

PARADISE
OF
THE SPIRIT

Part 3
Second Edition

By
His Grace Bishop Youanis
Late Bishop of the Province of Gharbia,
Tanta, Egypt

PARADISE
OF
THE SPIRIT

Part 3
Second Edition

By
His Grace Bishop Youanis
Late Bishop of the Province of Gharbia,
Tanta, Egypt

- 1. Love of God to man**
- 2. Love of man to God**
- 3. Love of man to his brother**
- 4. Faith in God - Its power and fruits**
- 5. Belief in the miracles of the Lord Jesus**
- 6. Hope**
- 7. Life of peace**
- 8. Life of submission**
- 9. The principle of the narrow gate in spiritual life**
- 10. The Kingdom**

Publisher & Printed by
St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church of Chicago
15 West 455 - 79th Street
Burr Ridge, Illinois 60521, U.S.A.
TEL:(630)655-3468, FAX:(630)323-5986

(Picture of)
Saint Mark

(Picture of)
His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
117th Pope of Alexandria
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark

(Picture of)
Anba Youanis
Late Bishop of Province of Gharbia
Tanta, Egypt

FOREWORD

Bishop Youanis wrote over 20 books in Egypt in the Arabic Language between 1960 and 1987, before he rested in the Lord. These books are considered of great wealth to the Coptic (Egyptian) Orthodox Church and indeed to the whole Christian Church. The first of these books is "Paradise of the Spirit" which he wrote in three parts.

Part 1 of "Paradise of the Spirit" deals with the 'Life of Repentance' and contains 11 chapters on: Repentance, Confession, Communion, Humility, Pride, Honor, Purity, Anger, Speaking Out and Keeping Silent, Some Sins of the Tongue, and Condemnation.

Part 2 of the same book deals with the 'Spiritual Means' and contains 8 chapters on: Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving, Spiritual Readings, the Holy Bible, Spiritual Exercises, Retreat, and Service.

Part 3 deals with the subjects of 'Advanced Spirituality' and contains 10 chapters which are on: Love of God to Man, Love of Man to God, Love of Man to his Brother, Faith in God, Faith in the Miracles of the Lord Jesus, Hope, Life of Peace, Life of Submission, the Narrow Gate, and the Kingdom.

St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church, in Chicago, U.S.A., published the English translation of the first two parts of this book.

The present book is second edition of the English translation of part 3 of "Paradise of the Spirit".

May this book become a blessing to our lives and help us to grow in the love of God.

March 2001

**Introduction of Part Three of
Paradise of the Spirit**

by

Bishop Youanis

It was intended that the book "Paradise of the Spirit" be in three parts: part one deals with 'life of repentance', part two deals with 'spiritual means' and part three deals with 'the advanced levels of spirituality'.

The first part of this book appeared in 1960, that is a quarter of a century ago. The second part appeared at the beginning of 1963, that is nearly three years later.

I was delayed in writing part three of this book "Paradise of the Spirit" as I was busy in publishing two other books which were needed for the Theological College. They are "The Church at the time of the Apostles" and "Martyrdom in Christianity". I was then occupied in the business of the Bishopric from late 1971. Since then we published eight other books which contain the sermons which we gave on Sundays of the Great Lent, every year.

In due time, and after a quarter of a century, we fulfilled our promise to the reader, publishing part three of "Paradise of the Spirit".

In this book, we speak about "Love" in three chapters, "Faith" in two chapters and in one chapter each of the following subjects: "Hope", "Life of Peace", "Life of Submission", "Principle of the Narrow Gate in Spiritual Life" and finally we end the book with a large chapter on "the Kingdom".

In the introduction of part one of this book, I wrote that this book, first and foremost, is one of the "fruits of pain". That was at the beginning. I thank God that part three which is now between your hands is also one of the "fruits of pain", after these pains of the body revisited me in a more dangerous way.

I experienced that the fruits of pain are sweet, and God in His wisdom knows how "out of the eater comes something to eat and out of the strong comes something sweet" (Judges 14:14). What I want to say is that as I have started this book with pain, God finished it with pain also. If pain has such blessings, we thank God Who said on the tongue of His faithful Apostle Paul "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29)

I give thanks to God from the bottom of my heart Who helped me in producing this book.

His Hand has been certain with me in my writings, and His Grace overflows within me until I finished this work, which I end by the subject of "the Kingdom".

I put this book in the hands of God Who loved us to make it a means of blessing to all who read it. And may this book always remain a paradise of continuous greenery, in which each tired soul finds her comfort from the troubles of the world.

May the grace of God be with us all, and to His Greatness be all glory.

Youanis
by the Grace of God
Bishop of Gharbia

1 Tote 1702
11 September 1985
Remembrance day of the beginning of the Martyrs Year

Preface

Dear reader: In this book, we offer you the second edition of the English translation of the third part of the book "Paradise of the Spirit", by Anba Youanis, late Bishop of Gharbia, Egypt, who rested in the Lord in November 1987.

(Picture of)

Fr. Samuel Thabet Samuel

We wish to thank Jean Abdelmalek, Sharon Basta and Mervet Cook for reading the English manuscript and correcting it.

