal, ways by someone who knows him closely, but my friend took refuge in God. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear, The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalms 27: 1). He kept his calm through it all and never attempted to get back at his friend. And it came to pass, "For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous" (Psalms 125: 3). My friend overcame it, yet those who wronged him fell in the pit of despair and harm. "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14: 14).

The fall of the enemy

"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16: 33). Christ became incarnate to defeat the devil in the same physical nature that fell and triumphed over him on the mountain. Since Christ is God and man simultaneously, He did not fall in any temptation or desire "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2: 22), and expelled the evil souls and devils with a commanding word "I saw

Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10: 18). He also accepted death in order to go into the devil’s den and bind him “trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life”. He is everlastingly alive. “He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20: 2).

Hell is real and the devil will be cast into it

“The everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25; 41). “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12: 9). “For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched” (Isaiah 66: 24). If man willingly choses to separate from God and from the path of righteousness, and down the path of sin and darkness, then he has willingly chosen where to spend his eternity.

Be smarter than the devil

The devil has thousands of years of experience in fighting man and making him fall in sin. He notices how and where a man glances, his gestures and desires and builds upon them his temptations. However, the sharp witted believer plugs out all evil desires from his heart and becomes aware of his gestures and glances. He should also avoid suspicions by going to sinful places and is always armoured with Christ’s Words and the Church’s Sacraments in his battles: “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Galatians 5: 17).

The devil is like a roaring lion

The devil fights man. He is jealous of him and bears a grudge against him “your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5: 8). He wants us to sin and fall and turn away from God, so he can put us under his dominion, for he is “the ruler of this world” (John 12: 31). The fallen world is that one far away from the Church and the Lord Jesus, however, whoever faithfully seeks the protection of the Lord and clings to Him, will triumph in preventing the devil from toppling him.

The devil's history

The devil is real and present even before Adam and Eve were created and he seduced Eve “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (Genesis 3:1). The faithful of the Old Testament fought him “Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel” (1 Chronicles 21: 1), as did the angels. The evil also tempted the Lord on the mountain “Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down” (Matthew 4: 5-6). The devil lost this battle and it was a turning point in the triumph of the human nature over the devil, represented by the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ “You shall not tempt the Lord your God” (Matthew 4: 7).

How can you practically make sure of God's existence?

I asked the bishop this question and I was curious to know the answer, he replied: it's simple, all you have to do is to pray intently 5 more minutes than you would usually do, and it is then you feel the devil raging a war against you to stop your prayer, and only then can you be sure of God's existence. This contradicts logic, and even my expectations, that the devil's existence proves the existence of God. I

was surprised by the Bishop's answer as I thought he would say through prayer, faith and theological belief I would be certain of God's existence. "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Luke 4: 8).

The roofs of our homes

The roofs of our homes are two types. The first one is well-insulated preventing rain water from leaking in while the second has bad or no insulation whatsoever, allowing water to leak in and ruin the house structure. A believer who lets his thoughts and body go without proper spiritual insulation like prayer, fasting, and strong will, will result in allowing bad thoughts and desires to seep in and destroy his earthly and everlasting life. Let's be ready and fortify our bodies and souls guarding them for the eternal life "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12: 25).

Our Father thou art in Heaven

The evil one is the devil, and the fallen angels, are the ones whom, with their free will, fell from God's grace because of their arrogance. The devil tempts man and tries to make him fall because he envies him and bears a grudge against him. He tried to topple righteous Job with God's permission "Behold, all that he has is in your power" (Job 1: 12). The devil cannot do anything without God's permission for God is the creator of Heavens and earth and the Pentocrator, everything is in His hands and is capable of throwing the devil in the blazing lake with fire "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20: 10). Ask God

for help and He will deliver you from the evil one “But deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6: 13).

The devil's plot

A dear elderly wise friend once told never to stir a brother against another even if I feel that I am compelled to do so because one is wronging the other. I abide by his advice, because brotherly relations are as sacred as the matrimonial bond that united their parents, and as sacred as the womb that bore them, and the mother that raised them. Leave the dispute unto them, to be resolved amongst them by the wisest of them. “The devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested” (Revelation 2: 10). “And when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22: 32).

Most sacred place over the most impure place

On one of the highest peaks of the French capital Paris, lies the church of Jesus' Holy Heart. The street just below it is a red light district, filled with sinful people. It is not by chance that these two places are in such proximity, as it is the devil that fights the church and its faithful children. However, wherever sin abounds, God's mercy abounds much more in order to exceed it and triumph over the devil and his assistants “But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5: 20).

The territory of the devil's work

The devil is a spirit, that is, a non materialistic being, so his work is also beyond material. Since thoughts and souls circle in an energy range higher than the body's low energy, then it is easy for the devil to

communicate with them in the same non-materialistic and imperceptible medium. Let's imagine that the devil has a TV broadcasting station in sound and picture broadcasting for each person his favorite programs satisfying his desires and lusts. But how does the devil know what to broadcast and to whom? The devil is very well informed in his war against humans through the ages. For once he sees a teenager, he knows what messages to send him to lure him toward lust and desire. Or when he sees brothers in a loving brotherly relationship, he transmits to them images of the money that they would one day split, so he can drive a wedge between them. Or he wages war amongst families, sisters in laws, or between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. In all these matters he is well learned and experienced, transmitting to them on the same waves of their personal desires to entice them. He would observe a young man's glance at his female neighbor, and seize the opportunity to profit from this weakness; he would take advantage of a teller's glance to a money filled drawer, or use the envy of employees when the boss praises only one. These thoughts and feelings that go through someone's mind is picked up by the devil, who in turn exploits them for his own benefit. "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren" (James 1: 14-16).

"They seeing see not"

There is a lot of suffering in the world. Every day thousands are killed in civil wars and armed conflicts, or are dying of incurable diseases, suffering from pain and aches and slowly awaiting death, while we watch this all unfold on social media, it seems we never learn from what we see. The thief does not stop stealing, like the liar never ceases

with his lies, or the adulterer that continuously cheats, and those who bear false witness. But Judgment Day is coming for sure and the evil doer will get his just punishment while the faithful, whether righteous or repentant will receive mercy and will enter the Kingdom of God. Do not be afraid if you are a sinner for now you have a chance to repent and return to the Lord who promised that He will forgive your sins “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1: 9).

“I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil”

Christ, the Son of God is asking His Father to safeguard the disciples from the devil, and his deceits and lies.

Let’s also beware of him and pray to the Lord to safeguard us of him.

The devil always attacks the weakest link.

The saints know

“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2: 11). Saint Paul writes to the Christian Corinthians about forgiveness, and also addresses how the devil whispers in the mind of man and spreads his poison in the world, in order to deceive the faithful and draw them away from forgiveness. He also whispers temptations of their hearts desires for them to commit and fall into sin. However, the Church and the saints know the devil’s games and warn us of them “Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6: 11).

The devil

A fallen created angel. Our Lord knows the future, our thoughts and intents. In His hands are life and death, yet, the enemy of good knows only the past, never the future, predicts our reactions and desires but does not know our thoughts and intents. Do not be deceived by him. Our Lord is the creator of the universe, what is seen and not seen for he is the Pentocrator.

The devil of perplex

A bad decision is better than no decision. In life man faces many tough situations where he has to make detrimental decisions. This is where the devil takes advantage of man, riddling his mind and heart with confusion. Train yourself with techniques to help you reach sound decisions, and shield yourself with faith and prayer to triumph over the devil and his evil. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4: 6).

Is the devil true or delusion?

It is the title of a book I once read. Let no one doubt the true presence of the devil. It is clearly mentioned tens of times in the Bible. Beware and be watchful of his presence and know that he is in every negative and evil thought, in times of anger, or uttered hurtful words, in every vice, weakness and desire. If you are aware of his presence and all his moves then it will be easy for you to fight him and triumph over him, and live in peace, love and joy and reject every wrong thought that might upset you. "Resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5: 9).

Harvest time

God is the creator of the universe all that is seen and unseen, creator of heaven and earth, creator of angels, some of whom disobeyed Him willingly, thus fell and became the devils. With one word He is capable of destroying them but He does not. The devil unknowingly contributes in God's plans. The Lord awaits the harvest season to separate wheat from tares and sheep from goats, then He casts the devil in exile forever. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12: 9).

The devils' envy

When the enemy of good witnesses man doing right he starts fighting him.

When he sees a faithfully married couple he comes between them to separate them. He sows doubt and envy thoughts in them. The devil works on the mental and spiritual levels with thousands of years of experience. He also incites others unknowingly to help him, by exploiting their envy too, so they continue his work in destroying other marriages.

Prayer, prayer and prayer is our weapon against him in addition to Communion. The Lord's Body is the strongest weapon against the devil and his plots.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6: 11).

The struggle between good and evil

The devil and his assistants fight the faithful and the saints not the criminals, killers, evil doers or the sons of darkness, who are all his assistants. The devil opposes God's plan for the salvation of humanity, but he never dares to fight God, his creator and creator of the universe. God is omnipotent. He created the angels, of which some, like Lucifer and his assistants, who fell from His grace with their free will due to their arrogance. God can destroy the kingdom of the devil and his assistants with His Word, but He chooses to leave it to harvest on Judgment day so as not to pluck the wheat with the tares. "But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them'" (Matthew 13: 29). When we request help from God to fight the devil, He grants it. The struggle between good and evil is not a struggle between God and the devil, rather among men of good will and those of bad will. Between angels and demons. God has the final word when He sees fit, by His wisdom.

Deliver us from the evil one

Lord Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer by which we ask our Heavenly Father to "deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6: 13), who is the enemy of good and his assistants, as well as the evil doer. The Lord teaches us that He responds to our prayer and He is capable and willing to deliver us of any human or spiritual evil. However, we have to ask faithfully and work to earn the Lord's response.

Beware of the wicked eye

Beware of all who are watching your business, your health, all that you do or own and beware of wicked and envious eyes. "A wicked eye envies his bread, and he is a niggard" 11225

55 at his table” (Sirach 4: 10). Arm yourself with faith, prayer and grace (Communion, Holy Water and the Holy Cross) to protect yourself from the evil one and his assistants.

The struggle between the devil and the believers

It is a struggle between the immoral desires of man, on one side, and what is moral, just and true on the other side. This struggle is inside everyone. Desire is welcomed for it makes a person happy, but not for long, while justice and truth are better liked because they give a person everlasting joy. The devil kindles the fire of evil to attract the souls to his dark eternal destiny for he knows that his time in seducing humans is short and that one day he will be bound for ever, on Judgement day. *“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20: 10).* The clever one is he who runs away from the forbidden fruit.

The tempted and temptations series

1. The tempter

He is the devil who is the accuser on Adam’s sons in front of the Divine Throne *“For the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down” (Revelation 12: 10).* He is never truthful, he is “the liar and father of a liar”¹¹ who devoted his existence to tempt man and make him fall in his plots and snares to share with him his destiny in everlasting punishment and the lake of kindling fire. *“The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21: 8).*

¹¹ John 8: 44

2: The tempter and assistants

What assists the tempter in bringing down man is man's own human weakness. For man is made of dust, for man's thoughts are filled with lust and desires born out of his surroundings. Life imposes on man many desires and immerses him in seduction, envy, fights, and disputes with others over position, and money.. However, the Lord assures us in His Bible: *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10: 13).

3: Temptations and spiritual wars

God did not tempt Adam and Eve in Paradise, it was the serpent (the devil) who did. God already knew that and warned them against it. *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"* (Genesis 2: 16- 17).

God's forth knowledge does not mean that He tempts his children or tries them with evil, for He knows that the enemy of good lurks to tempt God's children day and night that is why God warns His children of the devil's plots and traps.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5: 8).

4: Temptations and spiritual wars

God did not tempt righteous Job, yet He permitted the devil to do so. His fore knowledge and permission were at the end, in God's wisdom, for the benefit of Job who was crowned with the crown of glory when he triumphed through his faith. *"For gold is tried in the fire"* (Sirach 2: 5). However, this does not mean that God tempts us with evils changing it to good *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12: 21).

5: Temptations and spiritual wars

God did not tempt righteous Joseph, it was his brothers who cast him into the pit then sold him to the Ishmaelites, and it was Potiphar's wife that seduced him... all those temptations and evils were of men's free will not of God's.

At the end, the Lord turned tribulations to Joseph's own good, by making him the ruler of Egypt and the saviour of his people from famine,

"Shed not blood; cast him into one of these pits in the wilderness, but do not lay your hands upon him"
(Genesis 37: 22).

6: Temptations and spiritual wars

As for David the prophet, one of the great prophets of whom the Lord said that "He shall seek for Himself a man after his own heart"². Nevertheless, David fell in his lust willingly, and it was not God that tempted him, but it was his own lust that allowed him to look at Uriah's wife and desire her, and cause the death of her husband, and then bear with her a child. God detested and loathed what David did, and to punish him he did not respond to his prayers when his child (the fruit of his sin) fell ill and eventually died.

¹ John 8: 44

¹ 1 Samuel 13: 14

Thoughts of the Corona epidemic

Is corona of God? -1

If it were good, then it would have been from and of God, but if it were evil, then for sure it is not of God the benevolent and merciful the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God does not tempt us with evil, for He is light and good *"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all"* (1 John 1: 5).

