

CHAPTER 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 teachings of the Apostles**
- C) Brotherly love in the life of the Church**
- D) Christ presents a new understanding for the love of man to his brother**
- E) Christ's teaching about "Who the neighbor is?"**
- F) Love of enemies in Christ's teaching**
- G) Features of Christian love in the love of man to his brother**

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In Him there is no variation or shadow of turning (Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17). And if God is love as proclaimed in the New Testament (1 John 4:8; 6:14), He was also love in the Old Testament, and indeed from the beginning. In His characteristics, God never changes. **When we realise the love of God in the New Testament in its fullness and depth, that does not mean that He was not loving in the past.**

God said by the Prophet Moses: **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God"** (Leviticus 19:18, 34) and **"Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt"** (Deuteronomy 10:19).

The Wise said: "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. **Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred. He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends"** (Proverbs 10:12; 15:17; 17:9). He also said: **"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; Lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him"** (Proverbs 24:17, 18).

When the children of Israel sinned and made for themselves a moulded calf of gold and worshipped it, Moses showed his love to the people and interceded for them to the Lord saying: "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! **Yet now, if You will forgive their sin-- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written"** (Exodus 32:31, 32).

The Psalmist says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing-- life forevermore" (Psalm 133:1-3).

We mentioned that the teaching of the love of man to his brother was in the Old Testament. Yet the clear and full understanding of this command is only seen in the New Testament, where God demonstrated His love in its fullness, whether in His love to mankind or in His teachings about the love of man to his brother in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The Apostle Paul says: **"But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another"** (1 Thessalonians 4:9). We notice the expression which the Apostle used **"for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another"**.

A) LOVE OF MAN TO HIS BROTHER IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE LORD JESUS

Numerous are the teachings of the Lord Jesus about brotherly love: **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"** (Matthew 19:19; Galatians 5:14), and in the Sermon on the Mount He says: "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (Matthew 5:41, 42), "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). **"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. These things I command you, that you love one another"** (John 15:12, 14, 17).

He who does not love his brother isolates himself from the Church, and it is known that there is no salvation for him outside the Church. The Lord Jesus says: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established". **And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector"** (Matthew 18:15-17).

Then the Apostle Peter came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, **"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven"** (Matthew 18:21, 22). **Immediately after that Jesus gave us a parable in which He explained the consequences for him who does not love his brother. He said:**

"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all". Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all". And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. **Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother**

his trespasses" (Matthew 18:23-35).

More than that, the Lord Jesus makes practical love the qualification for inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven:

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me". Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me".

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, **"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me".** Then they also will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me". And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Lord Jesus says: "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42). Perhaps a cup of cold water is trivial in the eyes of the people. But when it is given with love, it becomes a great thing and has a reward from God, because it fulfils the command.

B) LOVE OF MAN TO HIS BROTHER

IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE APOSTLES

Our teacher the Apostle Paul says: "**Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.** For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet", **and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself**" (Romans 13:8, 9). He adds: "**Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law**" (Romans 13:10).

He writes to the Corinthians saying: "**Pursue love, ... Let all that you do be done with love**" (1 Corinthians 14:1; 16:14). And he says to the Galatians: "**Through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself**" (Galatians 5:13, 14). **And he relates our love to one another through Christ's love to us: "Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us** and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:2).

This Apostle speaks about Christian virtues and crowns them with love as he says to the Colossians: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. **But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection**" (Colossians 3:12-14). **He makes love the purpose of all God's commandments:** "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5).

The Apostle James calls brotherly love the royal law: "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well" (James 2:8).

The Apostle John - the Disciple whom the Lord Jesus loved - speaks in length about brotherly love:

"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ... We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:11, 14-18). He also says: "**Beloved, let**

us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8).

It is mentioned that the Apostle John was the Apostle of love, in his preaching, his sermons, his Epistles and his Gospel. As he became old and unable to preach, they used to carry him to the church and let him stand between the believers to whom he repeated the phrase "My children, love one another". As the believers heard this phrase many times they asked him why he repeated these words? His answer was: "Because it is the Lord's command, and it is sufficient for our salvation if we kept it".

The Apostle Peter says: **"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins"** (1 Peter 1:22; 3:8, 9; 4:8).