May this book be a blessing in your life and help you to grow in the love of God, by the prayers of the father of fathers **His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you

Father Samuel Thabet Samuel
St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church of Chicago

April 2001

CONTENTS

	page
Foreword
Preface
1. Love of God to Man
a- The measure by God is love
b- What is love?
1. God's love to all creatures
2. God's love to man
c- Where do we sense the love of God to man?
1. In His creation of man
2. In His incarnation and redemption
3. In His care to man
4. In His love to sinners
5. In the eternal glory for man
d- Why does God permit man to suffer?
2. Love of Man to God
a- Love of man to God is the echo of His love
b- Value of love in the sight of God
c- Why should man love God?
d- Love of man to God and his love to the world
e- Where does the love of man to God show?
f- Virtues related to the love of man to God.
g- The marriage supper of the Lamb
3. Love of Man to his Brother
a- Love of man to his brother
in the teachings of the Lord Jesus
b- Love of man to his brother
in the Apostles' teachings
c- Brotherly love in the life of the Church
d- New understanding presented by Christ
for the love of man to his brother
e- The teachings of Christ: who is your neighbour?
f- Love of the enemy in Christ's teachings
g- Features of Christian love
in the love of man to his brother
First: Negative side
Second: Positive side

4. Faith in God - Its Power and Fruits	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
a- What is faith?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
b- Mind and faith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
c- Faith in the unseen matters	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
d- Our Christian faith in God	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Does it embrace specific beliefs?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
e- Does faith have degrees?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
f- Faith and spiritual life	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
g- Some fruits of faith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
h- Promoters and deterrents of faith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Promoters:	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Deterrents:	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5. Belief in the Miracles of the Lord Jesus	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
a- Meaning of miracle -	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
objections against miracles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
b- The devil and miracles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
c- How do we distinguish	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
between miracles and deceit?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
d- Sorcery and sorcerers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
e- The believers, sorcery and sorcerers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
f- Belief in the miracles of the Lord Jesus	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
1. Healing of the paralytic	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2. Healing of the haemorrhaging woman	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
3. Opening the eyes of Bartimaeus	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4. Healing the daughter of the Canaanite woman	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5. Healing the Centurion's servant	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
g- Stories about contemporary miracles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
6. Hope	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
a- Christ is the subject of our hope	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
1. Christ: Hope of the atheists	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2. Christ: Hope of the Jews before His coming	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
3. Christ: Hope of the Jews and	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
the atheists when He was in the flesh	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4. Christ: Hope of all the believers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
after His Ascension to Heaven	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
b- Hope and Christ in the Gospels	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
c- Relation between hope and other virtues.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
d- Why do we put our hope in God?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
e- What strengthens our hope?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
f- Christ: Hope for tired people	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

g- Examples of persons who kept hold on hope	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
7. Life of Peace	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
a- Christianity and peace	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
b- Peace and Christian faith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
c- The Christian and peace	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
d- Experience of peace in the lives of God's men	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
e- Joy comes with peace	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
8. Life of Submission	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
a- Life of submission is the most acceptable offering	..	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
b- Virtues which precede the life of submission	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
c- Characteristics of the life of submission	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
d- Blessings of the life of submission	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
e- Matters which help man in the life of submission	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
9. The Principle of the Narrow Gate in Spiritual Life	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
a- What is the narrow gate?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
b- God's love and His call for us to enter by the narrow gate	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
c- The wisdom behind narrow gate	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
1. It is Christ's command	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2. To imitate Christ	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
3. It is the road of all saints	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4. It is the way which suits man spiritually	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5. It leads to eternal glory	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
d- The principle of the narrow gate in the life of repentance	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
e- The principle of the narrow gate in spiritual life.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
f- The principle of the narrow gate in life's problems	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
1. Family problems	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2. Problems of work	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
3. Problems of sickness	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4. Worldly desires	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
10. The Kingdom	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
a- Kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
b- The idea of the kingdom in the Old Testament	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
c- The kingdom of Christ is spiritual not material	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
d- What is meant by the kingdom of God?	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
e- Christ's parables about the kingdom and their connotations	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
1. The Sower	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2, 3. The Wheat and the Tare - the Dagnet	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

4, 5. The Mustard Seed - the Leaven	.	.	.	.	.	.
6. The Workers in the Vineyard	.	.	.	.	.	.
7. The Wedding Feast	.	.	.	.	.	.
8, 9 - The Hidden Treasure - the Pearl of Great Price	.	.	.	.	.	.
10. The Virgins	.	.	.	.	.	.
f- Joy in heaven and everlasting life	.	.	.	.	.	.

**ALL BIBLE QUOTATIONS ARE FROM
 "THE NEW KING JAMES" VERSION
 EXCEPT THE APOCRYPHA
 WHICH ARE FROM "THE NEW ENGLISH" VERSION**

CHAPTER 1

LOVE OF GOD TO MAN

- A) **The measure by God is love**
- B) **What is love?**
 - 1. **God's love to all creatures**
 - 2. **God's love to man**
- C) **Where do we sense the love of God to man?**
 - 1. **In His creation to man**
 - 2. **In His Incarnation and Redemption**
 - 3. **In His care to man**
 - 4. **In His love to sinners**
 - 5. **In the eternal glory for man**
- D) **Why does God permit man to suffer?**

When we talk about love, we talk about the greatest of all Divine commandments, all of them are collected into it. We talk about what is desired by the heart of God Who is Love Himself.

In the mean time we speak about something easy for man to fulfil. You do not need striving, toil, travels, troubles, riches or human interventions. All you need is the desire to love God and you will not encounter what stops or prevents you from doing that.