Yes, He is the Pentocrator and has dominion over the earth and heavens and can destroy the universe with a word of His mouth *"In whose hand is the life of every living*

thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12: 10). Yet, He is the Creator, the loving, the compassionate and the life giver, He is not a murderer or not bestow death upon mankind.

Then, who is responsible for the Corona? -2

It could be manmade or of man's neglect. It could, as well, be of the devil or a consequence of the nature's earthly laws of biology, chemistry or physics.

God could have permitted it as punishment for the sinners (like Sodom and Gomorra), or a mercy and a call to repentance for all His children. Corona should not be compared to the flood because the Lord promised not to punish the earth again.

"And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done" (Genesis 8: 21).

God is present, recognizes and knows and the epidemic's fate has an end. God recognizes all His creation and as He gets honey out of the carcass³, from this distress He will bring forth relief *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55: 9).*

God respects man's free will

God does not compel man to do good, neither to repent nor stops him from doing evil. He does not compel him to save himself. He is standing at the door, knocking⁴, urging us in unimaginable ways to do good and detach ourselves of sin, to repent and seek our salvation, yet on the other hand, He highly respects our will and does not compel us to do anything.

Therefore , he shall transform this epidemic into good and benefit for man, but He is not who invented it. He does not create nor cause diseases neither death nor evil, for all are manmade either intentionally or unintentionally, naturally or through the the seduction of the enemy of good, the devil. For God is innocent of

³ Judges 14:8

³ Revelation 3: 20

this. “let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts any man” (James 1:13).

Chapter four: sickness, pain and hardships

[The inflicted shall thank](#)

Whoever gets ill and bedridden for weeks and months thanks the Lord for good health. Whoever tried hunger thanks the Lord for food. Whoever faced desperation and deprivation thanks the Lord for the hope he has given him. Whoever faced grief and distress thanks the lord for happiness and joy. Let’s be the first to thank the Lord for all His blessings and benefaction before the bite of pain: “But seek first the

kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6: 33).

Sickness, evil and death

Sickness is not of God, rather healing is.

Evil is not of God, rather of man’s will and the devil’s seduction. God reject and despises sickness and evil for he is not their maker, rather He changes them to the benefit of His children at the end.

He helps those who rely on Him and protects them from evil.

Death is not of God for life is His will. That is why Christ came and triumphed over death to grant us life.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3: 16).

The miracle of healing the paralytic

Is it possible that God caused him the disease?

Does God play the role of a hero! That is to cause paralysis to the man to show up later and cure him and get praised?

God does not like His children to be sick, nor to any of His creation. Rather, nature, hereditary traits, man’s mistakes are what caused him sickness and disease.

But God loves healing His children which is exactly what Christ did on earth, healing the ill, opening the eyes of the blind, bringing the dead back to life, calming the winds and casting out demons.

“Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20: 31).

However, its when people cling to religion, they unknowingly exaggerate their faith by relating all things to Him.

Relating all good to Him is correct for He is light in whom there is no darkness at all. He is the father of all light, and the father of all the blessings and comforts. But to relate evil to God like illness and death, is not Who or What God is.

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1: 5).

[Advantages of distress](#)

One of my friends told me once of a lesson he learned. He was nervous because he was about to close an important business deal that would change his and his family’s lives. He flew to another country to close the deal. On the plane a very charming and attractive woman sat next to him (he is weak towards such women, and has somewhat of a history with these types of temptations). The woman talked to him the whole trip with the purpose of coming on to him, while he tried to resist her. The conversation took a more aggressive tone from the women’s side, but he remained focused on resisting temptation, by praying, for fear of disappointing God that the business deal would fall apart .

He feared that if he flirted back with her, somehow the deal would not go through, and he would lose God’s trust, because he allowed himself to fall into temptation. He also felt that if he did fall in sin, he would be

too ashamed to ever ask for God's help again, because he had failed Him. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalms 66: 18). At the end he triumphed over the temptation and the deal was successfully closed. He considered that the distress he faced made him stronger in overcoming it. These types of tests have advantages and God allows them for they strengthen a weak person, by allowing him to resist such temptations with his free will, and get close to God and ask Him for help. These tests also strengthen man's faith, hope and dependence on the Lord. So it is through temptation, trials, and adversity many are led to salvation. "You have been grieved by various trials that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1: 7).

The suffering believer

To be faithful and do good does not mean that man never faces hardships, challenges, pain, illness. The saints and the Apostles were whipped, tortured, thrown to the lions, crucified and drowned for their faith. However, it was their faith and hope in God that did not shatter, for they knew that the pains they suffered were of their free will, and those of their enemies and not of God's doing. For God changes them for their good and eternal salvation and helps them go past and bear such suffering to reward them with crowns of glory and martyrdom, where extreme joy and glory awaits them in their eternal lives. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2: 9).

God is with us in distress

Prophet David's relation with the Lord strengthened in his distress and flee during which he wrote the psalms and experienced the Lord's existence and protection "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalms 23: 4). We, as well, suffer every day and if we trust that the Lord is always with us, especially in the most difficult of times, and if we submit ourselves and our troubles in faith to Him, we will feel at ease for He will deliver us. Just have faith and watch: "if you would believe you would see the glory of God" (John 11: 40).

Revenge

The desire for revenge stems from our feeling of hatred and anger toward those who have deeply hurt us. Therefore, we have two options, either to feed this feeling of hatred, and to mentally and physically prepare for revenge, which will further ignite our anger, pain and hatred, resulting in self harm, or chose the other option, which is to forgive, and excuse the one who wronged us, by putting ourselves in his shoes. Only then can we properly understand why he wronged us, and start to heal ourselves mentally, physically and spiritually ridding ourselves of anger, hatred and the will to revenge, that can only destroy us spiritually and physically, and might also cause us sickness.

Finding excuses for those who wronged us allows us to forgive, and forget, replacing the need for revenge with forgiveness.

"But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." Mathew 5:39

"And pray for those who persecute you." Mathew 5:44

Hardships and persecutions

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19: 29). The Lord Himself promised compensation of a hundredfold.

Not only in our next life but also on earth. The persecutions and hardships might sometimes be necessary for our salvation and the Lord will help and protect us through them. “And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12: 9).

Pain has its own blessing

If you do not suffer, you will not feel with those who suffer

And if you do not feel with others, you cannot forgive them

And if you do not forgive them, then you will not be able to forgive yourself

When in pain, you appreciate what it means to be in good health, spiritually and bodily.

When in pain, you learn to be humble

When in pain, you hasten to God to relieve you of it

When in pain, you get nearer to God. Pain will lead you to reunite with Him.

When in pain, you understand the meaning of life.

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure” (2 Corinthians 12: 7).

[Distress strengthens the believer](#)

“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16: 33). Distress affects all people, though in different degrees, whether they are believers or non-believers. However, the believer has faith and hope in Christ to help him in his distress; for Jesus has triumphed over the devil and will stay with us till the end of times: “we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance” (Romans 5: 3). Tribulations strengthens the believer so he becomes accustomed in facing them. They also test his faith as he is always resisting them.

The believer is not fortified against tribulations and temptations

“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3: 12). God does not prevent tribulations from happening to His children, nor does He prevent temptations and hardships, yet He offers triumph over them and gives an opportunity and a solution: “They will return to the Lord, and He will be entreated by them and heal them” (Isaiah 19: 22). Ask of the Lord that the tribulations end well and that He bestows on you their blessing and the benefit which His wisdom deemed of them.

Rejoice in the Cross

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross” (Luke 9: 23). Who does not accept to take up his cross means that he did not benefit of his tribulation; for in tribulations you feel the need for God and you pray to Him and draw near to Him, and by doing so you meet with Him and the everlasting relationship starts. Let’s accept the cross of pain faithfully.

Ailment and medication

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Matthew 9: 12). Man is weak, born of flesh and blood, he sins and falls again and again. God knows it for He is our creator, thus He gave us the Divine medication in the Sacrament of confession, the spiritual food and the immortal vitamin which is faith in Him. If we keep taking the medication, the food and the vitamins, then we triumph over the ailment and enjoy His bliss.

Time of suffering

Recent studies have shown that man seeks refuge in God (even if he is away from Him) in times of suffering. In sickness, in death and in poverty. God accepts repentance and allows us to return to Him. However, it is better for us to cling to Him not only in bad times, but in good times too. “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastics 12: 1).

Why the illness my Lord?

Many reached faith in God and returned to Him, safeguarding their salvation and eternal life by means of a chronic disease. For God meets man in his illness and weakness “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12: 9). Pain and sickness are an alarming bell to the human soul to humble itself and return to its earthly roots “you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3: 19).

Our Mutual destiny

Often, unexpectedly we are saddened by news of someone close diagnosed with an incurable disease, or we hear of someone’s death. We grieve and fear that one day we shall be in their shoes in a deadly illness or pain or death. We all have to strengthen each other providing spiritual as well as material help to overcome, together, the hardships of this life in one spirit and one faith “I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me” (Matthew 25: 36).

The wisdom of sickness

We are faced daily with the challenges of life, such as sickness or death, of ourselves or those around us. Some might lose hope while others’ faiths shake and they start questioning God’s wisdom, for sometimes, we blame all ailments unto Him. However, God does not tempt us with illness or evil, rather, they are a natural outcome of our behavior and the environment in which we live. Adhere to the Lord and let not your faith shake “For I am the Lord who heals you” (Exodus 15: 26).

Sickness as the road to Heavens

Sometimes the ailment of the body becomes the nourishment of the soul, and teaches us better than if we are students of theology. It might wear the body out, but it prepares the person for everlasting life. “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (John 11: 4). Let’s accept our sickness and benefit from it for it becomes our salvation by participating with Christ in his passion.

Death warning as lesson for gaining life

With time, the list of our beloved departed relatives and friends for whom we pray, grows longer. We remember them while they were still full of life and how they departed from this life, miss them, mourn them for their departure, grieve for their spouses and children who are left behind, yet, the truth is: “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1: 2).

Under God’s protection

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Psalms 50: 15). Prophet David’s enemies were chasing him to kill him but his relation with the Lord and belief that his life or death were in His hands gave him comfort in that ordeal, so he did not fear death or his enemies “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues” (Psalms 31: 19-20). The destiny and life of the believer who trusts in the Lord and submits his will to His Will lies under the protection of the Lord even if

the evil doers encircles him with his evil plots, all of which the Lord saves.

[Ask for what you like and the Lord will give you what you need](#)

You ask for riches? He might give you contentment instead. Getting rich might expel you of your everlasting life. You ask for health? He might give you patience, for in sickness you draw nearer to eternity. You ask for power? He gives you humility instead, for power makes you fall in pride. “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men” (Matthew 7: 11).

[Sickness and pain](#)

A dear friend of mine suffered for ten long years of illness. He used to pray daily questioning God for why he permitted his sickness to happen and asking for healing, until he was finally healed. Only then did he receive the answer and understood God’s wisdom in getting sick and feeling pain and he thanked Him heartily. “A thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12: 9).

Sometimes illness and pain prevent a greater evil. That was the wisdom that my friend understood, yet, he prevented me from publishing the wisdom he grasped.

Many illnesses are due to spiritual sicknesses

When a person falls in sin due to spiritual weakness, like greed, desire, pride, self-love... he feels guilt which might develop into desperation and depression, thus the body becomes more prone to different illnesses. The cure begins spiritually in getting closer to God's Word and enforcing his will, in addition to submitting our lives and will to the Lord Jesus our redeemer and saviour. "So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you" (Exodus 23: 25).

"Because Your loving-kindness is better than life"

The head of a family once fell ill with a severe chronic disease and his family was deeply grieved. However, this man was living a life of sin away from God, concerned only with earning profit. After he passed through this difficult illness he became more vigilant and returned to the Father's arms in repentance and faith and he turned his life around. A believer commented on this situation saying: "this illness was the best thing that happened in this man's life, for it brought him back to his senses, his faith and his church". In many situations, an illness is a time for self-examination and a means for the salvation of the soul. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9: 12).

Old people ailment

A wise man was asked: what is the wisdom of parents' ailment while you watch them suffer?

He answered: sickness is due to a body's weakness and mortality since the fall of the human nature represented by Adam and Eve. God does not cause illness. When parents fall ill, children care for them, as they

repay them for nurturing and raising them. They also get closer to God as they pray for their parents well being. It also provides an opportunity for the elderly to prepare for their heavenly life with repentance, confession and Communion, and to ask forgiveness to those whom they wronged. When the grandchildren watch how their parents care for their grandparents, then it teaches them how they are expected to one-day care for their own parents. However, if their parents neglect their grandparents, then they will fail to do the same with their own parents. “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (John 11: 4).

