

CHAPTER 6

HONOR

"Whoever runs after honor, honor escapes from him, and whoever escapes from it knowingly, it follows him and directs people to him"

St. Isaac

- A) Christianity and a person's honor**
- B) Why should I flee worldly honors ?**
- C) How do I acquire honor?**

The word 'honor' is used in everyday life to express different inner emotions and feelings.

Among the good uses are such as giving honor to God, His ministers, parents, teachers and to those who exceed us in age, position and level. It is necessary to give honor to them. Among the bad uses of honor are such as the artificial honor we give to others, with or without right, or the fabricated honor, in its name one commits horrible offensive deeds, such as beating or killing for a received insult, or to wipe out the shame which resulted from an immorality of a relative.

The wrong meanings of the word 'honor' have confused many people and deprived them of their peace, tranquillity, and happiness, and robbed them of the spirit of forgiveness, replacing it with the spirit of anxiety, displeasure and discontent in life. This may lead them into trouble with justice for crimes they foolishly committed.

It is not our intent in this subject to talk about the different kinds of honor, but we limit our talk to personal honor, which one seeks to get for himself by all ways and means. This is the wrong type of honor because of its reasons.

IMPROPER HONOR; DAUGHTER OF PRIDE:

No doubt, improper honor, in its understanding and purpose is one of the daughters of pride and exaltation, because it always aims at honoring the self and defending it. **The true Christian person has taken off the robe of worldly honor, and put on the robe of humility, imitating his Lord.** He does not give any weight to the honors of the world as the Apostle says "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! (1 Corinthians 4:10).

Because of the wrong kind of honor, a person becomes furious, and quick in wrath which "Does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). He thus loses his meekness and becomes far from his meek Lord, Who asked us to learn from Him, "And will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). Also in the name of the wrong kind of honor, he persists and insists on his position, because it is not suitable for him to give away part of his rights, else this abates his honor. In its name he is also quick in wrath beyond control against anybody who makes a fool of him, or takes away part of his rights.

A) CHRISTIANITY AND A PERSON'S HONOR

From what we said, does Christianity abolish human honor, or lower its value in the sight of people and society, so that one should not get angry for honor's sake or defend his humanity?!

Christianity honors man greatly, and raises his value as the crown of all creation who has the sole dominion over it. But it is a spiritual religion which aims to create a religious society, eliminating the spirit of evil in man, to bring him back to his first state before the fall when God made him in His image and according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26). When Christianity asks us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us (Matthew 5:44), it does that to elevate the state of all parties that they become no more enemies but friends. In doing that, it does not convert us to passive fearful people, but to good and active people. It gives us a powerful weapon by which we defeat our enemies. It is the weapon of goodness which eliminates evil from its root "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). Hence, withstanding is out of strength and not of weakness, for "He who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

The matter is very clear in our own lives, in fulfilling such commandments - which some consider as lowering to human honor - one gains honor and tribute via humility and love, and not via roughness and haughtiness, and he converts enemies to friends.

This does not only concern the personal life, but also the general and political lives. Ghandi, the great leader of India, proved beyond doubt, that such superb principles can be applied in practice and they bring forth the best results. And if you do that, you make a miracle, which brute force cannot do. **Nobody said, or will ever say, that he who shifts the mountains of hatred from inside the human soul, erases their traces, and prepares the hearts for love and humility, has lost his honor, and destroyed his humanity. The contrary is true.** Nobody said about the leader Ghandi, who believed in such principles, that he is a weak man or a mad person; but they raised him to a sacred level, after he and his followers, barehanded without weapon, at the end, won over the mighty British Empire.