In spite of its superiority and greatness, love is easy. By this logic we understand the words of the Apostle Peter "For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

When the Lord Jesus Christ was asked: "Which is the great commandment in the law?" He immediately answered: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". He then commented by saying **"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets"** (Matthew 22:35-40). **This means that God included all His Divine commandments in two, even in one commandment of two parts, which is "Love"**. All the commandments are connected to love, the way the branches are connected to the root of the tree, and if separated from the tree, they wither and die.

From the comprehension that love is "The first and greatest commandment", and that all Divine commandments are tied to it, the Apostle Paul says: "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5). This Apostle places love above faith which could remove mountains (1 Corinthians 13:2) and above hope in which we are saved (Romans 8:24), and makes it the first of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the believer (Galatians 5:22) and for its power he calls it "the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14).

After the Apostle names different Christian virtues, he says: "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14). In this understanding love resembles the cement which fastens the bricks in the building. Imagine bricks arranged in a building without cement, what would the result be?

Love binds man to God, binds man to his brother, and binds all the virtues together. By that, according to the Apostle's expression the ordinary human becomes "man of God" (2 Timothy 3:17). By binding the rest of the virtues, love becomes like the string of a rosary which goes through all the beads of the rosary and ties them together. **Hence if any virtue lacks love it is rejected, and with this we understand the words of the Apostle Paul: "For he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Roman 13:8).**

All these meanings pressed **St. Augustine** to the saying: "**God is love, what else could be said? Love is praised in the first Epistle of St. John and in the other Books. If this is the only item said to us by the Holy Spirit, we need nothing else.** I consider love to be the pearl of great price about which the Bible said the merchant was looking for and when he found it, he went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:46). Love is the pearl of great price, without which nothing will benefit you, **and if you have it, it is all you need**".

A) THE MEASURE IS LOVE

God values the virtue of love to the extent that He made it a measure for knowing Him. St. John the Apostle says: "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). **In that St. Augustine says: "God the father sacrificed Christ, and Judas delivered Him, and it seems that the two deeds are of one kind! Judas was a traitor and he delivered Christ. Is God the Father the same? God forbid. But the Apostle says: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). God the Father sacrificed Him, and He gave Himself up, and if the Father sacrificed His Son, and the Son surrendered Himself, what about Judas then? It was a sacrifice from the Father's side and there Judas delivered Him. Yet what the Father and the Son did was for love, but what Judas did was a treacherous betrayal. A man's deed by itself does not count, but what counts is the intention by which he does it.** We see that God did what Judas did, yet we bless God and curse Judas? Why? Because we bless love and hate sin. **Love alone distinguishes between men's deeds**".

Man is rewarded for his good deeds as long as love is the motive. Thus deeds have no reward except for love. Valuable work without love is worth nothing, but things which are considered minor and trivial with love become great. A cup of cold water offered with love has its reward in heaven (Matthew 10:42).

B) WHAT IS LOVE?

Saints, fathers and men of God stood amazed and tense in front of love. They failed to express its essence and to contain it in words. They described it according to their own experiences.

The Spiritual Elder who was a hermit, says "What is love? It is the source of righteousness in the heart, a port of understanding, rivers of water for life, and knowing the secrets

of both the known and unknown worlds. Amazingly love is the language of angels, and is difficult to translate into words. **Love is the honored name of God, who can search or limit it? He who wishes to address the love of God proves his ignorance, because grasping the Divine love is not possible at all".**

Another father says about love: "It is the completion of good deeds, blessing of virtue, fulfilment of Divine commandments, finishing with sin, life of virtues, strength of striving people, and helper for the victorious. It returns life back to those who die in their sins. Faith reaches it and hope flies towards it. Under its wings, obedience grows, by it patience conquers **and without it no one pleases God. Real, true and complete love is what the Apostle calls "A more excellent way"** (1 Corinthians 12:31). Truly it is the way which leads those who walk in it to their real home land".

1. GOD'S LOVE TO ALL CREATURES

Because God is love, He loves all creatures, not man only. He cares for the animals and for the plants, even for the breathless objects. The Psalmist says: "He sends the springs into the valleys, they flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field. He waters the hills from His upper chambers; **the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth.** O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions -- This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. **These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season.** What You give them they gather in; **You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth"** (Psalm 104:10-30).

When God initiated the law of the Sabbath day, he applied it to the animals also. He said: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. **In it you shall do no work:** you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, **nor your cattle,** nor your stranger who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:10). "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. **In it you shall not do any work:** you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, **nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle"** (Deuteronomy 5:14). "Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; **and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat"** (Exodus 23:10, 11). "**And the Sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you:** for your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, **for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land -- all its produce shall be for food"** (Leviticus 25:6, 7). "**You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain"** (Deuteronomy 25:4).

The Psalmist also says "Who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the

earth, **who makes grass to grow on the mountains. He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry**" (Psalm 147:8, 9). After the plant which shaded Jonah's head was damaged and he was very depressed, God said to Jonah "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 4:11).

It is clear from the above verses how God cares for the animals, livestock and birds, and how He prepares food for them.

There is an actual story published in the main newspaper in Cairo, Egypt, on July 23, 1952, reported by a police officer in the city of Minya, in Upper Egypt. In short, one day in the holy fasting month of Ramadan for the Muslims, an officer and a friend of his were awaiting to break their fast. They were leaning against a demolished wall, resting. They noticed a wasp carrying a grain of wheat entering a cavity at the top of the wall and coming out without the grain of wheat. This was repeated several times. They were curious to find out the relation between the wasp and the grains of wheat. They climbed the wall, and to their great astonishment they found inside the cavity a bird unable to fly. They then understood that God cared for the bird and sent it food by the wasp.