Moments of anticipation

How many times you have felt fear or worry while waiting for your exam or lab tests results, or your doctor’s examination? Your fear would be exasperated especially if you suspected you had a deadly disease like cancer. You would run out of patience while waiting, and whether you do or don’t have the disease, you find yourself taking precautionary measures. You wait impatiently for the results, and whether you are sick or not, you start planning to take better care of your health, making promises to yourself, if you escape the disease. This experience teaches you a grave lesson, the lesson of anticipating fearfully judgment day. Whereas the last result would either be everlasting life or death with everlasting torture. So, what you do now, and how you act will determine the result on the day you are judged and “the clever is he who saves himself”. “Those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5: 29).

Longest night in life

A friend went through the longest night in his life, when he got his blood results back and feared he might have cancer. Immediately his mind went to his wife and children. He thought who would take care of them? He also feared for his life, and what would happen to him if he has cancer. Fearing the worst, he ended up calling a doctor friend in Canada, who thankfully relieved his worst fears. Looking back, my friend told me, this was probably the longest night in my life.

Facing a dreadful illness and fearing imminent death can be a turning point in one's life, no matter what the end result might be. For man questions his readiness to meet God, and whether he spent his time on earth working for his everlasting life. Therefore, always know that today could be the chance for everyone to review their legacy in life. "whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

Why would we seek the Lord only when in need?

If someone becomes in need, he hastens to the Lord, if he gets sick he hastens for help, if a dear one or a relative dies he draws nearer to the Lord; if, if, if... when a person faces powers more powerful than himself like wars, floods, hurricanes, volcanoes and big daily problems he feels his weakness as a human being and only then he remembers the creator of the universe and runs towards Him for protection. Therefore the only solution is to be with the Lord at all times, thanking Him in sickness and in health, in poverty as well as in riches, in death and life, in joy and grief. "Nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8: 39).

The doctor and the healer

Some sects refuse to visit doctors assuming that God is the initiator of sickness, thus they accept the sickness and its consequences due to their belief in God and submit to His will and accept it without any objection. They even reject to seek medical help, or consume medication that could relieve their sickness and pain. No matter what their illness is, they are adamant in their objection to seek medical help or to checked into a hospital to receive proper treatment. The Bible is very clear in this regard: “Honor a physician with the honor due unto him for the uses which you may have of him: for the Lord has created him”. For of the most High comes healing, and he shall receive honor of the king. The skill of the physician shall lift up his head: and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. The Lord has created medicines out of the earth; and he that is wise will not abhor them (Sirach 38: 1). However, he has to pray to the healing Lord “My son, in your sickness be not negligent: but pray unto the Lord, and he will make you whole. Leave off from sin, and order your hands aright, and cleanse your heart from all wickedness. Then give place to the physician, for the Lord has created him: let him not go from you, for you have need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success. For they shall also pray unto the Lord, that he would prosper that, which they give for ease and remedy to prolong life” (Sirach 38: 9- 14). Visit the doctor once you are sick and do not forget praying in faith.

Man is a weak creature

When you are faced with an illness that weakens you or you are threatened by a chronic disease, you feel your weakness, even though you think you are invincible or you riches will save you. It is only then

you start approaching the Lord more than before, because the illness drives you to Him and to repentance if you are a sinner. It also allows you to start feeling the pain of other humans. These diseases and weaknesses are part of the human life and might become of great spiritual benefit more powerful than thousands of religious eulogies. Make use of the illness and weakness. “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord” (Psalms 130: 1).

Would our creator not pity us?

Jonah admonished the Lord for forgiving the people of Nineveh who repented after he forewarned them. He prophesied on the whole city that it will be destroyed as the Lord commanded him. The Lord answered him “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?” (Jonah 4: 10- 11). They are the Lord’s children as well, even though they are sinners. In this manner the Lord pities us and sends one warning after the other either through a relative or a stranger, young or old man and sometimes as a reproach, intimidation, or awakening of our interest, or by threatening, plainly or alluding, or by example, preaching, or directing or teaching. The Lord might allow sickness or the death of a loved one only to return and repent so we would live and not perish.

God permits His children to suffer

When the shadow of Peter fell on a sick man, he was healed. Also handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from Paul’s body to the sick, and they would be cured.

Peter also raised dead people in the name of Jesus Christ.

Despite all this, the Lord permitted that he be crucified.

The Lord also permitted many Apostles and martyrs to unjustly die and suffer for the sake of the name of Christ and the ministry of preaching, all of them understood the Lord's wisdom and accepted it with joy.

"I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."
(Acts 9: 16).

Perhaps it is for the good

Even if you do not get what you have wished for and desired, thank the Lord at all times and say "perhaps it is for the good". If someone dies say the same thing. The deceased might have departed in the best time for his salvation, that is, in his best spiritual state to go to heaven not to hell. Even in the case of illness say "perhaps it is for the good". Illness is sometimes beneficial for the salvation of the sick. "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"
(Ephesians 5: 20).

Between life and death

My friend told me how he miraculously escaped death after an accident left him unconscious for a long time. He cherished what this accident did for him, because it led him to vigilance leaving behind the past path of youthful recklessness and indulgence in vices, thus returning to God in repentance thanking Him dearly for saving him from death. "A person is not crowned unless he triumphs and he does not triumph unless he fights. He does not fight unless he faces distresses that tests

his faith and steadiness of will according to the Divine will. “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (James 1: 3).

Sin and sickness

Sin does not necessarily generate sickness, and God does not afflict us with sickness if we err towards Him or toward a fellow human. In the story of the paralytic, Jesus says first: “your sins are forgiven you”, and then He miraculously heals him saying again: “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house” (Matthew 9: 1- 8). Here, if the sickness was due to sin alone, then Jesus would have forgiven the paralytic his sins and consequently he would have risen up and walked.

Doing good only

When the Word of God got incarnate He fought evil, the devil, sickness and death for He went about healing the sick on every occasion that presented itself, triumphing over the devil when he tempted Him, in addition to casting out demons and raising the dead. He healed the blind since birth, the lame, the deaf and the dumb, raising Nain widow’s son. When John’s disciples asked Jesus if He was the coming one or they look for another He answered: “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11: 5).

As well, He healed all illness and weakness among the people, this is God’s nature as well as the incarnate Son “who went about doing good” (Acts 10: 38), and in none of the events we hear or see that He punished any one with evil, sickness or death.

Topping His love for humanity He consented to the Cross to triumph over the two enemies of man, sin and death “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15: 26).

Many a harmful is useful

Sometimes, the illness, which transforms the body to a sickly and deathful nature,, is better for man’s salvation.

In sickness man feels his weakness and susceptibility to pain and death, thus he learns from it and refrains from his bad conduct and stops committing sins that could lead him to his eternal death.

It is said of cancer that it is the disease of the Kingdom wherein the patient feels the definiteness of his death, so he prepares for his afterlife in repentance, fasting, prayer, spiritual strife and corrects what he wrongfully committed unto others and prepares with all his strength by doing good works and walks the path of righteousness trying to sanctify himself for the Kingdom.

“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (John 11: 4).

Chapter five: Death

Slow death and fast death

Many discuss the way their loved ones pass on. For some, they feel pain for the sudden death of a loved one without having the opportunity to bid them farewell, for others, their pain stems from their inability to stop the prolonged suffering of a loved one before they pass.

This reminds me of an old prayer asking God for ways not to die: “God do not let me die in a fire neither drowning nor as a stranger alongside of the road; rather an easy death with a Communion, with the intercessions of pure Virgin Mary, Amen”.

Actually, it is difficult for the Lord to see the death of His children: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalms 116: 15).

The way and speed of death of each person is probably the best suited for his salvation. For those whose death is slow, it is probably because it is in preparation for that person and those around him. However, although a fast death, for those who are prepared, is less painful, it is more painful for those around him who will mourn this sudden death.

O God have mercy upon our dead, prepare us for death in faith and longing to You.

Wakefulness of the generations

I am in my fifties and so are many of my friends which makes our parents in their seventies and eighties. This means that their lives are coming to the end, as this is man's natural life span on earth.

Every now and then we hear of one of them passing on to the next life. Some of my friends in sadness say "life is useless" and "this is life". In regards to the inevitableness of death they say "life is not worth it" and "we are all destined to die". As for believers who mourn their parents, they do so with the hope of resurrection and meeting them one day again in heaven. The most important thing is to watch and learn "work for your life as if you are living forever, and work for your afterlife as if you are dyeing tomorrow".

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called" (1 Timothy 6: 12).

The spiritually dead and the bodily dead

Bodily death is of the nature of our mortality, which is not the important factor, for our life on earth is limited to seventy or eighty years, most of it is spent in toil. "The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalms 90: 10). Still, this is not important.

For in the Gospel of John, the Lord says: "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5: 21-22).

Here, the Lord is referring to those who are spiritually dead, those dead in sin and thus separated from God Who will give them life again once they believe in Him and the One Who sent Him, guided by repentance.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5: 24).

Do not fear death

Bodily death is the gate to everlasting life in heaven with the Lord Jesus where there is no grief, no wail and no pain, rather, infinite happiness "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11: 25).

Memorial of the faithfully departed

“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them” (Wisdom of Solomon 3: 1).

Through the Church’s teachings, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the Holy Bible in its two Testaments, we know that once a faithful servant of the Lord departs this earth, he rests in peace in the bosom of Abraham together with the saints and righteous where there is no grief and no pain, but great peace. “But they are in peace” (Wisdom of Solomon 3: 1).

We do not believe that the merciful God has snatched the souls of our beloved with death as punishment for them or us for He is life and love. “For God made not death: neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living” (Wisdom of Solomon 1: 13).

As for our departed, they have departed from this life from natural causes and the corruptible nature of the body and due to sickness and disease. “But though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest” (Wisdom of Solomon 4: 7).

We should not forget that God has the keys to death, hell and heaven and nothing happens without His knowledge and consent. He is the Pantocrator and intervenes in His wisdom as He sees fit to prolong the life of a person when this is better for his salvation. He might, also shorten the life of a person whose evil has prevailed, or who has successfully passed the trial. He intervenes in His wisdom as He sees appropriate.

Bodily death is a blessing

God allowed death to enter this world so that evil and evildoers do not become eternal.

He permitted Adam’s death “you shall surely die” (Genesis 2: 17) when he ate from the forbidden fruit, so that he would not live in the state of fall and separation from God eternally. Yet, God with His love, planned for the redemption of Adam and the human race and to give them back everlasting life. Sometimes, bodily death is comfort to the crippled, disabled, captive, jailed and the homeless.

Even the saints are eager to live with the Lord in heaven.

Faith of living in utmost happiness after bodily death is what strengthens us, so never fear death. “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory” (1 Corinthians 15: 55).

“He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11: 25).

All have sinned

God’s plan was to create us to live with Him forever. Yet, our father Adam fell and death prevailed over the world and the human nature. “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life” (Romans 5: 18). We all as well have sinned, not Adam alone “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3: 23), thus we needed the incarnation of Christ so

that God might be glorified when we are redeemed for we are not able to be saved solely by our own deeds.

The Lord does not want our death

God abolished death by the death of His son Jesus Christ who died by the Father's will knowledge and permission and the will of His crucifiers' as well, but God raised Him for He is life itself and death cannot capture Him. The Lord does not wish the spiritual death of man and separation from Him, in addition, bodily death has numerous reasons like sickness, war, fire, flood, old age (except murder and suicide), and they are all within His will. For the Lord is the Pentocrator and creator of the universe, all of which runs through his wisdom is done by His wisdom. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55" 9).

Nonexistence of death

Nobody wants to die, and the believer seeks to be alive at the second coming of the Lord Jesus at the end of times, for no one likes to taste death and its pain, its fear and waiting for the unknown. Yet, Jesus assured us that "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11: 26). Bodily death is unimportant and it is for a very short time like passing a gate into eternity. Do not fear or grieve. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will live with Him forever.

The happiness of departing to Heaven

I do not call it death. The Christian believer lives in faith and hope for the happy everlasting life in heaven. Bodily death is painless (at the moment of death) for the righteous. The soul is then freed of the weary bodily bonds heading towards everlasting heavenly happiness. Be ready in mind, heart and soul to depart to Heaven, so you will not be grieved when your departure time comes, rather, you will meet that moment fearlessly in joy. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8: 35). "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (John 8: 51).

Socrates and death

"The real philosophers accept death. For to them it is less fearful than to others". Socrates said before drinking the poison while he was calm with a clear mind and philosophized about death and immortality of the soul. When he was offered the poison, he did not hesitate to drink it, or showed disgust or pain. Yet, he doubted, for death to him is metaphysical and only God knows its secrets. The Christian faithful should not fear death. For them it is a departure to heaven, to everlasting happiness, where there is no more pain or tears. That is what Christ, Son of the living God, promised, for He died to fulfil this promise for us "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2: 9).

When death is a mercy for someone's point of view

I asked a poor man "what do you do?" He replied "nothing, just waiting to die". I asked "why?" He answered "64 years of torment, poverty, pain and depravity". I am not sure if his suffering was his responsibility or the community or both? This viewpoint contrasts with the Christian faith where the believer hopes and works for a better life here on earth and in heaven.

"He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19: 17).

Christ the life

Christ is life itself. He is everlasting life "In Him was life" (John 1: 4). The Life was incarnate to triumph over death. The reason for death is sin "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6: 23). Jesus did not sin in life "He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4: 15). He accepted death on the Cross, He Who is life, for it is the only way to face death. Since death is the nonexistence of life and darkness is the nonexistence of light, death lost the battle to the Lord of life and the Light of the world.