If feelings moved in a man with jealousy and pride against a virgin related to him, who did an error, or a woman who went in a wrong moral path, and he killed her, pretending that he is erasing his shame with her blood, to keep up the honor of his name and his family, he commits a serious wrong. It shows that, he was in a hurry and amputated a sick member which could have been treated. He corrected an error by doing another error. **Jesus our Lord behaved differently in His dealing with some of the fallen adulteresses, opened the way for their repentance, and thus created from them useful members in human society, and they were converted to saintly ministers.**

GOD TAKES REVENGE FOR THE HONOR OF HIS CHILDREN:

We talked so far about human honor, in the light of Christian teachings on forgiveness. **We refused, to follow the people of the world in insisting on the wrong meanings of honor. We rather build souls and gain greater honor. This is from the spiritual personal side.**

There is another side, the divine one, which makes us stop asking for our personal honor.

God Who cares for the honor of His Children - without us asking Him to revenge on anybody - takes revenge on our behalf. He punishes who resist us, humiliates our enemies and those who hate us, and returns back our honor several times over. There is no wonder in that, as He says "He who rejects you rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). If He considers our rejection and humiliation - for His sake - rejection and humiliation of Himself, does not He bring back our honor when He gets angry for His honor?! Our teacher St. Paul said "Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you" (2 Thessalonians 1:6). In the past also a Cushite came and announced to King David saying "There is good news, my lord the king! For the Lord has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you" (2 Samuel 18:31). In the past also Moses told his people before crossing the Red Sea "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. ... The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:13, 14). **Do not go after honor and let heaven declare your honor.**

A STORY:

Contemporary history tells us a story about a saintly priest, who was living in one of the villages in Upper Egypt, during the first world war. He went to the mayor of the village and asked him for a specific favour. The mayor who was foolishly fanatic met this Father in a rough way and treated him badly, and even slapped his face as a kind of revenge. The Father went back with hot blood from the slap and entered the church which was named after the Martyr St. Georges, where there was a religious service awaiting him. While the Father was praying in the church, the mayor was walking in one of the roads of the village. The mayor was met by a knight on a horse who stopped him, asking him for the reason why he insulted the priest. And before getting his answer slapped him so hard that the mayor lost one of his eyes. And suddenly, the knight disappeared. He was none other but St. Georges himself.

ANOTHER STORY:

This happened in the beginning of this century also in one of the villages in Upper Egypt. This was in one of the nights of the Coptic month of Kiahk, when the church celebrates the Kiahk chanting (known as 7 and 4). The church in this village was named after St. Marcorios (Abi Sefein, of the two swords), and its priest was old and was a very simple man. While the priest was walking from outside the village on his way to the church, a criminal by the name of 'Bilal', stopped him demanding to take all the money the priest carried. As the priest had nothing, the thief wanted to search him, but the priest refused. The thief searched him by force, and as he found no money he slapped him and left. The priest went right away to the church where he found the chief chanter and some deacons, chanting and waiting for him. The priest started the Kiahk praises as usual. But after a short while the sound of a gun shot was strongly heard. People asked and were told that "Bilal was killed by a gun shot". Knowing that, the priest continued his chanting with enthusiasm. It was also strange that the security forces in investigating the accident could not locate any source for this gun shot which killed Bilal. The matter was an obvious miracle which God did for the honor of his minister.

Dear brother, you have seen how God returns back your honor, while you are holding your

peace. He returns it back to you many times over, and in a way you cannot comprehend.

MAN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

Never count dear brother, that you are a negligible quantity in the sight of God, but you are a beloved creature He has, and He honored more than all the other creatures.

(1) Man is the greatest among all creation:

You are the only creature, who is created in God's own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27) and the everlasting creature who will never perish. You are greater than the universe and what is in it, but even you are its lord, to whom all the seen creatures are subdued. The whole creation was created in order to be under your service "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). You did not lose your dominion over the beasts and savage animals until you have lost your dominion over yourself by sin, and still can gain it back by freeing yourself from the yoke of sin, as we see in the lives of the saints who can tame the beasts.

You are the only creature whom God beautified by the gifts of both mind and speech. You are the one with whom God delights (Proverbs 8:31). You are the one whose feet God washed. To you God gave His Flesh and Blood, which is what the angels desire to look at, so that you abide in Him and He in you (John 6:56).