The Lord Jesus affirms these feelings towards the animals and the plants. He says: "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them" (Luke 12:24). "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God" (Luke 12:6). "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Luke 12:27).

If the above verses show the love of God to the plants and the animals and even to breathless creatures, how much more is His love to man whom He created in His image and according to His likeness be? (Genesis 1:26).

2. GOD'S LOVE TO MAN

In the Book of Song of Solomon, in the Old Testament, God uses an illustrative style to portray His love to the human soul in view of the love of the groom to his bride. The bride describes the love of her groom as "better than wine" (Song 1:2) and that "his banner over her is love" (Song 2:4). The Divine revelation ends this book by saying: "**for love is as strong as death, ... Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it**" (Song 8:6, 7).

The Old Testament is full of verses which express the love of God to man, but this love focused on Israel as the people of God, though it was also shown to heathen nations such as the gentile people of Nineveh. As an example of God's love to His people, the story of getting

them out of Egypt with a strong hand and mighty arm in a miraculous way and how He cared for them for forty years during their journey in a barren desert from Egypt to the land of Canaan. All these years he fed them with manna and quails and brought them water from a rock! **God continued in the Old Testament to show His love for His people, sometimes by caring and helping them and sometimes by chastising them.**

This love of God was so clear in the Old Testament. However, the love of God in the New Testament which He revealed and proclaimed in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord, unveils for us the love of God in a way that has never been shown before. It is enough to meditate in the words of the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus: "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).

This expression "For God so loved", displays the inability of human language to describe the love of God to man. **Besides, it reveals the love of the three Persons of God to man.** The Lord Jesus did not say "For the Father so loved the world", but "For God so loved the world", confirming a valuable fact, that the salvation of man is the result of the love of the three Persons of God. This salvation was in the mind of the eternal Heavenly Father, and was fulfilled by His only Begotten Son by the Holy Spirit in the heart of each believer. In other words, **the salvation of man was prepared by the Heavenly Father Who is love, fulfilled by the Son of God Who is love, and we received its blessings by the Holy Spirit Who is love. What is love in the Divine Person? It is a mystery which the human soul can not explain, because if it is able to characterize the love of God, it would be able to characterize God Himself.**

Let us not be surprised at the description of the Apostle Paul to God's love in Christ "**passes knowledge**" (Ephesians 3:19). This is expressed in the liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian: "**no manner of speech can measure the depth of Your love to mankind**". **In that St. Augustine says:**

"The love of God cannot be measured and is unchangeable. His love to us did not start at the time of our reconciliation with Him by the Blood of His Son, but He loved us before the creation of the world, before our being, so that we become His children with His Only Son.

We should understand the reality of our reconciliation with God by the death of His Son, that the Son reconciled us with Him from this moment, and He now started to love whom he previously hated, in the same way an enemy reconciles with his enemy to become friends and the lasting love replaces the constant hate. **Rather we were reconciled with Him Who loved us, and with Whom we were in enmity because of our sins. The Apostle says "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).** God loved us even when we were in enmity against Him and did iniquity. That is in spite of what is said rightfully about Him "You hate all workers of iniquity" (Psalm 5:5).

Accordingly, God has loved us in an astonishing and holy way - even when we scorned

Him. He hated us according to the change in our image, He hated in each of us what we did, and loved in us what He did. Truly it is possible to understand that from the verse "Thou hatest nothing that thou has created" (Wisdom 11:25). God does not hate anything from what He created, because He created His creatures without sin. He does not make the evil which He hates, and from evil He does what is good, whether by healing us with His grace or by chastising us with His justice. **Hence we see that He does not hate anything that He made, and who can measure the amount of His love to the members of His Only Begotten Son!"**

C) WHERE DO WE SENSE THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN?

It is impossible to count the features which illustrate the love of God to man. The love of God to man existed before He created him. Did not Jesus say to the righteous people: "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34), that is before His creation of man. The love of God surrounds man and cares for him from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). The Lord even declared that "he who touches you touches the apple of His eye" (Zechariah 2:8). **To what extent does God love man? He loved him to the end as the Lord Jesus said:** "Jesus ... loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1). We try here to enumerate some of the aspects through which we feel the love of God to man.

1 - IN HIS CREATION OF MAN

Before God created man, he provided every thing for him. He created light, the two great lights; the sun and the moon and all the stars in the firmament of the heavens, the earth and all what is in it, and the sea and all its creatures. He created everything for man. He not only created creatures for man, **but He also made him master over all the creation. And when He created him, He did not create him like the rest of the creatures, but created him in His image and according to His likeness** (Genesis 1:26), a sage creature, free and pure.

God is love and in His love He created the life element in man, a breath from Him. It is the image of the Holy trinity and His likeness. Man is an eternal creature and because man is created in the image of God and according to His likeness, his soul is attracted to God and desires Him and does not find sufficiency except in Him.

God created man, not because He needed him or in order for man to worship Him. God does not need even the angels and all the heavenly creatures, but He created man in His image and according to His likeness and had "His delight with the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:31).

How truthful is St. Gregory the Theologian in what he says in his Liturgy:

"Holy, Holy O Lord and Holy in everything and exceedingly excellent is the light of Your Essence. Indescribable is the power of Your Wisdom, and no manner of speech can measure the depth of Your love to mankind. As a lover of mankind You have created me a man, for you have no need of my servitude rather I have need of Your Lordship. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, You have brought me into where I was not. You have filled up the heavens for a roof to me, and established the earth for me to walk on. For my sake You have shut up the sea; For my sake You have manifested the nature of animals. You have put all things under my feet. You did not suffer that I want anything of the works of Your Honor. You have formed me and put Your hand upon me and wrought me in the image of Your Dominion. And granted me the gift of speech; and opened to me the Paradise to enjoy. And gave me the learning of Your knowledge. You have manifested to me the tree of life and have shown me the sting of death".