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life.

Why did God create us?

God created us for His great love and to share with Him His Kingdom be part of His plan for the creation, therefore, we have to proceed in religious piety to arrive to salvation and reunite again with the Lord. However, the actions and will of a person determines the length of his life time.. Some commit suicide, others are killed by their fellow man in wars (the devil tempting man in evil) while some get addicted to alcohol and drugs, thus killing their body prematurely. Yet, some neglect their bodies and expose it to diseases and sicknesses thus shortening their life span. Sometimes the Lord punishes a person when his evil aggravates (like King Herod) and ends that life "Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12: 23). Man dies by permission of God the Pentocrator and sometimes he dies prematurely "Why should you die before your time?" (Ecclesiastes 7: 17), if man willingly intervenes to end his life or the lives of others by his actions guided by the devil's temptation, as Cain killed his brother Abel "I said, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations" (Psalms 102: 24). But the devil, God forbid, has no dominion over the lives of humans, for he is a mere fallen angel.

Man is a creature with a soul/spirit.

The soul is bound to the body and it is effective through the body for it is not corporeal. The body senses, sees and notices while the soul is not perceivable. Though the soul is united to the body, yet, it is of a totally different nature distinct of the body, but has its own aspirations, desires and goals.

Therefore, man is a united soul and body creature heading towards God. This is nicely expressed by "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water" (Psalms 63: 1). Therefore the body and soul together are left to the

pleasures of life or left to unpleasant circumstances as Job says: “But his flesh will be in pain over it, and his soul will mourn over it” (Job 14: 22), that is the body pains while the soul cries and grieves.

Who created death?

Saint Gregory Palamas writes: “God did not create death, rather, the devil the king of evil, who himself was deprived of life and became father of death”. “Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world” (Wisdom of Solomon 2: 24). As it is also written that God did not create neither spiritual nor bodily death, for He did not pre-order “die on the same day you eat of the fruit”, rather He said “you shall surely die” (Genesis 2: 17). In addition, He did not say “go back to earth now”, that is die immediately and return to the earth of which you were made, rather, “And to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3: 19). With those words God announced and permitted, yet, did not obstruct the just consequences of disobedience. “That through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2: 14). God is life while death is the nonexistence of life. Death reigned over the human race due to the devil’s seduction of Eve and Adam, for the spiritual death is curable by repentance and the bodily death follows the spiritual death. In all cases, the everlasting death is man’s choice of sin and union with the devil, the father of death.

Immortality is God’s target for man

God wanted to grant Adam and his offspring immortality, for Adam was not created for death, rather, to be immortal “proceeding to immortality” with his free will. They were given the opportunity, according to their free will, to become mortal or immortal, yet, they chose improperly and Eve believed the envying devil “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6: 12). Thus, man became susceptible to death and evanescence.

Who comprehends life and death

“So far we did not know anything about life, so how can we know about death?” But as Christians, we know life since God became incarnate to give us everlasting life “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1: 4) and “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3: 13). No one to date has ever understood the mystery of life nor the uncertainty of death. “The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints” (Colossians 1: 26) and “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face” (1 Corinthians 13: 12).

Death as the gate to Life

The Lord does not cast away grief by preventing a loved one’s death, but rather by understanding and accepting death, for it is unavoidable. The bodily death is the gate to everlasting life for this gate is inescapable. There is no resurrection without the cross and no rest without toil. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Psalms 116: 15).

The devil's plot

His plot was to entirely annihilate the human race, yet, he was not capable of making his work profitable because God, the Omnipotent suppressed most of the catastrophic energy with indestructible laws, and later, aimed at him the final deadly blow through the death of Christ, the redeemer, on the Cross and His glorious resurrection. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6: 23).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16).

Cosmic precepts

The devil knew how to distinguish between good and evil before his fall, yet he willingly chose to disobey God's orders and tried to lift his throne above the almighty God's throne arrogantly. Thus he fell in sin, resulting in his eternal death "you shall surely die" (Genesis 2: 17), which is detachment from God.

Since he envied the new creation that God created, the devil capitalized on his knowledge of the cosmic concepts and seduced Eve to disobey God's words, thus falling with her husband into sin and consequently death, which the devil himself suffered earlier, sharing the devil his destiny.

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2: 17).

"For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3: 19). The name of Adam means the one created of the dust of the earth.

Sleeping time and dying time

Many children fear sleeping alone in darkness, as if they sense loneliness and unconsciousness at sleep in material and mental darkness. Adults also fear the time of death or nonexistence and are terrified of the unknown. This is however, not inapposite to the true believer who knows where he is going and even knows the road, so he lives in peace and joy awaiting the happiness he will find in his eternal life. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11: 25).

Learn from death and life is bestowed to you

Every day we bid farewell to someone dear to us who departs from this life to the "house of justice" and none of us is immortal as we are all heading down the same road and destiny. Let's take into account the death and judgment hours and walk fearing God to the everlasting life that would be granted to us "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalms 111: 10).

May God extend your life

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20: 12). Why this reward of long life? We also pray for the elderly and the sick for long life though they are incapable of enjoying more the life. The main reason is to have a greater chance for repentance and preparation for the Kingdom, so let's use what is left of our life in preparedness to live in eternity. " Go to Hezekiah, and say, The Lord, the God of David, your father, says, Your prayer has come to my ears, and I have seen your weeping: see, I will give you fifteen more years of life" (Isaiah 38:5).

The sinner dies twice

"Seek not death in the error of your life: and pull not upon yourselves destruction with the works of your hands. For God made not death: neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living" (Wisdom of Solomon 1: 12- 13). Sin is the cause of spiritual death, God said to Adam "you shall surely die" (Genesis 2: 17). When a sinner dies, his death is twofold, bodily and spiritually "the second death". We have to strive against sin and believe in Christ's redemption in order to reign with Him forever, where "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain" (Revelation 21: 4).

Christ has acquitted us

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5: 12, 20). With the free will fall of Adam in sin, spiritual death entered, which is separation from God, through his children, us, since we sin every day, yet, with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and his death on our behalf, we were acquitted.

No more death

"Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (John 8: 51), will not see eternal death for the bodily is inevitable. The fear of death has always been the obsession of man for it takes us into the unknown, which no one returned to tell us about. Yet, for us as believers, it is a departing from earthly life in the body to no death, which is everlasting life where we do not face the death that was our destiny before Christ's redemption.

Spiritual and bodily death entered the world as a consequence of Adam and the Woman's disobedience

God warned Adam of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for at the moment he and his wife disobey the commandment they will surely spiritually die (detach from God) which is what happened at the moment of fall. As a result of that death, bodily death followed which is separation of soul from the body.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2: 16-17).

Resurrection of the dead

“I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come” (The Orthodox Creed).

Abraham, the father of the believers believed God’s words to him absolutely, hence he obeyed and consented to offer as sacrifice his only son, which was counted as righteousness. He, as well believed in the resurrection of the dead. We too believe and live in hope of resurrection and life in the coming age.

“For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead” (2 Maccabees 12:44)

The inferior death

Sleep is rest for the body after a long tiresome day, and death is the rest for the soul after a life’s long toil. After a night’s sleep a new dawn of hope rises and after death glorious resurrection rises for the loyal believer. God gave us sleep as similar to death to comprehend that death is painless after which resurrection and a new dawn arises. “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days” (Daniel 12: 13).

Let’s change our perspective to pain and illness

“Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24: 26). Our life span on earth is short, 70-80 years at most. During our life time we work and toil and are put to the test. Those who pass these tests successfully attain happy eternity. Sometimes there is no escape of pain and sickness for this is the nature of life. He who accepts it faithfully and does not blame God for it and does not lose hope enters into the glory, for death is the gate to Life.

Everybody fears death, however...

My 4 years old daughter told me she would study to become a doctor in the future, I asked her why? She replied “to treat you if you get sick, for I do not want you to die”. I was very moved by her spontaneous childish words full of love, yet, full of fear of death as well. Every one fears death, but the faithful keep hope in eternal life believing in their departure from this mortal life to other everlasting and happy life in heaven, in the bosom of the Heavenly Father: “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11: 25).

Alarm system

The alarm system in a house warns us of any intruder while we are sleeping or inattentive.

However, there is no alarm system in life to warn us about our departure hour from this life, therefore, we have to be attentive at all times and fortified of the negligence hour.

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matthew 24: 36).

The carrier and the carried

I entered a large empty church and immediately recalled the number of times I entered this church and walked the middle aisle carrying a deceased relative or friend. At the end, we shall all enter the church carried for this is life “one carries the other”, for life is short.

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1: 22).

Do not hurt anyone, do not err against anyone, love others, do good and do not let worthless matters rob you of the Kingdom.

Christ would have died in vain

We cannot enter the Kingdom with our own power for we are sinners “There is none who does good, no, not one” (Romans 3: 12), thus we needed the redemption of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

The human nature fell in person because of Adam’s disobedience, and this was followed by all humanity as it continued the fall in sin and unrighteousness.

“If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2: 21).

Here lies the importance of our faith and gratitude for Christ’s redemption as a prerequisite for our salvation.

Believers do not die

Believers fall asleep, that is why the graveyard in Greek is not called “cemetery” it is called (the place of sleep) their bodies rest in expectation of eternal life “The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessaloniki 4: 13- 18). God’s children depart, not die, from this temporary life to the everlasting life. Let’s work to earn it.

Refugees and war

A friend of mine working with UN refugee camps balked against God for not intervening to stop wars and human suffering. I answered that God works through His believers who reign the earth and the nations, for we are Christ’s body and God’s children. If people’s will is to go to war, He will not tie our

hands for He respects our will. He will not stop caring for his children, and will not overlook, for in His wisdom evil will turn to good, whenever and however He pleases. "The Lord your God is a merciful God, He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them" (Deuteronomy 4: 31).

Excerpts from the book of "the Christian concept of life and death"

Death is God's enemy not an ally

"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15: 26) what is meant here by death is the separation of the spirit from the body, that is death of body or simply death. For Saint Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians talks about the general resurrection and the judgment where there will be no death hereafter to the believer, rather eternal life, and the second death will not dominate God's faithful, the triumphant and crowned ones.

Christ died to deliver us of the ancestral sin and its results since man inherited the effect of death from Adam's sin (the ancestral sin), therefore man inherited the effect of bodily decay. God, the Life is in every particle of the universe and every man and when Adam sinned and Life (God) left him, he became prone to death and bodily decay, hence, the separation of soul of this decaying body. For this reason, Christ became incarnate and died, to redeem us from our ancestral sin. Christ came to repair Adam's fault, consequently to save us of eternal death, the second death, which follows bodily death.

Death reasons

One of the poets wrote: whoever did not die by the sword dies in other ways ; the ways of death are numerous but death is the same.

1. Some die on their bed (Jeremiah 38: 9) of natural causes, others die on the road or in wilderness (Exodus 14: 11), others die in the sea (Exodus 14: 30), others die by fire or drowning, others die by natural disasters or daily accidents (Exodus 9: 19).
2. Some are executed for crime (Deuteronomy 24: 7), or die by stoning like Stephan, some die of sickness (Acts 9: 37) or of famine (1 Kingdoms 17: 12) or heart attack (Acts 5: 5) or by the sword in war (Jeremiah 42: 17) or of infection or exhaustion or deep grieve (Job 21: 25), or of misconduct (Proverbs 5: 23) or of addiction or uncleanness or drugs, etc.... (Ezekiel 18: 12).
3. Others die of extreme indulgence and excesses "But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives" (1 Timothy 5: 6) and the Greek philosophers lived for food and drink thus perished stupidly (1 Corinthians 15: 32). "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts (Romans 6: 12).
 - "The sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7: 10)

- Death of exhaustion of worldly affairs ((Psalms 44: 22) not in the service of God or for the service itself, like some of the Apostles (Romans 8: 36)
- Asking for death because the hopes are not fulfilled (Jonah 4: 8)
- Death by one's hand (material or moral suicide) because of great tribulation (Revelation 9: 6) due to detachment of the evildoers from God

4. The Holy Bible also record other reasons for the death of the evildoer:(spirited death – separation from god – the second eternal death

- “A harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15: 1)
- “He who is careless of his ways will die” (Proverbs 19: 16)
- “Who lifted his eyes to the idols, or committed abomination (Ezekiel 18: 12)
- “But if they do not obey, they shall die without knowledge (Job 36: 12), But fools die for lack of wisdom (Proverbs 10: 21)
-
- “sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1: 15)
- “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18: 21), “The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3: 8). How many words led to a person's death, together with many?
- “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18: 20), “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6: 23)
- “he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death” (Proverbs 11: 19)
- Consulting with the sorcerers, charlatans and conjuration is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and leads to eternal death (Deuteronomy 18: 11; Isaiah 8: 19).

