

**Contemplations on the Ten  
Commandments**

**Volume 4  
The Last  
Four Commandments**

*By*

**H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III**



*See of St. Mark*

**COPTIC ORTHODOX  
PATRIARCHATE**

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The Last  
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**H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III**

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Author : H. H. Pope Shenouda III.  
Translated By : Fr. Markos Hanna.  
Reviewed By : Mr. Sobhy Botros.  
Revised By : Wedad Abbas.  
Illustrated BY : Sister Sawsan.  
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*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of  
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*



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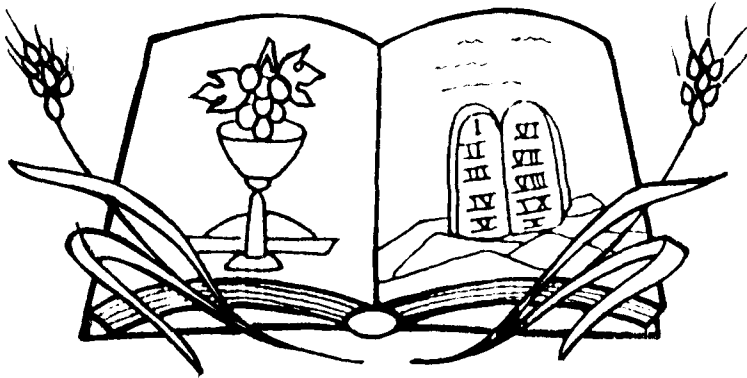
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## INTRODUCTION

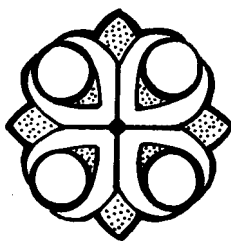
Dear reader, I present you with these lectures which I delivered in 1967.

There are three other books on the Ten Commandments, this one deals with the last four. Each Commandment needs in fact a whole book, but I preferred to present them in such a concentrated way.

They are perhaps expounded in more detail in my series on "Spiritual Warfare" and in the series of "So Many Years with the Problems of the People".

I pray God may give us power that we may behave according to His commandments, written by His finger due to their great importance.

**Pope Shenouda III**







## **THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT**

***"You shall not commit adultery."***

***(Ex. 20:14), (Deut. 5:18)***

***"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.. therefore glorify God in your body."***

***(1 Cor. 6:19-20).***

## THE HIDEOUSNESS OF THIS SIN

The apostle says: "*Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body; but he that commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.*" (1 Cor. 6:18).

**What is the seriousness of man's sinning against his body?**

**According to the apostle, this seriousness focuses upon two reasons:**

1. "*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot?*" (1 Cor. 6:15).
2. "*Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit... and you are not your own?... therefore, glorify God in your body...* " (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

*"You are the temple of the living God ..."* (2 Cor. 6:16). "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*" (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Therefore, whoever commits adultery, sins against the members of Christ. And he defiles the temple of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit!

How terrible it is!

And what else is there about the seriousness of this commandment?

**So hideous is this sin that it is called "uncleanliness"...**

Peter, the apostle, says that God *"... reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment: And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanliness."* (2 Pet. 2:9- 10).

Thus he used the expression: "The lust of uncleanliness" instead of saying: "The lust of adultery".

When Shechem committed adultery with Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, the Bible says: *"And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter.."* (Gen. 34:5). As for Jacob's sons, they grew extremely angry and worked out a plot through which they killed Shechem and the men of his city, *"... because he had defiled Dinah their sister."* (Gen. 34:13-27).

Ezekiel, the prophet, says about the man who commits adultery that he *"... defiled his neighbour's wife."* (Ezek. 18:11).

Jude, the apostle, says that wet dreamers, *"...defile the flesh."* (Jude 8).

John, the apostle, explains in the Book of Revelation, *"...the judgment of the great harlot (is) for... abominations and the filthiness of her fornication."* (Rev. 17:1-4).

This great saint explained to us the magnanimity of the "hundred forty and four thousand, " who sang the new hymn which no one else could sing. He said: *"These are the ones who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes."* (Rev. 14:4).

God communicated this same meaning to the angel of the church in Sardis, saying: *"You have a few names even in Sardis ... who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me ... for they are worthy."* (Rev. 3:4).

The above clearly demonstrates that the sin of adultery has been called uncleanness, that adulterers defile their bodies, defile their clothes, defile women, and are themselves defiled with them, and that they follow the flesh in their lust for uncleanness.