You are the one on whose heart God knocks, and wants you to open for Him, in order to come in and dine with you, and you with Him and make His home with you (Revelation 3:20, John 14:23). You are the one who - by faith - orders the evil spirits and they obey you. You are - if you are a priest - one who has dominion over heaven, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:18). You are one of those He said to "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2, 3). You are the one who sits in the feast of the King and are in His company "And where I am, there My servant will be also" (John 12:26). You are about whom the Apostle said that the members of your body are members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15). You are the only one about whom is said you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you (1 Corinthians 3:16). You - by faith in the Son of God - the works that Jesus did you will do also; and greater works than these you will do (John 14:12).

(2) For man God was incarnate and suffered:

You my Lord Whom Heaven, with its vastness, cannot contain, descended to the womb of the Virgin, for my sake ... "You were born in my image in order to give birth to me in Your image. You were born in a cave like those who have no home or a place to go to, while You are the creator of heaven and earth, and the refuge of all the world. You were wrapped in rags and laid on the dust

in the manger like the poorest of the poor in this world, and You are the source of wealth and the pride of life. They carried You as a child and escaped from an unjust person, and You are the haven of the tired and the refuge for the escapee. You were persecuted like somebody who deserves death, and You are who give life to everybody. You were baptised in order to sanctify me, and You are the holiest Holy ... You were insulted to honor me, and You raised Yourself in order to raise my head. You drank the vinegar and myrrh in order to offer me sweet for my throat after I drank the myrrh by my own will from the hand of the enemy" (from a prayer for St. John Saba, known as the Spiritual Elder).

You stood against mocking and shame in order to honor me, and tasted death by Your will to shelter me. You Who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in You (2 Corinthians 5:21).

(3) Man is the son of God whom angels serve:

Dear brother, you are made in the likeness to the image of God "That He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). You are beloved of God, Who honored you by calling you a brother to Him, and He said to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection "Go to My brethren and say to them ..." (John 20:17). You have an angel to guard you. You have the angel of the Lord encamped all around you, and delivers you (Psalm 34:7), and to you all ministering spirits sent forth to minister you who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). You are who the angels love and rejoice over your repentance (Luke 15:10). You are for whom the angels were exultant for your salvation and gave the Good News to the country shepherds (Luke 2:8-14). You are the one who has the angels at your service, to deliver you from difficulties, to close for you the mouths of lions, to put out the flames of fire, and to intercede for you.

Now dear brother, did you know the value of yourself, and your honor? Do you realise now that Christianity honors your humanity greatly, even in ways which differ from the ways of the world, because you are not of the world (John 15:19)!!

B) WHY SHOULD I FLEE WORLDLY HONORS?

It is clear from what we previously said that there are two kinds of honor: Divine honor and worldly honor. **What is the reality of the worldly honor, and why should I escape from it?**

(1) Because they are trivial and vain:

The honors of the world, with its different shapes and sizes, are nothing but deceit. It is like the mirage in the desert of this world, one sees it ahead, and aims for it, comes nearer, and runs towards it, but no matter how hard he seeks it, he will never reach it; like his shadow, he will not catch it.

They are trivial matters, if measured with the real honor which God gives us. Thus says the Wise Ben Sirach "Do not ask the Lord for high office or the king for preferment" (Sirach 7:4). **The honor with which the world presents us, in either clanging words, in sounding titles, in tempting positions, or hugh wealth,...., is vanity.**

Solomon son of David, king of Israel, experienced all these vanishing glories, of whom the Book witnessed that there shall not be anyone like him among the kings all his days (1 Kings 3:13). He expressed all his experience about life and its vain trivial honors in his everlasting words "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity ... I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. **I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind**" (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14).

He also said "I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me ... I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow" (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18). Again he said "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, ... Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labour in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:10,11).

Have you seen brother what Solomon said? Or do you think that however you increase in your position, wisdom, or riches, you shall reach what he reached?

(2) Because they are temporary:

The honors of the world are short lived. The devil showed the Lord Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world **in a moment of time**" (Luke 4:5). Yes in a moment of time. This gives us the feeling that the glories of the world are quick to vanish!!