Age is not definite in time but not human life is not determined at a certain point

- If death is decreed on all creatures of the universe (Hebrews 9: 17) then man's life ends in a time known to God and with His permission, either in youth hood, manhood or elderliness. God doesn't order the death to come to a man at a specific time.
- The evildoer himself might interfere to end ones life either by committing suicide or by the different vices that shorten his life, thus might end his life at a young age.
- Wise Solomon asks the evil man of corrupt conduct saying “Why should you die before your time” (Ecclesiastes 7: 17) and a local proverb says “who unjustly treats his youth, his elderliness will unjustly treat him”.

chapter six: who is responsible for the departure of my father from this earth

[Till we meet again](#)

My father departed to heaven, I grieved and cried a lot however, with a firm faith I was happy he was in heaven with the angels and the saints where he is capable to move and fly in spirit as he was not able to walk in his remaining days on earth. He was in Heaven where there is no need for food or drink, as he was not able to eat or drink here on earth. Every night I feel united with him in prayer and he became an intercessor for me together with Virgin Mary. Yesterday I told him “will meet in heaven when God wills”. “If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death” (John 8: 51).

[Who's the killer?](#)

If the Heavenly Father, God the creator of heaven and earth did not end my father's life, who did then? Is he Azrael? Is he the devil? For he has no dominion on human life as he is just a fallen angel created

and limited, rather punished and in the final judgment will suffer in eternal punishment accompanied by all humans who willingly follow his path. "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matthew 25: 41). "And come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5: 29). So, who compelled my father to leave to heaven?

My Father and my father

My heavenly Father did not cause my earthly father's death and he did not deprive me of him, He did not snatch his soul and did not end his bodily life. Death is evil and separation which is against good and life. God is love and life. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 12: 6). God is love (1 John 4: 8). Jesus wept at Lazarus' grave, and His incarnation, death and resurrection was to conquer death and grant us life. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16). Yet, who kidnapped my father from me?

Then, who is responsible?

The human corruptible nature which is subject to the laws of nature is the cause. Our bodies' susceptibility to death (separation of soul from the body), is caused by the sin of the first man, Adam, and his fall from paradise (the life of grace) to the cursed land is because of him "Cursed is the ground for your sake" (Genesis 3: 17). "Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" (Genesis 3: 3). When Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit, they became carnal with corruptible tunics of skin. So, where is God?

God's status of death

The Lord Jesus saved us of the spiritual death (eternal death, for bodily death is repose not death) and gave us life (spiritual death is separation of the sinful from God), so returning back to the Lord and repenting saves us of "spiritual death". "If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (John 8: 51) which means whoever believes in the Lord's incarnation, crucifixion, death and resurrection for our sake and lives in repentance and does good works shall not die spiritually, for his body will rise to resurrection on Judgment Day and will rise as a spiritual body and view God's glory in eternal happiness.

Where is my father then?

He is in heaven with the righteous and saints, looking unto God and enjoying His holy mother's presence who is his patron. He is also in the company of his earthly parents, and all those righteous people he knew on earth. He is now where "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying" (Revelation 21: 4), in eternal happiness "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2: 9). My father has reached the heaven with God's mercy not with his personal worthiness and with the good deeds that he did on earth, Christ's passion and death were the price of my father's redemption and ours.

Does God have dominion over bodily death?

Series

Does God have dominion over bodily death? -1

God is the Lord of the living and the dead, the Lord of heaven and hell, brings to life the human body and prevents his death and prolongs his life “And I will add to your days, Hezekiah, fifteen years” , and God has done this many times in the Old and New Testaments. The commandment of taking care of parents also indicates it: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20: 12). He brought back Lazarus to life, Nain widow’s son and many others to prove to man His dominion over death and He rose from the dead with His own power.

Does God have dominion over bodily death? -2

In addition, He immediately punished many with bodily death as He did with Herod when he did not praise the Lord, so the angel of God struck him “Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12: 23). There was also the incident of Saint Peter with Sapphira and her husband when they lied to the Apostles “Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out” (Acts 5: 9).). God also struck the Pharaohs and the people of Egypt as punishment for their ill treatment of the Jewish people. The examples go on and on...

Does God have dominion over bodily death? -3

God Has established Divine rules for the good of humans since Adam’s fall that led to his expulsion from Eden in a state of sin, so that he may not stay in paradise and eat from the Tree of life and live eternally in the state of sin. For sin is the eternal separation from God. He then permitted bodily death of man for his welfare. “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3: 19). After man’s fall, God promised salvation by the Redeemer to save man of eternal spiritual death which is more important than bodily death.

Does God have dominion over bodily death? -4

God is the Pentocrator and creator of man and in His hands are their lives, souls and bodies, yet, He gave man free will to choose. Who chooses to cling to God lives righteously and does not die spiritually or eternally. Rather, his soul proceeds to live with the Lord forever after his body dies. At Judgment day, the bodies rise and carry on incorruptness and live eternally happy in heaven. As for the body, it is how man chooses to care for it, for if he stays away from wars, conflicts, does not commit suicide or fortifies it against sickness then he lives longer than others. The body’s nature is predisposed to sickness, and

death. God intervenes whenever He pleases to extend His children's lives or to permit their death in the best time for their salvation according to His wisdom. God knows when we are born and when we die and all is in His hands. He also has the ability to change them all, through His wisdom, that transcends our mere comprehension as the heavens are higher than the earth, He leaves nature to take its course and only intervenes with His Providence as He pleases for our benefit. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalms 23: 1).

Do not say this is the Lord's will: Series

Do not say this is the Lord's will -1

God is not the cause of suffering, it is stupidity to think that, and to even believe that God created our suffering, "this blasphemy undermines God's goodness". "The misuse of freedom in choice, made Adam liable to punishment, decay and death". "Men are born of men, thus all bear as well human imperfection". Therefore, liability for suffering originated from the original sin of Adam, which was committed with his free will, and perpetuated by our own sins. We are responsible for our own suffering through our free will and decisions.

Do not say this is the Lord's will -2

Saint Gregory of Palamas summarizes the fathers' consensus by saying: "God did not create death neither sickness nor faults", "God did not create neither the soul's death nor the bodily death". "The bodily death was not given by God, who did not create or willed it; and God did not create sickness". Then, how and where did death and sickness originate"? "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31).

Do not say this is the Lord's will -3

The fall (of humanity represented by Adam and Eve) led to losing Divine grace that was granted to man at creation hence man attained the liability of decay, sickness and death. Man's free will chose (since Adam till today) to live life either by pursuing evil or choosing the righteousness path, consequently, Adam's sin led the human race to sickness and decay. End of sickness is bodily death (separation of soul from body). "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3: 6).

Do not say this is the Lord's will -4

So, sickness is the result of Adam's sin and fall and it is a form of evil that sin brought about. God did not impose this punishment, though He permitted it, however, it was man that created it by his transgressions. "Every one of us choses punishment when he sins willingly". Adam bequeathed suffering, sickness, decay and death to man. Any man, as a human, is subject to sickness and death, not because God determines to make someone sick or kill another. "Men are born of men, thus all bear as well human imperfection".

Do not say this is the Lord's will -5

Then, illness that afflicts the human race is not always due to our personal sins, but because we all share the fallen human nature since the fall of Adam, our father. That is why the biblical texts refute any connection between man's sickness and sin, committed by him or his forefathers.. "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9: 3).

Do not say this is the Lord's will -6

A man feels guilt after he commits a sin. For his immunity decreases and he gets weak or more prone to sickness due to worry, confusion and guilt. But God forbid, he afflicts His children with sickness. If you sin return hastily to the Father in repentance. "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6: 37).

Do not say this is the Lord's will -7

God never forces any one to do good or evil and does not interfere against man's will. So, do not make the Lord a peg to your sins. The Lord urges man to arrive at salvation by doing good, of his free will: "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" 1 Timothy 2: 4).

Do not say this is the Lord's will -8

A pure spring does not spring but pure clear water, so is the Lord. He is Light, love and goodness and produces nothing else. The Lord is not the source of pain, sickness, evil or death, so do not ascribe any of these ailments to Him. Adam's sin and man's sin and his choices is what afflicts humanity with these evils. "Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3: 17- 19).

The different forms of death: Series

Death forms -1

The death of sin which is the spiritual death, that is, separation from God while on earth in body. Examples are numerous like the prodigal son when the father said to his elder son: "For this my son was dead and is alive again" (Luke 15: 4). My son was dead because he separated from me, his father (that is God) and now he repented and returned to his fatherly home (the Church) and he became alive again. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5: 24).

Death forms -2

Bodily death is the separation of soul of the body. This is due to the corruptible nature of the body which is predestined and predisposed to sickness and decay, which is of the laws of nature caused by the spiritual separation of Adam (his sin and spiritual death) from God the Life. So, when the body wears out and the heart and brain fail, the spirit leaves the body "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3: 19).

Death forms -3

Eternal or everlasting death means that the body and soul stay in hell eternally, that is, after the bodily death and soul separation, when man is judged on the great Judgment Day. "And come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5: 29).

This death is the worst for it is incurable. Sin death (spiritual death) is erased by repentance and return to God (while still alive), while the bodily death of the righteous is eliminated by the general resurrection when the soul returns to the body and the good man rises to the resurrection of life (incorruptible luminous body).

Lord Jesus and death: Series

Lord Jesus and eternal and bodily death -1

Lord Jesus came to save us of spiritual death “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25). For after the bodily death (separation of soul from body) the believer will live and eternal spiritual death will not dominate him. Bodily death, however, is a natural characteristic of man, as his body decays through illness and disease and eventually it perishes. “all are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Ecclesiastes 3: 20).

Christ came to abolish death -2

“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15: 26). The Virgin Mary along with her fiancé Joseph fled with the Lord Jesus from Herod who threatened the Lord Jesus (the expected King) with death, and out of cautious self preservation killed thousands of children, in the hopes that Jesus would be among those killed. For sure, God had nothing to do with the killing of those innocent souls. However, Lord Jesus fought death and reversed its effects in every incident He encountered, raising Lazarus and the son of the widow of Nain and many others. If He caused their death, He would not bring them back to life for He does not contradict Himself, and does not contradict His Father’s will, for the two wills are one. As for the devil, he has no dominion over man’s life. “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11: 25).

Death and Eternal Life: Series

The fall of Adam and Eve -1

The devil seduced Adam and Eve to share with him his fate (out of envy and jealousy of the new creation). Adam who is made of flesh and soul sinned and fell and was sentenced to death (spirit and body), the spiritual (first) by separation from God “you shall surely die” (Genesis 2: 17). The created human nature became liable to death (separation of spirit from body and the death of the body and its decay) because it fell in Adam’s person, though before the fall, it was created for immortality (body and spirit) wherein Adam walked with God in Paradise and saw Him face to face: “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3: 8).

God’s promise of salvation -2

God did not want man to be dead forever, after Adam’s fall, so He kicked him out of paradise in order not to eat of the Tree of Life, which, if he ate from it he would delve deeper into sin, that is, separation from God. For God promised the coming of the Savior, and Jesus became incarnate and redeemed humanity with His death, in order to restore to the human nature its immortality so that it can live again with God in paradise for eternity : “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1: 15). “That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3: 15).

Where do the souls of the righteous and sinners go? -3

When the earthly body life’s span “expires”, through old age, sickness, murder or suicide the spirit separates from the body, which is the kind of death we know. The soul goes to paradise if it was righteous (participates partially in God’s glory) or to hell if it were sinner, awaiting God’s Judgment.

What is death? -4

Death is the nonexistence of life, and since God is life, “In Him was life” (John 1: 4), then being far from God and separation from Him is death. Separation is when a man’s will (soul and body) is against God’s good will. As men do not accept a criminal or adulterer into their homes, similarly God does not accept to introduce sinners or adulterers into His heaven or in His Kingdom “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites” (1 Corinthians 6: 9).

Hell is the devil’s den -5

The devil was the first to commit sin and die spiritually and was cast away from God into hell. Likewise, all who commit deadly sins intentionally and commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit go to hell to the devil’s den. Before Christ, all souls went to hades, to the devil’s den, but he has no power to kill men: “And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life” (Job 2: 6). God forbid that he has any saying in the presence of God the creator of man and Who bestowed life unto him: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2: 7). However, the devil seduces the sinner by suicide, as he did

with Judas Iscariot, or incite man to commit murder, or to intentionally jeopardize his life in wars, accidents or fights, for then his soul will eternally be vanished to hell awaiting final judgment.

The devil's artifice -6

The devil knows when someone's is at death's bed, suffering from terminal diseases like heart disease, or diabetes, so he tempts them to sin, so that they end up in hell, living with the devil in his eternal dwelling. However, the Lord does not leave His children helpless, but rather, he tries in every way to warn and help them conquer the devil: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3: 20). And God tries with His marvelous ways that transcend human comprehension to save all of His children "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalms 116: 15).

The Lord and death -7

The Lord hates death, though He is the creator of all things, yet He does not will death to His children. Jesus wept at Lazarus' grave (John 11: 35) and grieved at the death of the son of Nain widow. He then raised Lazarus and Tabitha from death: "Little girl, I say to you, arise" (Mark 5: 41). If Jesus was the one who sent them to death, then their death would have been the most ridiculous play in history... so who killed them?