The Apostle Paul, the Philosopher of Christianity compares between knowledge and love: **"Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies"** (1 Corinthians 8:1), **and makes love the first fruit of the Spirit in the believer's soul:** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

In dealing with one another, he advised the Romans saying: **"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak,** and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me" (Romans 15:1-3).

C) BROTHERLY LOVE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

The divine commandment has no value without fulfilling it in a practical way. The purpose of the commandment is living by it, as we obey it. The Apostle Paul expresses that by saying: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). That is, such a person becomes like an empty drum. There is no value for the theoretical knowledge, as it does not advance the person in his spiritual or practical life. John, the Apostle of love said: "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). **No wonder that the early Church which received from the Apostles of Christ the teachings of brotherly love, applied it practically.**

The early Christian society consisted mostly of poor members and the Church used to care for the needy, the widows and the like of its members, by distributing a daily meal to them. This service used to be called "the service of tables" (Acts 6:2). And as the Church members increased in number, the Church appointed seven deacons to be responsible for the service of the poor.

The Book of Acts gives us practical proof of the belief of the early Church members in brotherly love. It mentions those who sold their houses and their lands, and gave the proceeds to the Church to distribute to the needy (Acts 4:34). Among them were Barnabas and Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 4:36; 5:1, 2). It also mentions a disciple named Tabitha, who was full of good works and charitable deeds, especially for the widows (Acts 9:36-39).

Again when the number of believers increased the Church organized financial aid for the poor, fulfilling the commandment of brotherly love. **The Book of Acts expresses that by saying: "Nor was there anyone among them who lacked"** (Acts 4:34).

As the believers kept the commandment of brotherly love, the common or communal life was established as the Book of Acts indicates: "Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common" (Acts 4:32). We notice that early Christianity was the result of a great spiritual understanding by the work of the Grace of God in the heart. **All the Christians became members of one body, whose head is Christ, and they were of one heart and one soul** (Acts 4:32; Romans 12:5; Colossians 1:18).

As a result, they sensed the pains of the needy among them. The Church did not ask its members to give their alms, as they gave by themselves. More than that, they implored the Church to accept their gifts. This is what the Apostle reveals about the Macedonians: "For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the

saints". The secret of that is mentioned by the Apostle in the following verse: "but they first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Besides caring for its needy members the Church showed brotherly love in other areas, such as caring for the ministers and the teachers according to the commands of the Apostles in their instructions and canons. The Church ministers cared for the sick, the elderly, the disable and the crippled through praying for them and visiting them. That was mentioned in the message of Clement to the Corinthians and in the book "The Shepherd" by Hermes.

Again the Church cared for the imprisoned as there were many imprisoned members, some because of their faith and others because of debts they owed. Both groups were visited with charity and love. This was accomplished by the Church deacons and the lay believers. That was clear from what the Apostle Paul said: "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them-- those who are mistreated-- since you yourselves are in the body also" (Hebrews 13:3). That is the teaching of the Lord Jesus "I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matthew 25:36).

Brotherly love was also demonstrated to those who had difficult times and experienced disasters. The Church was praised from early times because she bravely endured persecutions and tribulations (See Hebrews 10:32-34).

The Church also cared for and entertained strangers (Romans 12:13; 16:1, 2; Hebrews 6:10; 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 5-8). In the Epistles and documents of the early Church we find prayers and petitions presented for the strangers and the needy. Perhaps this is displayed clearly in the Liturgy of St. Basil: "Bless the crown of the year with Your goodness **for the sake of the poor of Your people, the widow, the orphan, the traveller, the stranger, ...**"

Brotherly love was also obvious from the early stages of the history of the Church, in caring for poor Churches in hazardous situations. That was clear from the Book of Acts and from the Epistles of St. Paul. Offerings were collected for the poor of Jerusalem, Paul himself gave this matter his personal attention and collected offerings from the Churches of Antioch, Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia, for this reason (Acts 11:27-30; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Romans 15:26; Galatians 2:10).

There is a final point in the subject of brotherly love in the early stages of Church history; the Christians called themselves brothers and sisters, confirming this fact. They had one spirit and one soul (Ephesians 4:1-6), **and they greeted each other with a holy kiss** (Romans 16:16); 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). The love of Christians to each other astonished the Jews who used to say: "Look how they (the Christians) love one another!" And when a Christian stranger arrived in any town he was accepted as a brother, was offered shelter, and the saintly widows washed his feet. He was treated with brotherly love.