God says through the prophet Jeremiah that with that affair "... *Would not that land be greatly polluted..*," and says to the sinning woman, "... *You have polluted the land with your harlotries..* " (Jer. 3:1-2). Thus, adultery does not defile the adulterers only, but it also defiles the land.. Isn't that terrible!

Calling this sin uncleanness and the like occurs in the epistles of Saint Paul, the apostle, where he says:

*"... the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness..."* (Gal. 5:19). He said in his epistle to the Colossians: *"Put to death your members*

*which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion... "* (Col. 3:5), and in this epistle to the Ephesians, he said: *"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints... for because of these the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."* (Eph. 5:3-6).

All these descriptions have been applied to the sin of adultery. Thus it has been described as uncleanness, whoredom, fornication, seduction, lust.. And what else?

### **In view of its hideousness, idolatry was called adultery.**

When the children of Israel worshipped idols in the period of Judges, the Bible said about them: *"And yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them."* (Judg. 2:17).

This expression became a familiar one in the Holy Bible. Thus when the kingdom of Israel, followed by the Kingdom of Judah, indulged into idol-worshipping, God said through the prophet Jeremiah: *"Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot....yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. "So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.* (Jer. 3:6-9).

In keeping with the same meaning, God said through the prophet Hosea: *"... there is the harlotry of Ephraim, Israel is defiled."* (Hos. 6:10).

We would not have enough time if we tried to quote all the holy texts where the term "adultery" is applied to idol worshipping. However, we should go further to say that sin in general was called "adultery" since no other term could describe how hideous it is.

What else is there about the hideousness of this sin?

### **God's harshest punishments were inflicted upon the world.**

1. What was the harshest punishment that God inflicted upon the world in the Old Testament? Undoubtedly, it was the flood, since the Lord said: *"I will destroy man whom I have created... The end of all flesh is come before Me... My Spirit shall not strive with man forever..."* (Gen. 6:7,13,3). This was the mighty punishment of annihilation, the like of which had never happened before. And what was the cause of it? It was adultery. The Bible says: *"Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful."* (Gen. 6:1,2).

2 Balaam, who had been hired by Balac to curse Israel, knew what Saint Paul, the apostle, said later on that: *"Because of these things God's wrath comes upon the sinners."* Therefore, he decided that the best way to destroy them was for them: *"... to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."* (Rev. 2:14). And this actually happened, and Balaam's deviation took place, for the Bible says: *"Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the woman of Moab."* (Num. 25:1).

Thus God's wrath befell the people, and He smote them with pestilence from which they were not rescued except through Phinehas who, motivated by sacred zeal, killed the Israeli man and the women he was fornicating with: *"So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. And those who died in the plague were twenty four thousand."* (Num. 25:8-9). The Lord praised Phinehas because he stayed off His anger against the people. Otherwise He would have annihilated them.

3 Owing to adultery, God burnt Sodom and Gomorrah: *"Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of heaven: and He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. (Gen 19:24-25)* Saint Jude, the apostle, recalled that terrible incident and said: *"As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."* (Jude 7). We know that before these two cities were burnt down, and also because of adultery, the two angels smote many of the inhabitants of Sodom with blindness (Gen. 19:11), and later, these blind adulterers were also burnt.

4. Because of adultery also, all the tribe of Benjamin was about to be annihilated, (Judg. 20).

And because of it God destroyed many when they committed adultery with the daughters of Moab.. In this



connection, the apostle said: *"Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty three thousand fell."* (1 Cor. 10:8).

5. Because of adultery, the apostle Paul passed a serious judgment on the Corinthian sinner, a judgment which made him about to be swallowed up in utter grief. Thus he said, *"To deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."* (1 Cor. 5:5).

6. In addition to these examples of severe earthly punishments, there is also a heavenly penalty which is eternal perdition. In this connection, the apostle says: *"Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God."* (1 Cor. 6:9-10). We should notice here that Saint Paul placed fornicators before idolaters, a fact which indicates the seriousness and hideousness of this sin.

**As a consequence of this sin the holy bond of marriage is dissolved.**

This great sacrament, which has been likened to the reunion between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-32), which the Lord God referred to as: *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate, "* (Matt. 19:6), and which no reason has the power to dissolve... this holy bond may be dissolved by

virtue of this one reason, namely, adultery. The Lord knows that a person can endure anything that their partner does, and can forgive any offence they commit, except adultery, which is unbearable and following which a person cannot live with their partner. Adultery leads to a dissolution of the "one body" bond, and following it, the couple become "two", as they were before their marriage, and no longer one.