Saying that differently, **St. Augustine says: "My God, You submitted everything under the feet of man, so that he can consecrate himself totally to You. You did not appoint a master on him except You, and You made him a master over Your creatures. You created everything for his body, you made his body for his soul and his soul for You. How good You are my God! How kind You are. You know my body very well, as You have created it"**.

2 - IN THE INCARNATION AND REDEMPTION:

There is no exaggeration in saying that the summit of the love of God to mankind appears in the Incarnation of His Son for the Redemption of mankind. Mankind had fallen and was driven out of paradise, but God in His love prepared for his salvation in order to restore him to his original state. This was not possible except by one way; the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. That is for Him to take a complete human body by which He pays - on behalf of man - the punishment of death which man deserved for his disobedience. This was fulfilled on the Cross.

In other words we say that for God to achieve this goal, He had to meet man, not in an outside encounter, but to share with him his flesh and blood, his pains and troubles, and to wipe his tears. This meeting, in this understanding, became the Incarnation of "Immanuel", which means "God is with us".

Hence the Incarnation was the most important proclamation of God's love to man. God Himself agreed to become one with the human element with all what man has from flesh and soul. **However, the role God did with man by the Incarnation is different from the role of Moses and other prophets of the Old Testament. God came with a new relation, impossible for evil to threaten nor for sin to overcome "But the free gift is not like the offense" (Romans 5:15).**

God honored man when He created him "in His image and according to His likeness", and He honored him even more when He Himself became - not like man and his likeness - but

a real human! Talking to God, St. Jerome said: "I am indebted to You my Lord for the insults by which You redeemed me, more than my indebtedness to Your Power by which You created me. You created me by one word, but redeeming me required insults and pains".

The same meaning is expressed by St. Augustine when he said: "The creation of the world did not cost God anything; He said to the object "Let be" and it is done. But the salvation of the world cost Him to come down from heaven and suffer mockery and shame, and finally to die on the Cross on our behalf".

In his liturgy, St. Gregory the Theologian says "You have turned my punishment into salvation. You are Who has ministered salvation to me when I disobeyed Your Law. You made Yourself of no reputation and took the form of a servant. And blessed my nature in You. And fulfilled Your Law on my behalf. You have shown me the rising again from my fall".

It is true that the Incarnation and Redemption are the summit of the love of God to mankind "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This is exactly what Christ asserted when He said: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

There are other precious blessings for man resulting from the Incarnation of the Son of God and His Redemption. Perhaps the most precious blessing is the gift of the Holy Spirit - the comforting Spirit of God - Whom the Lord Jesus promised the believers that He will abide with them forever (John 14:16, 16:13), and will teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all things that Jesus said, His teachings and guide them to the Truth (John 14:26). This is the Spirit Who renews the creation, so that whoever believes in Christ and receives the Holy Baptism, becomes a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is the greatest miracle in Christianity.

The Holy Spirit - the Spirit of God - transfers to the believers in Christ (by means of the seven Holy Sacraments of the Church) the blessings of salvation which resulted by the death of Christ on the Cross; the Holy Spirit takes what is of Christ and declares it to them (John 16:15). As an example, it is the Holy Spirit Who sanctifies the water of Baptism to give a new birth to the baptized person to become a child of God. He sanctifies the bread and wine in the sacrament of Thanksgiving to become the Holy Flesh and Blood of the Lord. He also unifies the bride and groom in the sacrament of marriage to make from them one body.

There is however an immense blessing from the Incarnation and Redemption; the believer in Christ becomes a temple to the Holy Spirit in which He dwells. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23). "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Man became a child to God "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1), and became a saint in Christ "just as He (the Father) chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians

1:4).

3 - IN HIS CARE FOR MANKIND:

The Books of the Old Testament are full of stories which record the care of God for His children, as a nation and as individuals. They are full of sayings of inspired prophets and writers expressing this care.

As examples, we mention the saving of Noah from the flood (Genesis 6:14-8:19), Lot from Sodom (Genesis 19:1-29), protecting Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 39:1-45:28), the way by which He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and leading them by a pillar of cloud, destroying Pharaoh and his army, converting bitter water of Marah to sweet water (Exodus 15:23-25), caring for His people in the wilderness for forty years and feeding them the manna from the heaven, defeating nations stronger and more numerous than them as in the war with Amalek (Exodus 17:8-13), entering the land of Canaan, the fall of the walls of Jericho without war (Joshua 6:1-25), the care of God for Elijah and His support to the widow and her son (1 Kings 17:8-24), and guarding Daniel in the lion's den and the three young men from the blazing fire (Daniel 6:16-23; 3:19-30)).

The sayings of the Lord which the Divine Revelation recorded in the Old Testament are numerous:

The righteous Job says: "You have granted me life and favor, **and Your care has preserved my spirit**" (Job 10:12) and also: "He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous" (Job 36:7). The Prophet Moses speaks about God guarding His people "**He encircled him, He instructed him, he kept him as the apple of His eye**" (Deuteronomy 32:10). The Prophet David says: "For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His saints" (Psalm 37:28), "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Psalm 91:11, 12) and the Psalmist says "I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber" (Psalm 121:1-3).