This subject is big - and there is not enough space to cover it. It is enough to say that the spirit of brotherly love carried with it the sense of equality; as there was no distinction because of color, race or place of origin. They all followed one Lord, sat side by side at the eating tables, stood in the churches praying, free men and slaves together: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3: 28).

After the era of the early Church we still find the same brotherly spirit in the lives and teachings of the Church Fathers, and also find it clearly in the lay believers from the following two stories:

It is written in a book entitled "Paradise of the Monks" a story in the life of **St. Macarius the Great, the father of the Skete monks in El-Natroon Valley**. Once he had some haughty thoughts that he was the greatest among all men in his time. The Good Lord wanted to teach him a lesson. The Lord informed him that he did not yet acquire the virtues of a certain woman who lived with the wives of her sons in Alexandria, Egypt, at that time; the Lord told him that he could find out for himself. The saint was moved by holy zeal; how could he a man who left the world to live an ascetic life in the wilderness not yet acquire the virtues of a married woman living in the world!

He left right away to Alexandria and arrived there on Sunday morning. He went to the church, and at the end of the liturgy he went as a lay person to take communion from the hands of the Patriarch. He noticed on one side a woman praying fervently. The saint thought that the woman was in difficulty and was moved to help her. As he was asking her why she was upset, the Spirit informed him that she was the woman whom the Lord wanted him to see.

The saint enquired about the life of the woman. She mentioned that her two sons were married to foreign women, and that they all decided to live with love. She did not favour either of her daughters-in-law over the other one. They all decided that a bad word would not be uttered from any one of them that provoked the other. They lived in this manner for a long time. For her two sons there was one saving pot under her care and they did not know how much money it contained. As to why she was praying fervently in the church, she thought that God was not pleased with her sons because they had not entered into temptation for a long time! Her story was very useful for the saint and he realised the value of brotherly love in the sight of God.

The second story is about the conversion of St. Pachomius, the father of the monks' communal life. He built the first monastery in the world, which is the model of present day monasteries, had thousands of disciples and wrote the rules of monasticism which were adopted by monks in the western world.

St. Pachomius was born to pagan parents and grew up as a pagan. At the age of twenty, he was inscribed as a soldier in the army of Emperor Constantine the Great in the war against Maximian in 310 A.D. The war did not last long as Maximian was defeated and killed and Pachomius left the army to live a civilian life.

What concerns us here is that during that war Pachomius' battalion was stationed at the city of Esna in Upper Egypt where he was acquainted with the Christians and their religion in that city. Although soldiers were in general disliked and hated because of their callous behaviour, the Christians of Esna went out to the soldiers carrying food for them, and dressed the wounds of their wounded men. They did that in modesty and gentleness which attracted the attention of Pachomius, who in turn asked for the source and reason of the kindness of those people. He was told that they were the Christians who kept the commandments of their religion.

As a result, as soon as he left the army he started to study this "new religion" and he was converted to Christianity in the year 314 A.D. It was not enough for Pachomius to become a Christian, but he decided to sanctify himself, left the world and became one of its greatest guides.

D) CHRIST PRESENTS A NEW UNDERSTANDING FOR THE LOVE OF MAN TO HIS BROTHER

In His teaching about love, the Lord Jesus said: **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another"** (John 13:34). **What is the meaning of the words of Christ that love is a new commandment? Is love a new commandment, and we previously mentioned that this commandment existed in the Old Testament ... what does Jesus mean? St. Augustine gives us the answer. He says:**

The Lord declares that He is giving His Disciples a new commandment that we love one another, yet this commandment was previously given in the Old Testament where it was written "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Why then does the Lord call it a new commandment when it was that old? That is because He transferred us from the old and put on us the new man. It is not just any kind of love that renews us, it is the love which the Lord gives us. In order to distinguish it from other kinds of love, the Lord adds saying: "as I have loved you".

Husbands and wives love each other, parents their children, and all human relations which bind people. What about the love of adulterers and adulteresses? **For this reason Christ gave us a new commandment that we love one another; as He has loved us. It is the love which renews**

us and makes us new persons, inheritors of the New Testament, songsters of the new song. This is the love which renews the nations and the human race which fills the whole world. It works and gathers new people which form the body of the newly married bride for the Only Begotten Son.