Who killed Lazarus? -8

"Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick" (John 11: 3). Martha and Mary have sent a messenger to Jesus to inform Him that His friend Lazarus is very sick. The body's nature is prone to sickness and death. God did not kill His friend Lazarus in order to raise him after four days... God is not a performer, nor is he a hypocrite and or a comic writer.

How did Lazarus die? -9

The Lord Jesus did not kill Lazarus; neither did the devil because he is not capable of this. His body was prone to sickness, so it wore out and he died naturally, thus his soul separated from his body and went to hades and the Lord Jesus brought him back to life. He is the Lord of the living and of the dead, in His hands are the keys of heaven and hell. He surely does not wish the death of His children except in the proper time for their salvation. He permits their death at the end of their bodily life, but with His will and knowledge and wisdom that transcends our comprehension, as the heaven rises over the earth. Sometimes, He intervenes (if He wills) to prolong the life of His beloved children if it is for their own good. He responds to His children's prayers and makes miracles and intervenes in their lives, He grants long life to those who honor their parents: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20: 12).

Chapter Seven: Passion, Resurrection and Redemption (The Holy Week)

Palms Sunday

“Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21: 9). That’s what the multitudes cried out at His entrance into Jerusalem. Hosanna means “Lord save”. Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This Kingdom was in Heaven before the redemption “My Kingdom is not of this world” (John 18: 36) and on earth after the redemption, also in our hearts at accepting the salvation. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth” (Philippians 2: 10).

The mystery of the Eucharist

“Saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22: 20). On Great Thursday, when the Lord gave His Disciples the greatest of Mysteries, the Eucharist, in which He gave His body on the cross redeeming humanity. With the proper words of consecration, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ and whoever takes them in repentance is granted forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Jesus’ Divinity

“And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19: 30) was the last indication of Christ’s divinity and freedom of voluntarily giving Himself up “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10: 18). Naturally, when a person dies, his head bows down before his soul leaves his body, however, the Lord did the opposite, He chose the moment of giving up His soul, thus willingly bowed first His head then gave up His soul “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23: 46).

The sun darkened at midday

“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He” (John 8: 28). I am He means that He is God. Jesus said it plainly to the Jews who did not believe Him, yet, when they crucified Him on the Cross, sun darkened at midday from 12 noon to 3 afternoon and the earth quaked and the graves were opened and the veil of the Temple was torn in two, then they realized that He really was the Son of God.

He who holds the creation in His hand

After the Lord gave up the spirit on Friday He was in Paradise together with the righteous thief who was crucified next to him on His right side. He was in heaven with the Father and the Holy Spirit on the throne, He was in the grave with His body, He visited hell in Spirit as God and released the captives after granting them life and trampled down death by death. Lord Jesus is the Son of God and equal to Him in essence, filling everywhere and everybody not bound by death nor by grave. He was not dead like

ordinary people because He is God and man altogether “For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2: 27). He who holds the creation in His hand will not be contained in a grave.

Christ's shroud

“Go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’ (John 20: 17). Christ's shroud is still present till this day in Torino, Italy and it is the evidence of Christ's resurrection. All the marks of the lashes he endured, the crucifixion, the crown of thorns that was placed on His head, the body shape and face are all still imprinted on the shroud because of the light of resurrection. These are marks similar to those of Beta and Gamma rays when they cross the body, they are not marks of blood and sweat since the body was scented with myrrh and aloes.

Alive forevermore

“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore” (Revelation 1: 18). Christ is risen and there is no more death for us, the believers in Him, let's congratulate each other every day. Christ is risen... He is risen indeed. Our faith is that our God is alive and He is with us forever. “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28: 20).

The gate to the Kingdom is open

“Because I live, you will live also” (John 14: 19). Starting from Great Thursday, through Great Friday, ascending with the Lord on the Cross and then taking Him down to bury Him in the grave, then Great Saturday, when the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected with God's glory, to Sunday of Pascha. At Pascha (Easter) we rejoice, as the gates of the Kingdom of God are open. Our redeemer is alive forevermore and we live with Him to carry this joy and His Kingdom in our hearts every day. Christ is risen... He is risen indeed.

The nature of the body after resurrection

The risen body, in general, is a glorified one and Apostle Paul explained that glory by saying: “The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (1 Corinthians 42- 43).

If we are resurrecting with a glorified body, a spiritual one, how more proper then was the resurrection of Christ the Lord. This resurrection was “the firstfruits” much like what we all will rise in during the general resurrection. The greatest evidence that we will arise according to that resurrection is Paul's saying “Jesus Christ will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Philippians 3: 21). It is obvious that the glorious body is a spiritual one hence rises over the materialistic body that requires food and drink to sustain it.

Jesus' weeping

"Jesus wept" (John 11: 35). He wept while standing at Lazarus' grave, His friend. Jesus was man and God and wept for Lazarus because he was in hell the gates of the Kingdom were not yet opened, for Jesus has not yet risen and triumphed over death (He knew the brutality and darkness of death). Hence He was eager to save us and lead us out of it.

The mystery of all mysteries

Christ knew He was going into passion, crucifixion and death and knew who was going to deliver and betray Him to the extent of asking the Father "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26: 39), He also willingly ascended to Jerusalem to fulfill all... why? Because He is Life and He has to descend into hades to bestow life on all the faithful dead and crash the bonds of death and open the gates of heaven for us, the living. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16).

The Friday of redemption and forgiveness

On Great Friday, the Lord willingly gave up His Spirit on the Cross – to redeem us – with great love. Kneel daily at the crucified feet, asking forgiveness "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Genesis 32: 26), and do not let Him go until He grants you repentance, spiritual and bodily healing, spiritual wealth, joy, salvation and fervor in faith.

Pascha Sunday

Christ is risen...he is risen indeed, and there is no more death for those who believe in Christ and His resurrection and those who are striving for a good life. Come on and rejoice, for today is the celebration day. Christ's resurrection is a token of our resurrection after our death, for He is the first fruit and we shall follow Him, Glory to our risen God from the dead "He is risen, as He said" (Matthew 28: 6).

Christ died on our behalf

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26: 28). Christ's words on Great Thursday are very clear when He plainly said that He will be crucified and die on behalf of the Disciples and many others. There is no doubt that He knew and accepted His death to redeem us, not to satisfy God's wrath for Adam's fall, rather to finish His mission which started by sanctifying the bodily nature by His incarnation and triumph over the devil in flesh when he repeatedly tempted Him, and ending by destroying death and setting free the captives in it and opening the gates of Heaven for us, the faithful.

When did the Kingdom of God dwell in?

The Kingdom of God started with Divine incarnation and sanctifying the human nature, and was verified at crucifixion, resurrection and triumph of Christ over death and the devil "I saw Satan fall like lightning

from heaven” (Luke 10: 18) and this Kingdom will be proclaimed in everybody’s life, at departing to everlasting life and on the great Judgment Day.

“For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17: 21), so you have to live the life of the Kingdom on earth from now in repentance, faith, mercy , fellowship with Christ, and love deeds.

The meaning of life

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17: 3). The meaning of life and its secret is to know the real God and to unite with Him, then only we shall know the secret of the universe and the meaning of life on earth and in heaven “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11: 25). Eternity is when all faithful unite with God and in God the Creator. Jesus said: “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17: 21).

A covenant written in blood

In a unique event in history, the Creator writes a covenant with His people promising them forgiveness of sins and salvation of eternal death. A covenant written in blood, and the blood is not of a regular wound, but wounds of nails and a spear struck while on the cross until His death. The covenant was written with priceless ink, blood, passion and death of the Creator to redeem the created. “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22: 220).

How was death abolished?

Christ was able to destroy his lashers and crucifiers with one word, but He didn’t. He endured the lashings, the pain and the cross to willingly die in flesh and descend to the depths of hades and abolish death by His flashing Divinity to grant us life, we the believers. He is immortal Life, so believe in the Lord Jesus the Savior, who died for you and fulfill His commandments to overcome eternal death: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life.

What happened when God gave up the Spirit?

“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land” (Matthew 27: 45). Historically, such a darkness at midday was recorded, astronomically, it was not a regular eclipse, it was a miracle: “Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split” (Matthew 27: 51). The nature shook and rocked when the Lord gave up the Spirit, for He is her creator “So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27: 54). He is truly the Son of God whom the grave cannot contain neither can hell confine.

“He is risen as He has said”

“Why do you seek the living among the dead” (Luke 24: 5). Christ willingly became incarnate and willingly accepted the lashes and crucifixion, He gave up the Spirit while on the cross when He willed and descended into hades to freely raise the dead. He was in heaven with the Father, in the grave with His body and at the same time He is the immortal unconfined by place or time. “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1: 18).

The Pharisees’ hypocrisy

On the Saturday before the Holy Passion week, the Church celebrates Christ’s raising of Lazarus from the dead after 4 days in the grave. The Jews’ reactions were varying. Some believed in Christ receiving Him, rejoicing with branches of palm the next day when He entered Jerusalem. “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9). Others, like the priests and Pharisees believed in the miracle, yet, conspired to kill Him for fear of the Romans: “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11: 48), as they did not want to lose their social and financial standings, although they knew He was truly Christ the Son of God. Sometimes, we believe in God and know the truth, yet, we act differently because of our desires and weaknesses. Let’s pray to the Lord to grant us strength to face these temptations.

The day of the plot

“Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve” (Luke 22: 3). Judas is a thief, traitor and a lover of money “he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it” (John 1: 6) and the devil’s temptation does not exempt him of his responsibility. In any case, Judas freedom and his delivering of the Lord to die did not prevent God from turning them around for our benevolence and the redemption of the human race. Let’s not hang all our sins on the devil’s hanger, rather, let’s charge ourselves, our will and desires with its share of responsibility.

A word to a wise man is enough

“While he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times”. So Peter went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22: 60- 62). “The Lord turned and looked at Peter”, why did he look at him? Is it because God and the Son of God wanted to admonish a weak man? Or is it to remind him to heed His warning to him a few hours before? And that He was right. The Answer is a definite no, for the Lord looked at Peter as if to say I love you and I forgive you. And as the Lord told the adulterous woman “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8: 11). Had Peter not understood the gist of Jesus’ look, he would not have repented knowing for sure of the Lord’s forgiveness. It is a message to each and everyone of us: return to the Lord in repentance and He will forgive us even if we are sinners like that woman, or if we deny Him like Peter did.

He rested on the Sabbath

When God created the universe in six days, He rested on the seventh “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done” (Genesis 2: 2). Likewise, Christ the Son of God rested in the grave when He gave up the Spirit “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23: 46). He was the only one to give up His soul in the hands of the Father, like the only begotten of the Father and a God, and not under the dominion of the devil. He descended into hell with the power of His dominion, freed the captives while death could not capture Him like humans. However, as God rested after the creation, Christ rested: “a holy Sabbath to the Lord” (Exodus 16: 23). In His Resurrection He recreated all creation which was reborn in Spirit in the Kingdom of God “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3: 3).

The power of the Cross

The Jews’ plot was not to merely to murder Christ, but to curse Him well after His death in accordance with their scripture: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3: 13). However, Jesus the Lord blessed the Cross and the sign of the cross, since He gave up His Spirit clinging to it, thus gave it of His power to become a symbol of life, not death. Therefore, make the sign of the Cross on yourself all the time, and on your children morning and evening to be guarded by the Lord. “But God forbid that I should boast 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).

Every day is a Resurrection

Keep living in the spirit of the resurrection, bury past sins in the grave of salvation.

Rise from the mud of sin and you will rise from spiritual death. Then you will rise to heaven while your feet are on the ground. “He is risen, as He said” (Matthew 28: 6).

Jesus the King

He is King and Son of the King of Kings.

He is God of God and Light of Light

He was from the beginning

He became incarnate and subdued bodily desires

And Triumphed over sin and death

Defeated hell and rose from the dead and sat at the right hand of the Father

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

We all need the washing

On one Great Thursday, a man was appointed to take the role of one of the disciples and was late for the ceremony. It was only five minutes to Liturgy commencement. So I asked one of my friends if he would like to take on that role, he answered that he is not worthy and not ready for that honor. I valued his humbleness, his honest answer, and his repentant heart. Actually, no one is worthy to have his feet washed since there is no one clean, perfect or righteous "No one is good but One, that is, God" (Matthew 19: 17). Only God's mercy purifies and washes our sins. "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed" (Matthew 8: 8).

Lazarus of the four days

Lazarus was Jesus' friend "Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick" (John 11: 3). He got sick and died but the Lord raised him after four days of death (that is why he is called of the four days). It is said that after his resurrection he smiled only once when he saw a man stealing a water jar, upon which he commented: "mud is stealing mud". That is man which is of mud is stealing a jar made of mud. In those 4 days, while dead, Lazarus saw what made him change all his life and become preacher of the Word and later became bishop of Cyprus. Hopefully we learn from his example.

The power of the Cross

When Christ was crucified and on the Cross He gave up the Spirit, He gave it great power, an enlivening power, defeating the devil, power that defeated death and the dominion of darkness. So when we draw the cross on ourselves or wear it in faith, we confess and declare Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, death and resurrection. And believe that He is the Lord, Son of God who, by His death on the Cross, defeated the devil, sin and death itself. We take refuge, not merely in the wood or the shape of the Cross, rather by the victorious Christ who rose from the dead after being nailed to the Cross, of which we also take power. The power of the Cross is derived from the victorious crucified Lord. "But God forbid that I should boast 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).