They celebrated the Lord Jesus as a king on Sunday and shouted "Hosanna", and after four days they shouted in front of Pilate "Crucify Him, Crucify Him". How short-lived are the honors of this world!! It is not only short-lived but also temporary. The honored people, in parties, put on the finest clothes they adorn. But once the evening is over, and it is time for rest and sleep, they have to take them off. For us too, the night of our lives will arrive - death - and we have to take off these temporary things unwillingly. It is thus better and more honorable that we do without them willingly while we are alive in the body before they do without us through death. St. Anthony stood in front of the dead body of his father, while still in the house, looked at him and said "You left the world unwillingly, but I shall leave it by my will".

The honors of the world do not go with us in the world to come. We cannot take from them in our next life. The narrow door of heaven only allows me to go through it naked. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, **and naked shall I return there**" (Job 1:21). If we are going to stand naked in front of the throne of the Judging Christ, please tell me if you can distinguish between the

king and the tramp, between the learned and the illiterate, or between the rich and the poor, ... !!

(3) Because they are surrounded by dangers:

St. John Chrysostom said "The head has many pains", and also said "I shall be surprised to see a chief saved". That is because of the many dangers which accompany the honors and glories of this world, the big jobs and the main positions. As the social position of a person goes up, as he is promoted, the greater are his duties, responsibilities and lack of time. He finds himself bound by many ties, that are difficult to get rid of. It is easy to realise that these different and numerous ties make it difficult for a person to care much about the salvation of his soul. And with the honors which accompany the big positions, come the complicated problems also. They are like the thorns which try to choke the person spiritually. With them also the wars against pride and vainglory intensify.

The dangers of the world's honors do not stop here, but also extend to the next age. **St. Eronimos said "It is very difficult for a person to enjoy present and future benefits, and to go from the temporary to the permanent everlasting joys, and to expect to be honored here and there"**. When Joseph presented his two sons Ephraim and Menasseh to his father Jacob Israel to bless them, he put the older who is Ephraim on his right, and Menasseh who is the younger on his left, which is the custom in the world in honoring the older. But Jacob crossed his hands and put his right hand on the head of Menasseh and his left hand on the head of Ephraim. This is what God does at the end of the world, advances the young, the poor in the spirit, and the abused in this world, ... God clarified that for us in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The situation reversed after their death. After Lazarus "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table", the rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue.

How many are the dangers which threaten our lives as a result of seeking worldly honors ...
!

(4) Because they deprive us from God's blessings:

Our teacher St. Paul said "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). **Many times the lights of this world's honors shine in the eyes of the children of God, and bring them to danger. They are like the torrent which we fear to come near, else it will wash us with it. It is like the strong magnetic pole, if we enter its field it attracts us to it, and we gain new characteristics different from our original ones which are of the children of God.** This is exactly what happens to the piece of iron when it enters a magnetic field, it is attracted to the pole which was created, and it gains new properties, but even it becomes magnetic! Likewise, the honors of this world may be the cause which deprive us of the blessings of God.

Many Jews at the time of Jesus believed in Him "But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they be put out of the synagogue; **for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God**" (John 12:42, 43). Also Pilate condemned Jesus to death, while he sought to

release Him, and was convinced of His innocence, as he was afraid to lose his position (John 19:12, 13). Herod also massacred the children of Bethlehem, in order to get rid of the Saviour, and the rule remains for him (Matthew 2). Again, Felix the governor in Caesarea, in spite of the fact that he trembled while Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come (Acts 24:25), he left Paul bound because he wanted to do the Jews a favour (Acts 24:27).

St. Pachomius the founder of communal monasticism, said "If somebody honors you, let not your heart rejoice, but lament. Paul and Barnabas, when people honored them, they tore off their clothes, and Peter and the rest of the disciples when they were wrongly accused, and were whipped, they rejoiced, because they were worthy to be abused for the sake of the Great Name". He also said "As Eve sought divine glory, she was stripped of human glory. Likewise he who seeks human glory, is denied God's Glory".

C) HOW DO I ACQUIRE HONOR?