For this reason, the members of this body have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it (1 Corinthians 12:25, 26). It is not like the wicked when they love one another, or as people love one another in a worldly manner. Rather they love one another as God's people, and are all the children of the Almighty and brothers to His Only Begotten Son. He who loves his neighbor in a holy spiritual way, loves God in him. This is the love which differs from worldly love, as the Lord distinguished it when He said: "as I have loved you", because what does He love in us except God?".

In summary, brotherly love in Christianity is not like the bodily love of the people of the world. Christian love in its first degree, in all its patterns and forms, is love which has been poured out in the hearts of Christian believers by the Holy Spirit Who was poured to us from above (Romans 5:5). It is the same kind of love by which Christ has loved you. This love does not want anything except love itself and it has no limit. But as Christ loved us to the end, likewise is the Christian love. It is not for a benefit, but it is a pure unique distinguished love "love your neighbor as yourself".

E) CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT WHO THE NEIGHBOR IS?

The Lord said in the past by the Prophet Moses: "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, **but you shall love your neighbor as yourself**" (Leviticus 19:18). **It was thus settled in the minds of the children of Israel that the meaning of "neighbour" is confined to bodily relatives, whether as the same family, or as the Israelites who formed a nation which descended for one father, Abraham.**

The "love of neighbor" was the summary of the commandments written in the second tablet of the Ten Commandments. That was clear from the words of the Apostle Paul: "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery", "You shall not murder", "You shall not steal", "You shall not bear false witness", "You shall not covet", and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

But the Lord Jesus gave us a new understanding to the meaning of neighbor. The neighbor is no more a brother in the same family or the same nation, but is beyond this human understanding. That is, the neighbor is any other person, since all the people descended from one father, Adam. The Apostle Paul says: "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).

The Lord Jesus gave us this new understanding about the neighbor in the parable of the "Good Samaritan".

A certain lawyer stood up to test Jesus, and not to learn from Him saying: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself". And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live". But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:25-29). Then Jesus answered and said to him a parable **known as the "Good Samaritan".**

He said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you". **"So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him". Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise"** (Luke 10:30-37).

The parable of the Good Samaritan is full of deep and useful contemplations. But what concerns us here is the definition of the word "neighbor". The Jews felt that they were all brothers, since they all descended from Abraham, and that they formed the people of God at that time.

Let us now review what happened to this Jewish man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, badly wounded him, and departed. **A certain Jewish priest came down that road.** And when he saw his state which required help and compassion, he passed by on the other side. **Likewise did a Levite, who was also a minister of faith.** Then a certain Samaritan came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

We should realise that there was an ancient animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans, and that the worst swearing is for a Jew to call someone a Samaritan. This swearing was once directed to the Lord Jesus by the Jews when they answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (John 8:48). In spite of that, when this Samaritan saw him, he had compassion, went to him bandaged his wounds; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he gave money to the innkeeper, and asked him to take care of him; and whatever more he spent, when he came again, he would repay the innkeeper.

That parable was clear and powerful. Hence the Lord Jesus asked the lawyer: "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he answered right away, "He who showed mercy on him".

Christianity teaches and calls for love. Though love starts in one's own family, but it does not stop there. It includes all men and collects them between its compassionate arms. National patriotic spirits created huge barriers between different nations (Jews, Gentiles, Romans, Greeks and Barbarians, ... etc), to the extent that they were like strangers to each other. Then Christianity came to demolish all these barriers and to teach that God "has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).

By lauding the idea of humanity and placing it above national patriotism, Christianity gradually changed the image of the old world. It implanted the rigid idea of national patriotism with noble feelings and better concepts. Christianity infiltrated the civil and social lives of people by its virtues and goodness and led them towards the road of true civilization. The spirit of Christianity is a universal catholic spirit, which demolishes the barriers of enmity and hatred between different races and different nations.

F) LOVE OF ENEMIES IN CHRIST'S TEACHING

Christianity introduced a new commandment which never existed in the teachings of the philosophers nor the wise of this world. The Lord Jesus said in His sermon on the mount which contained the teachings of Christianity : **"You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy". But I say to you, "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"** (Matthew 5:43-48).

Yet what is the meaning of the saying of Jesus: "You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy"? Was this what the Old Testament Law taught?

The teaching of the Old Testament to the Jews was not to have personal hatred toward their enemies. The Law commanded them to treat their enemies well. The Lord said: "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it" (Exodus 23:4, 5) and "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land" (Deuteronomy 23:7).