Why and for what reason do we celebrate Palms' Sunday?

It is the celebration of the entrance of the Lord of Glory to Jerusalem two thousand years ago, and an image as well of the glorious second coming on Judgment Day with the angels and saints praising and glorifying the triumphant Son of God. This celebration is one week ahead of His resurrection from the dead on Pascha Sunday. Let's rejoice and be joyful for all the faithful will one day celebrate it in reality: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21: 9).

The Holy Week

It is the holiest week of the whole year, in which we walk to Pascha which means a pass over, that is when the angel of the Lord, who killed the firstborns of the Egyptians, passed over the Hebrew's homes and condoned them. Pascha is the pass over of the believer in Christ from death to the freedom of life. Invest in this opportunity to pass over from the bondage of sin to the joy of life. "Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Hebrews 8: 21).

The Pascha supper two thousand years ago

God asked the Hebrews to eat the Paschal Lamb on the night before fleeing Egypt, and to "eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it" (Exodus 12: 8). That was a symbol of the "true Lamb", the Lord Jesus Christ who was given "sour wine mingled with gall to drink" (Matthew 27: 34) and who fully drank the cup of crucifixion pain and death. There is no resurrection without crucifixion, pain and bitterness. So is our life, we have to go through strife and triumph in order to be worthy to reign with Christ.

Lord Jesus' commandment

While on a death bed, a person instructs those closest to him with important matters before he departs this life. Christ, in His last Supper and night with the Disciples taught them humility and love through washing their feet. He established the Eucharist by saying "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22: 19). However, He gave them the most important mystery of life which is His mystical presence with them and us forever in His Body and Blood "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6: 56).

Great Friday, not sad Friday

It is the Friday of joy not sadness for in it the world was saved. In it Christ suffered, yes, yet willingly, with His Father's will for our salvation due to His superabundant love for His children "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5: 24). "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16: 22). This verse expresses the Disciples' temporary grieve for Christ's crucifixion and death, replaced by their everlasting joy in His resurrection. Let's not regard the Great Friday and crucifixion apart from Great Saturday and Pascha Sunday. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

Holy Saturday -1

It is also called the Saturday of Light for in it Christ the Lord dawned over those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, who died in Hope of salvation. It is also called the Saturday of joy for those who dwelled in hell and rejoiced in their salvation and transference to paradise. "The people who sat in

darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Matthew 4: 16).

Holy Saturday -2

The Holy Saturday is an anticipation for resurrection, a guarantee and promise of the Lord's resurrection in body. Christ the Lord rose in the same moment He gave up Spirit on the Cross. Since He is God, He is with the Father in heaven, while His body attached to His Divinity descended into hades and blew it and trampled down death by death bestowing life unto those in the graves. The light that flows of the Sacred Tomb in the Church of Resurrection (mid of world) according to the faithful is a non-burning light at the beginning after which it resumes the burning characteristics of fire. "The light flowed and we celebrated". How could a grave contain He who holds the creation in His hand. "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said" (Matthew 28: 2).

Christ's resurrection is a guarantee for ours

Christ is risen from the dead,

Trampling down death by death,

And on those in the tombs bestowing life.

Christ is risen ... he is risen indeed

"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24: 1- 6).

Tears with Hope

It was so hard for me to stand beside my father's grave inside the church he built on Palm Sunday and whispering to him "wishing you a healthy year". This church that he aspired to be his home after he leaves this life..

I was filled with great sorrow and pain, and I felt them crush my heart. I repressed my tears, choking unable to swallow, hoping that like the Virgin Mary who wept with bitter tears at Her Son's feet, rejoiced on His Resurrection, I too shall rejoice with her on the Sunday of resurrection.

We were still going through Passion Week and the Golgotha, Knowing that Pascha Sunday is undoubtedly coming.

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11: 25).

Was the death of Christ on the Cross a mere show?

Did God the Father instigate the Jews to torture, crucify and kill His Only Begotten Son?

Did He incite Judas to hand Him over? Surely not, for Jesus the Lord said about Judas “It would have been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26: 4).

Did the Lord instigate or order Pilate to put Christ to death? Surely not, for Jesus said to Pilate “the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin” (John 19: 11).

Didn't the Lord Jesus know about the plot of His crucifiers and their longing to kill Him in order to protect themselves from the Roman assault and to maintain their religious, social and financial positions?

“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26: 39).

For sure God did not instigate the Jews or Judas or Pilate to crucify His Only Son and was not behind His killing though He knew and allowed it for our salvation. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus asked the Father to relieve Him of the passion cup.

Was the nature angry on Great Friday?

“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit; Having said this, He breathed His last” (Luke 23: 44- 46).

Lord Jesus is the Son of God and He is the Life, the true sun, the Word with which God created the universe, for He is the Lord of nature, He orders the winds and they submit. With a supernatural phenomenon, like never before, nor after the sun was darkened supernaturally for the Light of the World and creator of the sun and earth had given up the Spirit.

Why did Christ die on Friday?

Lord Jesus died in the interval of the Jewish Passover (Saturday that year) and on Friday the Paschal Lamb was slaughtered, which symbols the freedom of bondage and death when He freed them from bondage from the Pharaoh of Egypt.

While the multitudes left Christ on the Cross to go home and celebrate the Passover, the real Passover was hanging on the Cross.

“Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King... Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified...” (John 19: 14- 18).

Christ is risen, He is risen indeed, and we are witnesses to that

Christ rose with His own power for, originally, He has the power to lay down Himself and to take it again “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father” (John 10: 18). For Christ is the Son of God and both are one “I and My Father are one” (John 10: 30).

He contented to die for it was the way to descend to hell, without transgressing the cosmic principles, to redeem the captives in it.

In hell He triumphed over sin and death and opened the aeon locks thus releasing the souls that have been captivated since the fall of Adam.

“Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life”.

Rejoice and exalt for death will be no more for the believers in Christ’s resurrection and those observing His commandments.

“He is not here; for He is risen” (Matthew 28: 6).

Why did Lord Jesus rise on the third day?

Why did the Lord Jesus rise on the third day and not after a few hours or after even after 10 days for example?

If He rose in a few hours then the multitude will doubt that He really died and might say He was in a mere state of unconsciousness.

If He rose on Saturday the Jews or the Disciples cannot lawfully go around and visit the tomb thus testifying to His resurrection, since the Sabbath is a holy rest day consecrated by God Himself. “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done” (Genesis 2: 2).

Hence Lord Jesus rested in the tomb on Saturday for sharing God the Father in creation.

And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures since He is the first to rise of the dead “the firstborn over all creation” (Colossians 1: 15).

With what kind of body would the dead rise?

The dead bodies of the faithful will rise to the resurrection of life on the great Judgment Day in the same body in which they lived and triumphed with, but it would be different in that this body will be spiritually

enlightened, free of weakness, pain or corruption. Our bodies will be like those of the angels who do not marry or get married, living in unlimited time and space.

All will know all for they will bear similar bodies. As a nail blazes and glows in a fire furnace as such the risen bodies will look.

“And coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 227: 53).

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15: 42).

The good news

Even when humanity was sinful and fallen, Christ accepted to die for it, to vindicate it and elevate it from its descent. He did not leave it in the devil's hands to eternally perish for so He loved his children. So why then would He not excuse us and forgive our transgressions and bring us into the Kingdom after He reconciled us on the Cross? “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5: 8- 9).

Epilogue

The Lord would never cause death or sickness to His children for He is their father, created them with love though He holds the keys of hades and hell, and the key of His Kingdom. In His hands are Life and death, the universe and all creation. He utilizes all as He sees fit and in the manner that pleases Him, with His wisdom and his planning as part of His Divine providence over His creation. However, the devil is bound and has no dominion or capability of taking man's soul or sickening him. All he can do is tempt man with sinful thoughts.

God created nature and made its laws and regulations by dominating it. Man is born and grows toiling all his life, getting sick, wasting his body and wearing out his organs naturally, then dies. The soul then separates from the body and returns to its creator. A man might commit suicide, be killed or drown, by himself or at the hands of others. .

It is not permitted to attribute everything to God's unlimited omnipotence. It is logical to attribute to the Lord all goodness, blessings and benefaction, and the aspects of His guardianship over His creation and controlling the universe. His omnipotence and power are not diminished (His omnipotence is precious and exalted) if we exclude attributing to Him evils like sickness and death. For we do not attribute to our earthly parents any harm that befalls us nor do we accuse them of poisoning us or causing sickness or any evil action. But we attribute them with disciplining and educating us and sometimes trying us with difficulties. Did Apostle Peter think that God ordered the Romans to crucify him? Or did Saint Stephan think that God stirred up the Jews to stone him? Did Bethlehem people and its vicinity think that God had a role in Herod's command to kill their children?

God does not interfere in man's decisions and free will, rather He leaves them to do what pleases them out of respect for them. The exalted God Respects His children's will since He created them in His image and likeness in freedom, however, He shall judge every one according to their actions. That is why He said: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30: 19).

In cases of extreme evil, the Divine providence intervenes in the time He sees fit to stop the evil or divert it to good...

God's wisdom is far deeper and higher than our comprehension. For the death of millions in wars is not of God's desire or command. Rather He permitted man's will to do what it pleases. That would be for the greatest good or simply as a natural result of man's will and selfishness, needless to say, their wicked use of their will and in evil ways.

The secret of life and death are much harder and bigger for us to understand with our limited human capacity. This book is just a modest effort to declare God's innocence of all the accusations hurled against Him in effecting evil, death and sickness. This does not diminish His omnipotence, majesty, power and taking hold of the universe, but completes the correct theological reasoning encompassing the creator's love, righteousness, purity and impartiality.

However, sin, evil, sickness and death have entered the world by man “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5: 12).

But God does not wish the death to His children: “For God made not death: neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living” (Wisdom of Solomon 1: 13), and His original plan and desire that Adam eats from The Tree of Life in the middle of the paradise to live with God for eternity. Yet, Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command to abstain from eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the consequence was expelling them from paradise to prevent them from eating from the Tree of Life and live with their offspring in a state of eternal sin and spiritual death (which is the separation from God forever.)

The natural consequence of disobedience was spiritual separation from God (spiritual death) “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2: 17) and bodily death “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3: 19)

Very simply put, the body’s predisposition to sickness, corruption and death.

Death before Christ and after – do we fear death anymore? It is appropriate as well to look at the people of the Old Testament and see how they confronted death. Our forefathers had been condemned of surely dying (Genesis 2:17) and the separation of the soul from the body was not only called death, but also “Hades”.

The patriarch Jacob said to his sons who have returned from Egypt without Symeon; No I will not give you Benjamin. *“My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave (Sheol, Hades)”* (Genesis 42:38). Prophet Isaiah also said: *“Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure”* (Isaiah 5:14) to receive and never cease swallowing the dead. Prophet and King David praises God for saving his soul from the depths of the abysmal Sheol and certain death. *“For great is Your mercy toward me; and You have delivered my soul from the lowest hell”* (Psalms 86:13).

The fearfulness of death before Christ can also be seen in the attitudes of the Old Testament righteous, not only sinners feared death, but also those righteous who were bold before God also feared it. Before the coming of Christ everybody faced death with horror and terror. Moses left Egypt and went into the desert for fear of death; of being killed. The virtuous and bold Abraham behaved cowardly out of fear of death and lied to the Egyptians that Sarah was his sister, allowing her to be humiliated in adultery. *“I pray you, say that you are my sister, so that it may be well with me for your sake. And my soul shall live because of you”* (Genesis 12:11-13). Jacob feared death so much and prayed to God to deliver him from the hands of Esau his

brother. “Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau. For I fear him, lest he come and strike me, from mother to sons” (Genesis 32:11). Elijah, another righteous prophet who closed and opened again the heaven with his prayer; who brought down fire from Heaven, became a fugitive and an immigrant and fearful of death. “And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, so let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And he saw, he rose and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba of Judah, and left his servant there” (1Kings 19:2-3).

Even Job asked God to grant him consolation from the unbearable pain before he is thrown into darkness: “Are not the days of my life few? Let me alone, that I may find little comfort, before I go, never to return, to the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos, where light is like darkness” (Job 10:20-22). Similarly King Hezekiah, while sick and about to die, prayed and was given another 15 years to live, then he wrote: “The prayer of Hezekiah king of Judah when he was sick and recovered from his sickness: I said at the end of my days near the gates of Hades, I shall leave behind the remainder of my years. I said, I shall no longer see the salvation of my God upon the earth; I shall no longer see a man among my kindred. I left behind what remained of my life. It went away and departed from me like one who takes down a tent. My breath became in me like the web of a weaver when she draws near to cut it. On that day I was given as to a lion until morning. So He broke my bones, for from day until night I was given over” (Isaiah 38:9-13).