The Lord God says to His people Israel concerning giving rest (Sabbath) to the land: "And if you say, "**What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?**" **Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years**" (Leviticus 25:20, 21). He continues saying: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit ..., you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land" (Leviticus 26:3-6).

Again the Psalmist David says about the care of God for the human soul: **"Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's"** (Psalm 103:3-5), and: **"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them"** (Psalm 34:7).

God reminded His people of His care for them during their sojourn in the wilderness for forty years by saying: **"... that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years"** (Deuteronomy 8:3, 4). The Prophet Isaiah says: "In that day sing to her, A vineyard of red wine! I, the Lord, keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:1, 2).

In the New Testament we find that the Lord Jesus illustrates God's care for man in a very clear way. He says: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:26-30), **"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows"** (Matthew 10:29-31).

The Lord Jesus asks His Disciples whom He sent in training missions **"When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything? So they said, "Nothing""** (Luke 22:35).

The New Testament, Church history and the writings about the saints and the children of God, are full of stories which demonstrate the care of God for all mankind of all times and in all places. His care is not only for the righteous and the pious, but includes all mankind. This is most appropriate about Whom is said "for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

4 - IN HIS LOVE TO THE SINNERS:

God hates sin:

Holy is God Who created the first man in His image and in His likeness, and because He is holy He demands man to live a life of holiness. God said to Moses: "Speak to all the

congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: **"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy"** (Leviticus 19:2). St. Peter affirms the same meaning **"but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct"** (1 Peter 1:15), **and thus God hates evil and sin.**

Joshua said to the people who deviated from worshipping God: "You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" (Joshua 24:19). The Divine Revelation in the Book of Job says: "What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous? If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, How much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water! (Job 15:14-16).

In the past, because of their sin, God told His people: "I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you" (Leviticus 26:16, 17).

God hates evil and sin so much that He said to Moses: "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book" (Exodus 32:33). He also announced: "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:7). **Hence David said to God: "You hate all workers of iniquity"** (Psalm 5:5) and the Psalmist says **"You who love the Lord, hate evil!"** (Psalm 97:10).

Examples of God's hatred of evil: destroying the world in the past by the flood, burning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and sulfur raining from heaven. St. Peter says: "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, **making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;** and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked, ... then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Peter 4-9). **Let us meditate on the words of the Apostle Peter: "making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly"!**

God loves the sinners:

In spite of God's extreme hatred to evil and sin, we see wonders in the love of God to sinners in the person of Christ. We even say that the depth of the love of God to mankind shows in His love to sinners. This is what the Lord Jesus proclaims: **"For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance"**

(Matthew 9:13), **"There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance"** (Luke 15:7), and **"Those who are well have no**

need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12).

Let us now examine some dealings of the Lord Jesus with sinners:

a - Christ and the Samaritan woman (John, Chapter 4):

The Samaritan woman was one of the sinful women whom Christ met, and His meeting with her was the cause of her salvation. Being a sinner was obvious from His saying to her "for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly" (John 4:18). The meeting of Christ with the Samaritan woman reveals the depth of His love to sinners. It is said that the Lord Jesus walked on foot for six hours to save this sinful soul.

"Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour" (John 4:6). **He being wearied in order to comfort us.** What really makes Him weary is our sins, and it was with a purpose that "the sixth hour" was mentioned. It was the same hour when the Saviour was hung on the Cross for our salvation and the salvation of the whole world "O Thou on the sixth day at the sixth hour was nailed to the cross because of the sin Adam dared to commit in paradise" (prayer from the Agbia).

Let us see how the dialogue began with this sinful woman. The Lord started by asking her **"Give Me a drink"** (John 4:7). **He spoke as if He needed to drink, but in fact He was anxious for the tears of the woman's repentance.** Yet the woman according to her way of reason denied Christ His request, thinking that He wanted some ordinary water "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman"! (John 4:9).

Then Christ continued His talk raising the feelings of her heart and soul "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink", **you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water"** (John 4:10). When the woman expressed her surprise about this living water, He explained and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, **but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life"** (John 4:13, 14). When the woman asked Him to give her this water, He said to her **"Go, call your husband, and come here"** (John 4:16).

When she answered that she had no husband Jesus unveiled her life that she have had five husbands, and the one whom she had was not her husband; and said to her "you spoke truly". **The request of Christ that she call her husband means that He wanted her to confess her sin.**

Christ then told her that God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Finally the Lord Jesus disclosed the reality of His personality, that He is the long awaited Messiah (John 4:25, 26). The woman left her waterpot and forgot everything after her heart was opened up, went her way into the city, and said to the men, as if she is the first Christian missionary "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

(John 4:29). **And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified (John 4:39). It is interesting to notice that Christ was first called "the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42) from the mouths of those Samaritans who were traditional enemies of the Jews!**

The Lord, by His love and compassion, changed this sinful woman to an active missionary. She forgot her waterpot for which she came to the well, and went to announce that Jesus told her all she ever did. The Messiah Who was long awaited, **did not rebuke her by a harsh word for her devious behavior, in spite of His hatred of sin, but by His love and compassion He attracted her to the knowledge of the Real Living God.**

b - Christ and the woman caught in the very act (John, Chapter 8):

This is a stunning example; a woman caught in the act of adultery. The Scribes and Pharisees brought her to the Lord Jesus and said to him: "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" (John 8:4, 5). It was very critical and abashing for this miserable woman, whom "they had set in the midst" (John 8:3) to disgrace her more.