(1) By acquiring God Himself:

Solomon the wise said about Wisdom (Christ) "I am Wisdom ... Riches and honor are with me" (Proverbs 8:18). How wonderful this saying is, how profound and correct it is! Christ our Lord has the riches and honor, because He is "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3)!. Thus who wants to acquire real honor, **should acquire** Christ first in whom all desires are. He is the hidden treasure in our inner being of which we are not aware (Matthew 13:44).

What honor, dear brother, you get when Christ is present in your weak temple, when you carry Him as His mother Mary carried Him. When He is with you, you realise that Who are with you are more than those who are against you (2 Kings 6:16), when He gives you "A mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist" (Luke 21:15)??!

The Lord honors His pious people whom He chooses. The Apostle said "Glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good" (Romans 2:10). The Lord honored His saint John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople because of his piety, zeal, and ministry. He had a great name in the whole Church, and was greatly loved by his people, and acquired honor, which the king and queen of his time could not acquire, to the extent that anybody who had an accusation against them went to St. Chrysostom. The Apostle Paul was right when he said "No man takes this honor to himself" (Romans 5:4).

Sometimes, we think that the world neglected the children of God, forgot them, even discarded them from its consideration. But God comes back at the right time and shows them to the world. Are they not the light of the world, the salt of the earth?, (Matthew 5:13,14). Also "We are to God the fragrance of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15). Can the world live in darkness, doing without light, or without salt which stops its rot, when there comes from it the smell of impurities and sin? **Life on earth cannot straighten without the presence of the pious and the saints, who are always the minority among people. People need them even when they persecute and humiliate them.**

The young boy David was attending the sheep, forgotten by his father, as God took him from the pasture and made him king over His people. John the Baptist disappeared in the desert, but God gave him honor and glory as he testified about him "Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).

There is not enough time for us to talk about the divine gifts which God gave to His pious, chosen and saintly people. They made miracles, healed the sick, raised the dead, moved mountains, closed the mouths of lions, went through fire and were not burnt,... Is there honor greater than these?

Blessed is the man who acquires God in his heart. He becomes the throne for his Lord and a holy temple for His dwelling.

(2) With humility:

The Wise said "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life" (Proverbs 22:4). **The honors of the world are but a mirage or a shadow. It is not possible to catch it or get hold of it.** In other words, this shadow will not be under you, except in one case; when you lay down. **Likewise honor, you cannot acquire except with humility.** This is expressed by David the prophet when he said "My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word" (Psalm 119:25). The Wise also says "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, **and before honor is humility**" (Proverbs 15:33). He also said "Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, **and before honor is humility**" (Proverbs 18:12).

Have you seen, dear brother, how did John the Baptist deny himself. When they asked him if he were Christ, he answered "One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose" (Luke 3:16). **When the Fullness of Time came, in order for the Lord to begin His missionary work, He went to John the Baptist to be baptized by him. There, the Lord**

honored his beloved. He took his hand, about which he said is not worthy to loose His sandal strap, and put it on His head in the water of river Jordan!

Have you seen how God honors the poor man sitting in the dust: "He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap. That He may seat him with the princes of His people" (Psalm 113:7, 8)? The Lord of Glory gained honor by what He endured from abuses by His free will "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

(3) By being ascetic towards honor:

If we practise asceticism regarding the honors of the world for the sake of God, God loves and honors us. St. Isaac said "Be ascetic towards the world and God will love you, be ascetic to what is in the hands of the people and the people will love you". He also said "If you humiliate yourself for the people to honor you, God will expose you. But if you detest and despise yourself and your deeds, truly in your heart for the sake of righteousness, God will inspire all creation to honor you".

God said to Solomon son of David, the king of Israel "Because you have asked this thing (wisdom), and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. **And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days**" (1 Kings 3:11-13). **When God saw the asceticism of Solomon towards the world's glories and its honors, God gave them to him without him asking for them.** Even after Solomon got these honors and experienced every thing concerning them, he said as an experienced person "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit has a man from all his labour in which he toils under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever. ... All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again" (Ecclesiastes 1:2-7).