The Wise said: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles" (Proverbs 24:17) and also: "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will reward you" (Proverbs 25:21, 22). The same words were also commended by the Apostle Paul (Romans 12:20).

In fact the real enemy to the Jews was he who resisted and opposed God and thus God

opposed him and commanded His people as His governing body on earth to exterminate this person without mercy (Deuteronomy 23:3-6; Joshua 6:2, 20, 21). Yet when the era of these governments ended, the teachers of the Jews used these rules for their own personal vendetta, and that was what Jesus exposed and criticised in His teachings.

No doubt, to love one's enemy is a noble degree of Christian perfection for which we should all strive to achieve. At the end of His teaching about the love of the enemy, the Lord Jesus called us the real sons of God imitating our Heavenly Father Who makes His sun shine on both the good and wicked. The Lord ended His teaching by saying: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Indeed, man needs the work of God's grace in him to be able to fulfil this commandment. It is not an impossible commandment, as the saints lived with it in their lives. We have many examples:

Stephen, the first Christian Martyr, as his enemies were stoning him to death, he "cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60). Indeed many martyrs and confessors displayed real love to those who persecuted and tortured them, and raised prayers for them. These prayers attracted them afterwards to the faith. At the same time the love of those martyrs and confessors to their enemies was a true proof for the superiority of Christianity and its teachings. They are not just theoretical teachings, and made many nonbelievers declare their faith, for which they paid a heavy price.

We do not deny that keeping the commandment of loving the enemy is not easy, and its fulfilment needs help:

a - Help from God for this commandment is necessary for the Lord Jesus said: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Divine help is given to us by prayer and supplication. No doubt that God will help us because He knows our human nature which inclines to take revenge and to feel important.

b - By being full of love to God, we keep His commandment: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Besides that we should be filled with brotherly love towards him who acts as our enemy. We should look at him as a sinful, sick person, whom the devil got hold of and denied him the love of God and his brethren.

c - True humility helps us to imitate our Lord Jesus and to remember His saying: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Matthew 10:24, 25). What did the enemies of Jesus do to Him? They falsely accused Him, cursed and insulted Him, and He is God. Their

animosity kept increasing to its summit when they crucified the Lord of Glory. What was Jesus' response in the darkest moments when He was hung on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). It might have been said that delivering Himself to His enemies was a kind of weakness, but what could be said about Jesus asking forgiveness for His enemies?

d - Repaying evil with evil increases hostility and has very bad consequences, both physically and spiritually. From here we understand the wisdom of the Apostle as he says: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

On the other hand we say that to meet evil with love and charity tends to eliminate hostility.

It was said about Moalem Guirguis El-Gohary, that someone insulted him. So he went to complain to his brother **Moalem Ibrahim El-Gohary** who was one of the highest ranking civil servants at the time of the Mamlouks at the end of the eighteenth century. After listening to his brother, Moalem Ibrahim told him that he will cut the tongue of this person (meaning he will never insult his brother any more), called his servant and commanded him to take amounts of wheat, butter, cheese, and other goods to this person who insulted his brother.

Next day, Moalem Guirguis was passing by the house of this person who insulted him, and was astonished to find the same person who insulted him a day ago, now welcoming and esteeming him. He went to his brother and told him what happened. His brother Moalem Ibrahim explained that by doing kindness to this person, evil words will never again be uttered from his tongue!

G) FEATURES OF CHRISTIAN LOVE IN THE LOVE OF MAN TO HIS BROTHER

At the time of the Apostle Paul, the Church of Corinth in Greece was rich in spiritual gifts. Yet some of the members of this new Church used to boast of these gifts, or attempt to desire them more as something important. Such boasting and desiring of the gifts for the sake of the gifts themselves was wrong and the Apostle Paul elaborated to them on that matter.

In the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul spoke about the spiritual gifts or the Grace as they were called. **At the end of the twelfth chapter he wrote: "But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31). The more excellent way is to desire "Love", about which he wrote in detail in chapter 13 (1 Corinthians, Chapter 13).**

In that chapter, after speaking about the importance of love as the first Christian virtue, he pointed out that it is more important than the gifts of speaking in tongues, of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, of faith which moves mountains, of feeding the poor, or the gift of living an ascetic life.