### **Other indications as to the hideousness of this sin.**

1. Saint Paul orders us "*... not to keep company with sexually immoral people... not even to eat with such a person... put away from yourselves that evil person.*" (1 Cor. 5:9,11,13). Therefore, an adulterer is isolated by the Christian community which shuns him as an unclean and wicked person who carries the germs of an epidemic. How severe that is! When the Corinthian sinner was exposed to this, he was about to be "*swallowed up with too much sorrow.*" (2 Cor. 2:7).

2. The sin of adultery is a complex one: It is not confined only to man's sin against another whom he covets, defiles, trips, or tempts, but it also includes man's sinning against his own self since he loses his own chastity and purity, defiles himself, and destroys his health. Moreover, he sins against God, because he turns Christ's members into adulterers, and defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit which is his own body. Thus when the prophet David committed adultery with the wife of Oris the Hittite, he turned to God, screaming out: "*Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight ...*" (Ps. 51:4).

Adultery may develop and produce other serious consequences: such as loss of virginity, pregnancy, abortion, divorce, or a change of religion to avoid the consequences of sinning or to pursue a lust that has taken hold of one!... Most regretfully, most of those who nowadays abandon their religion, do so for this reason. They fall into the sin of adultery and are unable to avoid the consequences! This sets up for us an example of the extent sin may lead us to.

3. The sin of adultery encompasses the whole person, for every part of him sins when he commits it: his thoughts, his senses, his heart, his body, and his soul. Sin pervades his whole being and polarises it. Sins of lust and passion, in particular, are participated in by the person as a whole. Conversely, other sins are contributed to by one part only of a person. Thus, for instance, suspicion may be a sin restricted to man's thoughts, and some sins concerning spoken words may be restricted to man's tongue.

4. Adultery is so hideous that people sometimes find it expressive enough to just call it "the sin." Thus, in her confession to a priest, a girl may just say: "I have sinned." The priest then understands that it is that sin in particular.

5. Adultery is such a hideous sin that it is regarded as enmity to God and love of the world. The apostle, Saint James, says in this connection: "*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*" (James 4:4).

6. This commandment is of such importance that, when the apostles studied the question of those Gentiles converted into the Faith, and wanted to facilitate matters for them without burdening them with too many commandments, they confined their prohibitions to the few most hideous things committed by the Gentiles. One of these was adultery. Thus, James, the apostle, said: *"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."* (Acts 15:19-20).

7. By reason of the hideousness of the sin of adultery, some people think that it was Adam's and Eve's sin which incurred woe upon the whole world. However, I am totally in disagreement with this view for many reasons.

8. This sin is so serious that it has brought about the downfall of many mighty people, including prophets such as David. Thus, Solomon the Wise, based upon experience, referred to it, saying: *"For she has cast down many wounded, and many strong (men) have been slain by her."* (Prov. 7:26). The devil of adultery is a violent one which requires great caution and a strong support from the Holy Spirit.

Man's sin becomes more hideous if he forces a woman to commit adultery with him and rapes her, for then he behaves like a monster and not a human being. In this case he bears the blame for his, as well as her sin, especially if she resists with all her strength, cries out for help to no avail, and disapproves of the sin deep in her heart. The law says: *"... only the man who*

*lay with her shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbour and kills him, even so is this matter."* (Deut. 22:25-26).

If adultery is committed with someone who is unaware or ignorant of the act, as with an unknowing youngster, then it lies within the scope of enforced adultery.

The sin of adultery becomes more hideous if it is committed incestuously or unnaturally in accordance with the explanation of the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans (1:26,27), or if it is committed in ways devised to satiate lust.



## **TYPES OF ADULTERY**

It is not my intention to discuss this topic in detail since it will then require whole books to cover it. I only intend here to say some meaningful words about the whole subject in summary.

### **Names:**

Adultery is of many types and carries several names that comprise many vocabulary words. Thus it is called adultery when committed by married individuals, fornication, as a general term, when committed by addicts and perverts, and sodomy, or sexual perversion, when committed by homosexuals and sodomites.

### **Types:**

Adultery, which is known as sexual lust, may be committed through thinking, the senses, the heart, the body, or through dreams. It may evolve into attempts aimed at attaining satisfaction in a variety of ways. It may also be committed by the tongue, the ears, or through writing. There is also the adultery of intention, as well as total adultery.

Drawing other people into adultery may take place through seduction, temptation, tripping, deceit, or association. It may

also happen by consent and response, or through coercion and rape.

### **Adultery through the senses:**

1. A man may fall into adultery through his sight. Thus the Lord God said, "... *Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matt. 5:28). This was also realised by Job, the righteous, in the Old Testament, hence his beautiful statement: "*I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman.*" (Job. 31:1).