Mourning and lamentation were observed at deaths for it was fearful. Joseph fell on his father’s face and wept over him and kissed him. The lament did

not stop there and Joseph traveled to Canaan to bury his father and was accompanied by the servants of Pharaoh (Genesis 50:1-10). The Israelites grieved deeply for a month in the desert at the death of Moses for no one knows his grave (Deuteronomy 34:6-8). Similarly with great lamentation they wept at the death of Prophet Samuel (1Samuel 25:1).

All this was so because until then the nerve of death had not been broken. Its power and authority had not yet been destroyed. Everyone mourned those who have died as entirely lost; as if they were never to meet them again. The world then lived with ceaseless and uninterrupted fear of death.

After the Divine incarnation, Crucifixion, the descent of the Lord into Hades, Resurrection and Ascension, death was abolished to the extent that it only bears the name of death. Even the name itself was deprived of it. For from that time we do not even call it death; we call it "Dormition" or "sleep". An unknown example - to the OT people - were the words of Christ about His friend Lazarus: "our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep". He did not say that Lazarus has died. The word 'sleep' was unknown to the Disciples and the proof is their answer. "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up. Then His disciples said, Lord, if he sleeps he will get well. However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep" (John 11:11-13). Jesus has applied the same terminology upon the death of Jairus' daughter, and they laughed at Him 'but He said, "do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping. And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead" (Luke 8:52-53).

The name of "death" was fearsome but "sleep" is now sweet as it contains the hope of resurrection. Paul refers to death as sleep in his Epistle to the Thessalonians: "but we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning

those who are asleep....” (1 Thessaloniki 4:13-15). Even, the burial place is called a sleeping place.

Chrysostom wrote: When you bring your dead to this place you do not bring him “for death”, but “for sleep”. You place him in a sleeping place. Do not forget that you are bringing him here “after the death of Christ when the nerves of death have been severed”. Thus you have sufficient therapy against grief and despair, among other things, even “in the name of the place”.

We have seen above how the Old Testament people feared death, let us now hear how Apostle Paul speaks about his own death. For death evokes no fear at all anymore, on the contrary, the Apostle desires death. He writes: “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Philippians 1:23), incomparably better than life. Before Christ’s death degraded one into Hades; while now death leads one to Christ. Note the contrasting differences between the attitude of Jacob and that of Paul’s.

While in the Old Testament death brought mourning, lamentations and shedding of bitter tears, now we hear in the Church prayers and psalms to God. Despite of their mournful melody, they move us to have courage and hope for the dead. In death we are transformed from the corruptible to greater life, from the temporal to the eternal and from earthly to heavenly. Now that the Devil has been defeated what are we afraid of?

Athanasios the Great writes: “For that death is destroyed, and that the Cross has become the victory over it, and that it has no more power but is verily dead. For of old, before the divine sojourn of the Savior took place, even to the saints death was terrible, and all wept for the dead as though they

perished. But now that the Savior has raised His body, death is no longer terrible; for all who believe in Christ tread him under as naught, and choose rather to die than to deny their faith in Christ. For they verily know that when they die they are not destroyed, but actually [begin to] live, and become incorruptible through the Resurrection. And that devil that once maliciously exulted in death, now that its pains were loosed, remained the only one truly dead. And a proof of this is, that before men believe Christ, they see in death an object of terror, and play the coward before him. But when they are gone over to Christ's faith and teaching, their contempt for death is so great that they even eagerly rush upon it, and become witnesses for the Resurrection the Savior has accomplished against it. For while still tender in years they make haste to die, and not men only, but women also, exercise themselves by bodily discipline against it. So weak has he become, that even women who were formerly deceived by him, now mock at him as dead and paralyzed".⁴

Does God give life and put to death?

Never. God created man immortal and made him in His image, but it was the devil's envy that allowed death to pass into the world, allowing those who follow him to taste its bitterness. "For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless through the devil's envy death entered the world: and they that stand on his side tested it" (Wisdom 2:23- 25). God gives life and does not put to death. There is no joining between God and death, being spiritual or biological death, for God

⁴ Athanasios the Great, *On the Incarnation of the Word*. 27(1-3). *The Early Church Fathers*

is not the author of death by no means is He the cause of any evil. Evil and death are both God's enemies and their annihilation is the goal of God's salvific plan. God has initiated their destruction on the Cross and shall finish it on the final Judgment day. Death, in the Bible and in the Church's teachings, is the separation from God the source of Life, and it appeared in the world with sin. "Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men inasmuch as all sinned" (Romans 5: 12). Death is not the punishment which God threw at the sinner, rather, it is the natural result of man's separation from God, the source of life. Death, as a weapon in God's hand avenging with it His enemies, is not acceptable. It is a weapon in the hands of God's enemies with which they intimidate man with to set apart man from God's salvific plan, a weapon, which the enemies of God, foolishly, pointed at God Himself in the image of His incarnate son who became the victim not the executer, He was the dead not the deadly "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23: 34).

Death is a natural cause for the limited and incomplete man's nature who was created from nonexistence. Only God, the perfection, Himself is deathless and non-evanescent. Why then did God create man as a limited incomplete creature? Isn't that a declaration that God, implanted death in His limited and imperfect creation? Absolutely not. For God created a limited creature which is in His image. He called him to be in His likeness, that is, to cooperate through God's image represented in the conscious free will with his creator to overcome this limitation. God did not want man's limitlessness to be a mere divine achievement, rather a free pursuit of man investing, through that pursuit, God's image that is implanted in him. What happened

in the fall is man's deep infiltration into his limitation and evanescence. The fall was a misuse of the freedom God willed it in order for man to ascend from limitation to God's perfection. Do we blame God for a freedom we misused?

God took him to Himself

It is a statement often used in our church speech meant to console those who lost a dear one. However, it may appear as a synonym to "God caused his death". Therefore, it is not certain how much this will console the departed's family or friends. If they are nonbelievers, then such a phrase would increase their disbelief and refusal of God, that is seen by them as a competitor and a usurper of someone they believe belonged to them.. But if they are believers, then they would submit to this loss in submission of a believer to an assumed Divine will, that is non refutable , or negotiable and or debatable. So Is there a consolation to such submission? Unconscionable submission that is often asked of believers does not produce any real consolation. Rather a sadness of one without might or strength. Great is the difference between subservient sadness and consolation.

The problem in such a sentence does not merely lie in its impact on the mourners but rather in its falsehood. Also, why should we insist on depicting God as one kidnapping our beloved to take them for Himself?

Why do we then depict God in such a primitive unilateral picture? Scripture teaches us that "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living"

(Romans 14: 7-9). Humanity and the universe both belong entirely to God, for He needs not wait for death to conjoin us to His Kingdom. In principle, God rejoices when we get near to Him though He does not need it, for we are the ones in need of it. One's closeness to God starts and is fulfilled here on earth not in death. For those who was far from God before death, death will change nothing. However, for those who were close to God before death, will remain close to Him after death in anticipation of the final closeness at Judgment Day at the resurrection of the bodies.⁵

Letter from Bishop Dr. Munib Younan

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Dear Osama,

An Arab Christian greeting from Jerusalem.

I have the transcript of the book “God, Sickness and Death” that you have written and have sent me, dear friend. Osama, I admire you, Abu Karam, as you are a successful businessman both in your work and your investments. However, I have noticed that you do not only invest in earthly matters, but also in the spiritual life. I admire that you are well-studied in the Holy Bible, as I note that you often quote its verses in your book. This shows your interest in the Christian Evangelical faith, along with its mysteries that are difficult to rationally comprehend unless you are growing spiritually and are studying the Holy Scriptures.

The questions in your book are the questions of every Christian who seeks to delve deeply into the Christian faith. However, if a Christian does not ask or pass through spiritual crises, how can one find the truth, or move from doubt to truth and then to growth in the Spirit?

The issues you address in this book, Abu Karam, are the questions so many people deal with every day. However, so many people avoid deep discussion on sickness, trials, death and resurrection. People are afraid of death and sickness, and even more so they are afraid of falling into sin if they question the tenets of their religious tradition.

This is unfortunate, because we forget that the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Triune God accepts our life questions and deep thinking, and even receives our doubts. If our faith is not based on deep truths as Jesus describes in the Parable of the Sower, then our faith may fall on rock or among the thorns and never grow.

The questions that Osama deals with here are deep ones, and there are never shallow answers for deep queries. For example, how should one answer “Why do

we have volcanoes, tornadoes, hurricanes, cyclones and earthquakes? Why must humans die, especially the righteous? Where is God in all of this suffering? Is God responsible for all these calamities? Are we predestined for all of these things? Very often, we blame God for catastrophes and death. But is this really what we believe? Is God responsible for all, or do humans have free will?

Contrary to what some may think, these questions are not heretical, atheistic, or merely philosophical. To ask these questions, in fact, is a sign of deep faith. To delve into these deep waters is a sign of one who is both a deep thinker and a strong believer, one who is willing to walk with God into the deep waters of mystery and the secrets of the universe.

In this book, Osama is deeply influenced by the death of his late father, Mr. Karam Imseeh. This event has moved Osama to reflect upon sickness and death. However, Osama could not find quick or relieving answers without turning to the Bible and spending time in prayer and meditation. It is true that the person who dares to delve into these questions is like one who dives into deep waters. One of the church fathers, as he was seeking an explanation of the Holy Trinity, wrote: "I dreamt that I was standing in front of a wide, deep ocean, and I was trying with all my might to put all the waters of the ocean into my tiny brain." This is exactly what happens when one endeavors to understand the mysteries of life and death.

We are always trying to comprehend with our finite brains the mysteries of the infinite. In this book, Osama reflects upon the Orthodox father Nikolaus and Orthodox theologian Costi Bandali on the issue of sickness, as well as environmental and natural catastrophes and death. This is the reason that I deeply admire Abu Karam, as he is always trying to get to the other side of the shore in his efforts to understand the mysteries of human life. At the same time, I respect that he did not lose his faith in his meditation, research, and study. On the contrary, his faith in the Triune God has deepened.

It is true that sin has brought evil into the world. When human beings fell into sin and revolted against God, they were dismissed from Paradise. Even so, our loving Creator never desired the death of the sinner. As John the Evangelist writes: "For God so loved that world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, according to the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. For our sake, God made him (Jesus Christ) to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might know the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21) So Christ has suffered and was humiliated and even tasted the bitterness of death. This is the reason he prayed, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible. Remove this cup from me, yet, not what I want but what you want." (Mark 14:36) Jesus suffered for our sake. He tasted the bitterness of death by dying, in order that those in the graves might be granted eternal life. Christ gave us a renewed hope, as Paul writes: "For just as by one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience, the many will be righteous." (Romans 5:19)

This is the reason that we Christians consider death to be a deep sleep and not death. It is a transfer from this mortal world to the eternal glories in heaven. Christ's resurrection has granted the living new and renewed lives as well as the for the dead. For sure, this is resurrection. Believers will rise from the earthly deep to live with the King of kings and Lord of lords and they will praise Him with all the angels and saints forever and ever.

We believe that human beings are both sinners and saints, at the same time. Although one may sin against the will of God, God never punishes sin with sickness, epidemics or pandemics, neither with catastrophes nor even with COVID-19. The disciples called upon Jesus when they saw a man blind from birth, "Rabbi, who sinned? This man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works may be revealed in him." (John 9:2-4)

God is not pleased with sicknesses or disabilities. Rather, God asks us, as sinners to bear our responsibility in order to care for others, who are just as weak as we are. There is a Christian, national, and human responsibility to care for the other, to love the other, to give them basic human rights even if we are sinners.

But we are also repentant sinners. If we draw nearer to Jesus Christ, and truly repent each day, then we are saints already on this earth. At the same time, we know that the repentant sinner and saint enjoys no more privileges than any other. In their repentance and in respecting the other, they will enjoy a godly spiritual true happiness. They will live the pure will of God in this world and enjoy

the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul described it to them: “The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, and self-control. ...If we live in the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:21-23a & 25) These fruits are the deepest spirituality for a believer in their struggle and growth.

Osama Imseeh is a living example for the believer who is at the same time sinner and saint. He knows that life is fleeting but also that every human deserves to enjoy God-given dignity during this life. In his business, and in his life outside of work, Osama never misses an opportunity to give God prayer and praise. He studies the Holy Bible faithfully and regularly attends worship so that he may receive the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. These practices have surely increased Osama’s faith and wisdom and have refreshed his body, spirit, and soul.

Osama is a good example to all of us. We often become distracted by the details and burdens of this life and forget to give God His due praise and trust. For as much as the human being may achieve in life, we always remain in need of forgiveness of sins, which only comes through Christ and the cross.

Dear Osama, the questions you raise in this book have often confused the minds of theologians. They have kept the Church Fathers and Mothers in wonder and awe. However, you have not been afraid to dive into these deep waters. Guided by the Holy Spirit, and supported by the Holy Scriptures and prayer, you have given us much wisdom. For this reason, I endorse and bless this book, in the name of Our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. God bless your quest for truth, and your passion for defending the Christian faith objectively, scripturally, and scientifically. Above all else, God bless your living faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

Your faithful brother in Christ

Bishop Dr. Munib Younan

Jerusalem

Christ the King Sunday

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