Again, where are "The rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing" (1 Corinthians 2:6)? Where is Alexander the Great, Claudius Caesar, Napoleon Buonaparte, and Hitler? Where are they now? If you do not know, ask the graves to tell you and the dust to inform you!! But the holy people of God who deprived themselves from the honors of this world and its glory, their remembrance is still alive. The Apostle said about such people "And through it he being dead still speaks" (Hebrews 11:4). Their remembrance is still alive and makes miracles among people, either by their good example and their holy lives or by their intercession in front of God.

Moses the prophet despised the glory of Pharaoh and his palace "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Hebrews 11:26), so God made him a counsellor to the people of Israel, but even made him god for Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1).

(4) By Escaping from the honor:

The honor which the saints acquired, was not acquired either by rest or by labour, but by fleeing and escaping from it. In this **St. Isaac says " Whoever runs after honor, honor escapes from him, and whoever escapes from it knowingly, it follows him and directs people to him"**.

When you feel that the honors of the world surround you, and people have started to praise you much, then escape. The Lord Jesus, when they wanted to make Him king, He escaped from them and departed again to the mountain by Himself alone (John 6:15), while He was the best King in His rule and justice. Adam the first desired honor and it was taken away from him, but Adam the second - the Lord Jesus - escaped from the honor, ... "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

History is the best witness to that: **The saints who escaped from the honors of the world, obtained from God a greater honor and their names were preserved, not only in earth but also in heaven.** Constantine the Emperor of the Roman state, when he heard the news of St. Anthony, he sent to him asking blessings for himself, his children and for his empire. St. Moses the black, before his repentance and his monasticism, was a chief to a band of thieves. One of the rulers of Egypt sought to see him in the desert. The saint Anba Sarabamone Abu-Tarha, Bishop of Fayoum, Egypt, in the last century, who before his monasticism used to walk beside an animal selling oil, the ruler of Egypt - Mohamed Ali Pasha - sought him asking him to heal his daughter who had an evil spirit.

Among the best examples is that of **the history of the saint Anba Mettaous, the 87th Patriarch**, who was one of the greatest patriarchs of the See of St. Mark, Egypt, in his holiness and his spirituality. When he was promoted to the degree of Priesthood when he was 18 years old, he left the monastery escaping from the vainglory, and went to the monastery of St. Anthony. There he denied himself and did not present himself as a priest but as a simple deacon. But the honor from which he escaped followed him and God showed it with a miraculous power. One time during the Divine Liturgy, a hand went out from the altar and gave him incense three times when the Bible was being read. When some of the old saintly monks saw that, and realised it, they informed him that he must become the next Patriarch. When he heard that he was very sad, and left the monastery for Jerusalem, escaping from the honor. There he worked as a hired labourer earning his food. But honor followed him again in this new place: he knew by the Spirit the hiding place of an amount of money which was stolen from a foreign monk who was complaining to him, and he brought the money to the monk. This was an event which caused his story to be known in that area. Again he escaped from the vainglory to the monastery of St. Anthony and then to the El-Moharak monastery.

When the chair of the Patriarch was empty after the death of Pope Ghobrial the 4th, the elders of the people were unified in nominating him to the chair of the Patriarch. He escaped from them and went to a boat docking at the shores of the river Nile, wanting to travel to the southern cities. But God made a young boy speak and direct the elders to the place of his hiding. They went and caught him. He tried by different means to avoid this position and its honor. When he found that there was no more escape he took a scissors and cut the tip of his tongue in order to make himself dumb. But the Lord who untied the tongue of Zechariah, untied his tongue also. At last he had to bow his head in obedience and submission and accepted to be the Patriarch, in spite of his

reluctance.

This fantastic story and the like from the history of the saintly fathers, is a living picture, that **to escape from the honors of the world is an important means for acquiring them. This supports the saying of St. Isaac "Whoever runs after honor, honor escapes from him, and whoever escapes from it knowingly, it follows him and directs people to him."**