Love as St. Paul explained in that chapter has two sides: one side demolishes all walls of sin and evil and we call that the negative side. The other side which we call the positive side builds every virtue in the Christian believer on the basis that love is the virtue of all virtues. We now consider both sides:

FIRST - The Negative Side:

By this we mean the effect of love in eliminating all faces of sin in the life of the believer.

*** Love does not envy:** (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Envy is a feeling of shortage, while love is the feeling of overabundance. Envy is an eye which looks down, but love looks up towards heaven which is the source of its overabundance and fullness. To realise how envy is evil, it is enough to know that the Jews delivered Jesus because of envy (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10) and also the brothers of Joseph sold him to the Ishmaelites because of envy.

The monk named "Befnotius" (known as "Bebnoda") was a disciple of St. Macarius the Great the father of the monks in the Skete Desert in Egypt. While he was a young monk he was able to acquire many spiritual gifts, that later qualified him to become the father of the monks of Skete after St. Macarius.

One day envy entered the heart of an old monk. One Sunday morning when all the monks left their cells and went to the church, this old monk entered the cell of Befnotius and hid his Bible between the palm leaves in the cell, went to the church and there he announced that his Bible was stolen. Abba Isidore the priest in charge asked to inspect the cells and the Bible was found in the cell of Befnotius. The only reaction of Befnotius was to shed tears and to ask the brethren to pray for him. He accepted the accusation and intensified his prayers, fasting and humility.

The rest of the story was that an evil spirit entered the old monk and he was tormented for a long time. Abba Isidore had the gift of casting out evil spirits but could not cast out the spirit in the old monk. When he was questioned the old monk confessed his sin. God wanted to honor Befnotius, and the evil spirit could only be cast out by his prayers.

*** Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up**

(1 Corinthians 13:4)

"Puff up" is pride and to parade one's self is the act and fruit of puffing up. He who parades himself, his capabilities, his gifts or anything he has, has forgotten that God is the source of all goodness and of everything he owns. And because God is the source of love, love glories in God the Giver as the Apostle says: "But he who glories, let him glory in the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:17).

He who puffs himself up sees himself as important and righteous. He loves to glory himself more than to glory God. In fact this person does not know the reality of himself and that he is but a handful of dust from the earth. All goodness he has comes down to him from God, because: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

We here mention an incident about **Arsenius, the great Roman saint**, known as the tutor

of the sons of kings because he was the tutor of Arcadius and Honorius, the two sons of Emperor Theodosius I. It was said that once he was sitting with an elderly simple Egyptian monk, listening and benefiting from him. Another monk saw that and was surprised that the tutor of king's sons was trying to benefit from this simple monk. St. Arsenius said to the monk that even though he had perfected Roman and Greek studies, he was ignorant of the elements of spirituality of the Egyptian monk.

*** Love does not behave rudely:** (1 Corinthians 13:5)

Discourteous behaviour becomes rude behaviour and leads to insulting others. **But because love has a simple eye which sees only what is good, it sees the Creator in His creation. Because it is pure it sees what is surrounded with purity.**

It was mentioned about a saintly monk that if he enters the cell of another monk and sees it clean and tidy, he says to himself that this monk must live a tidy life. And if he enters the cell of another monk and sees it untidy, he says to himself that this monk prefers to be occupied in his worship than in tidying his cell.

*** Love does not seek its own:** (1 Corinthians 13:5)

He who seeks his own is a selfish person who lives in his own world. But love is giving and sacrificing. It does not seek its own because it lives for others.

It happened in the time of St. Macarius the Great that the monk who was responsible for planting the field saw a bunch of grapes which grew out of its season. He carried it to his father St. Macarius. But Macarius thought about an old sick monk in the monastery who might be in need of it and carried it to him. The old monk thought about a simple newly ordained monk thinking that the young monk is not yet accustomed to the monastic life and might be in need of it. The young monk took it to another monk and the bunch of grapes were carried from one monk to the other until it reached St. Macarius once more.

It has been said about Saint Abba Sarabion that once while he was walking down a road he saw a poor person poorly clothed and cold. The saint took off his robe and gave it to him. The saint was then met by a rich man who surprisingly asked him "Where is your robe?", the saint answered "The Bible my son?". The rich man took off his robe and gave it to the saint. Going his way St. Sarabion met another person who owed a debt, and the debtor was torturing him. The saint had compassion and as he had nothing at that time but his valuable Bible, he did not hesitate to sell his Bible and give the money to the debtor. He continued his walk without his Bible and met another poor person, so he took off his robe and gave it to him.