What did Christ do in this situation? He did not utter one word to those who brought her, but quietly He "stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger" (John 8:6). But in their hypocrisy, they pretended to keep the Law, and they continued asking Him about His ruling over this woman. **"He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first".** And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground (John 8:7, 8). His words and His writing caused the accusers of this woman to go out one by one, beginning with the greatest even to the least. And Jesus was left alone, with the woman standing in the midst.

Christ said to those who brought the woman "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first". But what was He writing on the ground? All the commentators of the Holy Bible agreed that He was writing down the sins of each of those who brought the woman. No one knew these sins except God alone. They were ashamed of themselves and hastened to go for fear that they would be exposed.

What was the verdict of Christ on this woman who was caught in the very act of adultery? He did not rebuke her for her adultery, even when no one was around, rather He was gentle and merciful. He does not wish that anyone perishes but that all come forward and repent. He said to her "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord". And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8:10, 11).

Christ Who will judge the world at the end of times, and Who said that all the judgment is given to the Son, did not condemn this adulterous woman, but without doubt He attracted her to the

way of righteousness. **No doubt that the loving words of Christ, which are full of compassion for this sinful woman were more forceful than the stones which Moses Law commanded she should be stoned with. What would anyone gain if the woman was stoned and died in her sin?**

Christ did not condemn this woman, yet He wooed the Scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy (Matthew 23), because they lived a life of pretence so that the people would praise and glorify them. That was their reward, they loved the glory of men more than God's glory. **This sinful woman with her repentance was better than them with their self righteousness, like the sinful publican who was better than the Pharisee, praying in the temple.**

c - Christ and Zacchaeus (Luke, Chapter 19):

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and the word tax collector for the Jews at the time of Jesus was synonymous to the word sinner. The Scribes and Pharisees were always murmuring against the love of Christ to the sinners and against Him sitting with them. **The traditional accusation against His disciples was: "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matthew 9:11). The answer of Jesus to this complaint was: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:12, 13).**

Zacchaeus heard that the Lord Jesus was going to pass through the city of Jericho, and Zacchaeus was very eager to see Jesus, but could not because of the crowd for he was of short stature. So in order not to let this chance escape, he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus, for He was going to pass that way.

When the Lord arrived at that place He looked up the sycamore tree where Zacchaeus was hiding. **Jesus overlooked the crowd, gazed up at Zacchaeus and told him: "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5). What a surprise for Zacchaeus the sinful man? He desired to see the Lord Jesus, and now Jesus is addressing and calling him to make haste and come down, why? Not because He will pay him a quick visit, but to stay at his house. That is wonderful.** This kind of treatment was not common at that time in Jewish society. The righteous people - in their own eyes - did not deal with those whom they considered sinful or evil. Then how will Jesus stay a whole day in the house of a sinful man?

This is what actually happened; when the crowd saw that Jesus accepted Zacchaeus joyfully, they all complained, saying: **"He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner"!** (Luke 19:7).

Let us see how the love of Jesus affected Zacchaeus, the sinful man. Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, **I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusations, I restore fourfold**" (Luke 19:8). Zacchaeus who

spent a lifetime of injustice and false accusations now declares that he gives half of his goods to the poor; and what next?, if he had taken anything from anyone by false accusations, he restores fourfold. The Law of Moses did ask for restitution for a trespass in full, plus only one-fifth of it (Numbers 5:6, 7). Yet Zacchaeus will restore fourfold to anyone he has taken anything from by false accusations. **Christ did by His love more than what the Law failed to do by its strictness and order.**

No wonder when we see Jesus declare that "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:9, 10). **This is the message of Christ "To seek and to save that which was lost".**

d - Parable of the Lost Son (Luke, Chapter 15):

This parable is considered the summit of what Jesus revealed about the love of God for sinners. Jesus said this parable after saying two other parables: "the lost sheep" and "the lost coin". They are Jesus' response to the murmur of the Scribes and Pharisees that He receives sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:1, 2).

The parable of the Lost Son as Jesus presented consists of two parts. The first part explains the stages of sin which the son followed, to the extent that "he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:16). The fact that he ended by feeding swines, means that he reached the bottom of sin and he became its servant. **The second part of the parable explains the stages of repentance and returning back to God, which is what we will talk about.**

When this son found himself in great difficulty, "he came to himself" (Luke 15:17) and thought seriously to return back to his father who symbolizes the Heavenly Father. The son actually arose up and went to his father. **This was not strange. What was strange is that as soon as he returned to his father, he found his father waiting for him** "But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion" (Luke 15:20).

What multiplies our surprise is that the father - who symbolizes the Heavenly Father - behaved in a way which is appropriate to the young son who sinned, and not to the old father who was sinned against. What did the father do?, "ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). **All that happened before the son who sinned open his mouth and said a word expressing regret or sorrow!** And when the son said to his father "I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21), **the father did not let him complete what he wanted to say to his father "Make me like one of your hired servants"!** (Luke 15:19). **This meant even though he had gone astray he did not lose his sonship with his father.**

We also see in this parable the father flooding the son with his love, sympathy and compassion as he says to his servants "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:22-24).