He returned to his cell without his Bible and without his robe. When his disciple saw him he

asked about the robe. The saint answered "My son, I keep it in a safe place until I need it" and pointed upwards to heaven. The disciple again asked about the Bible, knowing that its words comforted him. The saint replied: The Bible told me "go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33).

*** Love is not provoked:** (1 Corinthians 13:5)

He who is provoked delivers himself to anger. Yet love is tolerant.

*** Love thinks no evil:** (1 Corinthians 13:5)

He who thinks evil does not have a pure heart nor a simple eye. Evil thoughts are his direct impression. Because love is from God, it has seeing eyes, knows that all things work together for good (Romans 8:28), and likes the life of peace.

Father Daniel - who was one of the elderly fathers - went once to a convent to hear the confessions of its nuns. In that convent there was a nun whom they called "idiot" because of her behaviour. As soon as this father entered the convent, mother superior and all the nuns except this nun, went to greet him and take his blessings. Mother superior apologised to him saying: "many times I wanted to cast this idiot out, but did not want to commit a sin".

Father Daniel sighed because he had known by the Spirit the secret of this "idiot". He asked his disciple to stay with him that night in order to discover the wonders of God in His saints. In the night this fool got up to pray and to pray tearfully, and her face was shining. She was praying quietly and if she felt someone was coming, she pretended to be asleep. The father called mother superior to observe the scene. Mother superior wept saying: "Wo to me a sinner, how many times I shouted at and insulted this nun".

When this nun discovered that the other nuns in the convent found out her reality, she left the convent after writing a note in which she said: "Your insults to me were the fruit for my soul, your despising me was my gain. Blessed was that hour in which you started calling me "idiot". You are innocent from any sin you committed against me. I shall give account to you about myself in front of the Heavenly Throne. None of you is defiled, because you are all pure".

When this note was read, father Daniel explained that his stay in the convent the previous night was exactly for this matter.

*** Love does not rejoice in iniquity:** (1 Corinthians 13:6)

He who rejoices in iniquity is himself evil and wishes all people to fall as he did. But

love raises up fallen people, unties fastened people and covers sin.

Once St. Paul the Simple went to the church to watch people entering; he was given the gift of knowing secrets. He saw the guarding angel of each brother looking happy, except one whose guarding angel was looking unhappy and a host of devils around that brother. He understood that this brother was tormented by sin. The saint wept and prayed for this brother. The Lord heard the prayers of the saint and as this brother heard the readings in the church he repented and decided to sin no more.

When people were leaving the church, St. Paul the Simple saw the guarding angel of this person rejoicing.

*** Love never fails:** (1 Corinthians 13:8)

Man fails when he is alone, and when no one is beside him to raise him when he falls. As for love, God supports it, and it thus never fails. Real love leans on the love of God and never fails, no matter how many troubles and difficulties it encounters. But temporary enthusiasm soon fades away.

We have a parable in the Bible about the rich man who came running, knelt before Jesus, and asked Him: "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" and when Jesus said to him: "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me", he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Mark 10:27).

Poor was this man who exhibited enthusiasm at the beginning, but soon his love failed because his love of money was stronger than his love to God.

SECOND - The Positive Side:

By this we mean the positive attributes of love.

*** Love suffers long and is kind:** (1 Corinthians 13:4)

It is not surprising that St. Paul writes down these two complementing attributes on the top of the list of the positive attributes of love, pointing to their divine origin. God in His nature is very long-suffering. Likewise should his children be.

Long-suffering is the attribute which deals with the weak and sinners, and it makes

the person successful in his ministry. Kindness is the complementary attribute. The fathers say "Long-suffering is the pride of the saints". By its long-suffering and kindness, love wins the souls.

It was said once that St. Tadros, a disciple of St. Pachomius, knew that a certain monk was going to leave the monastic life because he did not like St. Pachomius. St. Tadros went to St. Pachomius and agreed with him secretly that he would bring the monk to him pretending that he was very annoyed with St. Pachomius.

St. Tadros and the monk went to St. Pachomius and St. Tadros charged his father Pachomius with many accusations, but St. Pachomius only listened quietly. Finally the monk was embarrassed and prevented St. Tadros from continuing his charges, he then bowed before St. Pachomius and went back to his monastic life.

*** Love rejoices in the truth:** (1 Corinthians 13:6)

If love does not rejoice in iniquity, it rejoices in the truth; and truth is God Himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The truth does not separate from God because it is one of His attributes, it is God Himself. When the truth is achieved in a certain case, God shows Himself in that case. When truth prevails among a group of people, God is certainly among them. And if I am a man of God, and the truth is against me, I rejoice.

+ Love bears all things: (1 Corinthians 13:7)

This attribute insures that love is exhausted to its limit. It helps the person bear insults to the limit without reacting, in order to keep his inner peace.

St. Glasius who was a father to a group of monks, had a valuable Bible which he put in the church of the monastery for the benefit of all the monks. The devil moved one of the visitors to steal it, and to go quickly to sell it. He showed it to someone who valued books and who offered to buy it for eighteen Dinariis, on condition that he consults someone else who has knowledge of the holy books. He went and showed the Bible to father Glasius, who recognized it as his Bible which was stolen from the church. In spite of that, Father Glasius encouraged this man to buy the Bible for that price.

The man went to the thief and told him that he showed the Bible to Father Glasius and that he had advised him to buy the Bible. The thief was shocked to hear the name of Father Glasius and asked if Father Glasius said anything else, and knew that he did not.

The thief went right away to Father Glasius and took the Bible with him after refusing to sell it. He confessed his sin to Father Glasius, returned the Bible and asked for forgiveness. Not only that, but he stayed with Father Glasius and consecrated himself to live a monastic life.

*** Love believes all things:** (1 Corinthians 13:7)

Once a tigress crossed the road to one of the monasteries. The head of the monastery called one of the simple monks and commanded him to bring it. The monk obeyed and as he arrived there the tigress submitted at his feet. He told it that my master ordered me to bring you to him and he carried it to the head of the monastery. The head of the monastery was then concerned about the vain glory which might enter the monk, and ordered the monk to release the tigress saying "I wanted you to bring me a tigress and you went and brought a dog". Then he released it.

*** Love hopes all things:** (1 Corinthians 13:7)

Moalem Fanous was one of the Copt's leaders in Egypt, at the time of the Mamlouks' rulers Ibrahim and Mourad Bek, in the second half of the eighteenth century.

On the eve of one of the big Coptic feasts, one of the friends of Moalem Fanous was unfairly arrested. The wife of this man went and informed the wife of Moalem Fanous. To give her support the latter cancelled all kinds of celebration for the feast. When her husband, Moalem Fanous came home he was told by his wife "how can we celebrate this feast and our friend is in prison!".

Moalem Fanous used his influence and released this friend. That took several hours and he went to bed late that night.

Meanwhile it was the custom that the Copt's leaders go to the Patriarch on the feast day to congratulate him with the feast. And it was arranged that **Moalem Ibrahim El-Gohary** (another leader) collect Moalem Fanous to go together to the Patriarch. Yet because of what happened the previous night, Moalem Fanous apologized to Moalem Ibrahim for being late and explained the circumstances. Moalem Ibrahim was upset that Moalem Fanous did not ask for his help so as to share the blessings of releasing this friend.

They both arrived late at the Patriarch and when they told their story, the Patriarch said to Moalem Ibrahim "Moalem Fanous released this man from prison and you will find a job for him".

*** Love endures all things:** (1 Corinthians 13:7)

Love has to endure whatever it meets from difficulties, troubles and obstacles. Patience leads us to eternal glory: "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13) and "By your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:19). By its long-suffering, love is able to be patient.

Two brothers lived in harmony in the desert together. When the devil, the enemy of every good, was tired from seeing them living in accord he tried to separate them.

One evening, the younger brother lit a lamp and put it in its place as usual. The devil let it

fall and it was extinguished. The older brother was angry, blamed and hit the younger brother. However, the younger brother was full of love, apologised to his older brother and asked him to be patient until he lit the lamp once more. **Because of the love and patience of the younger brother the devil was tormented till the morning.**

The devil went to a chief devil who was in an idol's temple and told him what happened, and there was the priest of this temple listening to the talk of the devil who was tormented because of the patience and love of the younger brother. **The priest was overwhelmed by this love which overcomes evil and defeats the devil. He decided to become a Christian and later he became a monk.**