Is there love for the faulty person greater than this love? Christ with His love to sinners attracted and won them to Himself. Mankind was in a state of hostility with God when Christ died on the Cross for their salvation. They were not only in a state of hostility but also in a state of persistent evil and sin. This is what the Jews asserted to Pilate the Roman atheist ruler "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" (Luke 23:21), His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). In spite of that Christ completed His walk to the Cross, and from the top of the cross He asked His Father to forgive them "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Christ forgot their evil, all He asked for was the salvation of their souls. **This is our Christ Who still searches for the lost sheep, and when He finds it He carries it joyfully on His neck.**

5 - ETERNAL GLORY FOR MAN

The amazing love of God - through the blessings of Redemption and the work of the Holy Spirit - sanctifies the nature of man after his renewal and makes him a son of God by adoption: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father"" (Romans 8:15). Thus by the awareness of this sonship, all saved believers everywhere cry out and say: "Our Father Who art in Heaven".

This amazing love does not only make the believers children of God, but also makes them resemble the Son of God "that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). **The matter does not end here, but the Apostle reveals for us what lies after that: "whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified"** (Romans 8:30).

Yes, God glorified man - in Christ - by His love. This is what the Lord Jesus declares in His talk with the Father "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them" (John 17:22). What an honor! **Further, the Lord Jesus in this talk asks the Father that those believers be with Him: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me"** (John 17:24). This is what made the Apostle Paul say: "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10).

God the Father, by His love, made the believers in His Son Jesus Christ heirs of eternal glory "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7), "and if children, then heirs -- **heirs of God and joint heirs with**

Christ" (Romans 8:17). This is what made the same Apostle say: "**When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory**" (Colossians 3:4). He also writes to the Romans saying: "that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, **which He had prepared beforehand for glory**" (Romans 9:23). St. Peter the Apostle confirms the same meaning "**But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you**" (1 Peter 5:10)

D) WHY DOES GOD PERMIT MAN TO SUFFER

The difficulties and trials which come to a person are not a sign of the anger of God upon this person. St. James says: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 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 1:2-4). **Trials, difficulties and pains do not contradict the love of God to man, but there is a wisdom behind the pains and difficulties. This subject requires a special analysis, but it is enough to refer to some main points.**

A - God permits man to endure pains and difficulties to rid him from self-righteousness. This matter is clear from the fall of some upright people such as Job, David and Peter.

Job was upright. He was also proud of himself and many times used to say: "I am blameless" (Job 9:21). The three friends of Job ceased answering him "**because he was righteous in his own eyes**" (Job 32:1). Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job "**because he justified himself rather than God**" (Job 32:2). But after the pains that came upon Job, he said talking to God "**Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes**" (Job 40:4; 42:5, 6).

Also David who was known for his chastity fell in the sin of adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). For this sin he was in great pains and shed many tears: "**my sin is always before me**" (Psalm 51:3). The Lord accepted his repentance and he became a man of prayer and the lovable Psalmist of Israel and from his descendant according to the flesh, Christ came.

Again Peter who was known for his courage, was scared in a disgusting way in front of a slave girl and denied Christ with curses and swearing, blaspheming Him (Mark 14:66-72). This trial made him vile in his eyes, and he was sorry and cried bitterly.

St. Paul was subjected to a certain trial. Did he not say about himself: "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).

B - God permits man to endure pains and difficulties to chastise and free him from the bonds of sin and bad habits. The Psalmist says: "Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O Lord, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him rest from the days of adversity" (Psalm 94:12, 13). Eliphaz the Temanite one of Job's friends says an advice: "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; he wounds, but His hands make whole" (Job 5:17, 18).

St. Paul says to the Hebrews: "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons" (Hebrews 12:6, 7). He then compares between the chastening of physical parents and that of God, and says about the latter: "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). This meaning is confirmed by what the Lord Jesus said to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19).

The three young men who were thrown into the midst of the fire in Babel is an example which explains what we say. All what the fire did to them is freeing them from their ties. Then they were able to walk freely in the midst of the fire as if it is a park (Daniel 3:24, 25). The fire did a service to the three young men, as it freed them from their ties, but did not burn their clothes, not even a hair of their heads. This is exactly what pains do to the children of God.

The gold which enters the fire spends a certain time in the fire to be purified from its impurities. If it spends longer time it spoils and if shorter it is not purified. Hence God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able or can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). It is said that gold is purified when one sees in it his picture clearly. We also remain under the temptation until the picture of God appears in us.

C - Pains make man experience God and His dealings and comes closer to Him. When man feels the temptation, and that he is unable to escape from it, he turns to God to deliver him. In fact God urges us to do that "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15). The Prophet David says from experience: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me" (Psalm 86:7). It is amazing that when all

the doors shut in front of us, we find one door stays open; the door of God.

D - Afflictions and tribulations do not contradict the love of God to us, but they are the glory of the saints in heaven. The Apostle Paul says "**Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory**" (Ephesians 3:13), and "**For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory**" (2 Corinthians 4:17). It is known that afflictions require patience, and St. Paul says: "But we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance" (Romans 5:3).

What does perseverance do, and what are its fruits. The Lord Jesus says: "**But he who endures to the end will be saved**" (Matthew 10:22) and "**By your patience possess your souls**" (Luke 21:19). Thus we are not surprised from what St. John wrote in the Revelation "**I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ**" (Revelation 1:9). **Here John speaks about the Kingdom of Christ and about tribulations and patience.**

What about the patience which accompanies the pains and tribulations? St. James writes to the believers and says "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). **The reason is that "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" and he immediately follows by saying: "But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing"** (James 1:3, 4).

The Lord Jesus says to His Disciples: "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). **This made St. Paul say "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him"** (2 Timothy 2:12).