Therefore, shyness and a "bashful look" are signs of virtue, but he who feasts his eyes on physical beauty or an exciting sight reveals an indication that his heart is impure.

However, this does not mean that every look is sinful. The first look may not be a sin, for man cannot live with his eyes closed. His eyes may unconsciously or involuntarily fall upon a sexual or an exciting scene. Up to this point, he has not committed a mistake. However, if this unintentional look excites him and makes him willingly cast another look, it then becomes a sin, since it is a form of seeking satisfaction. The commission of a sin may not take place in a second look, for perhaps the man is outwardly in control of himself and does not cast a second look. However, the sin lies in his inner self, which was affected by the first look of lust, and in his heart.

2. One may commit adultery through hearing. This takes place when he experiences a sense of enjoyment at listening to

sexual matters and getting excited in the process, or keeping them in his subconscious to be excited by them at a later time.

3. Man may commit adultery through the sense of touch, or through the sense of smell when a certain smell excites him and satisfies his sense. That is why perfumes are sometimes used in a way intended for temptation.

### **Adultery through thinking:**

The senses work externally, but when thought is defiled, adultery starts working internally. Thought then turns into lust in the heart. Sinning may start with a lust in the heart which generates ideas. These ideas then excite the senses which look for satisfaction. However, this satisfaction may be confined to thinking where wakeful dreams and a lot of imagining take place.

Thinking about sex may be generated through reading, watching, listening to, or getting mixed up in any type of exciting events.

We should, however differentiate between the war of thoughts and sinning through thinking, for the devil may fight against man using adulterous thoughts. Thus, if the fight is external and persistent, and if man rejects and shun it, he has not yet sinned, but is merely struggling against it. Sinning through thinking is the acceptance of sinful thoughts, negotiating them enjoying them and inventing new ones to satisfy the heart's lust.



### **Adultery through the heart (through lust):**

If the struggle takes place in thinking and not in the heart, then it is only mild. However, it becomes more raging if it mixes up with emotion, and it increases with the increase of whatever control desire has over man. At this point, the case becomes serious and may develop into actual adultery, namely through the body. However, adultery through the heart may be a mere intention in it, which circumstances do not help to get fulfilled, or may be man disposes of it in a spiritual way, thus getting himself rid of it.

### **Adultery through the tongue or the written word:**

This form of adultery comprises all forms of exciting sexual talk including jesting, flirting, sexual jokes, love stories, wicked songs, as well as soft and lustful talk. All these fall under the title of sin where man sins against himself and his listeners.

It may happen that such expressions are put down in writing, in which case they also lead to the same sins whether the expression occurs in novels, stories, poems or letters.

### **Offences:**

**An offence may arise in an early age through the parents' method of upbringing their children.**

The head of a family may accompany his children to the movies to please and entertain them, yet the show may include offensive things that will open the children's eyes and make

them lose their spiritual naivete. The father may argue that the show has nothing harmful and that it has not produced any bad influence upon him. In saying this he overlooks the difference in age between him and his children, for after all he is mature and controlled by his intellect while his children are at an age controlled by their senses and instincts. He also overlooks the difference between them in social status, for, unlike his children, he's married and does not suffer any form of suppression. Moreover, he overlooks the fact that an offence may not produce any effect at present, but may do so later on when the scenes follow his children into their future.

Another type of father may want his home to be a high class one in accordance with his own concept of high-class. Thus he furnishes his residence with all the means of entertainment, such as a television, or a home movie, before which the wife and the children sit at all times. The father may claim that the members of his family will be in control of what they hear and see. *"Offences should come: but woe to him through whom they do come!"* (Luke 17:1).

The father's responsibility increases if he forces his children into sinfulness when he confronts their religiousness and carefulness with irritating mockery.

A further example of sinfulness is the mother who wants to marry off her daughter. She may force her daughter into using make-up and certain clothes so as to attract the people's attention. Such an attitude makes her, as well as those looking at her daughter, fall into sinfulness.

A sin may be brought about through friends and bad company: According to the Bible: "*..evil company Corrupts good habits.*" (1 Cor. 15:33). These communications comprise sinful conversations, faulty meetings and excursions, and wrong directives picturing manhood and happiness as lying in corruption.

A sin may be brought about through a permissive society and the temptation of the opposite sex. We are in a generation that is disintegrating as far as clothing, adornment and permissiveness are concerned. If clothing is not in keeping with bashfulness, and if people put on such clothes regardless of religion and conscience, they may be doing so because they are permissive, because they want to keep up with the modern trends, or just out of fear of being criticised.

Many a time, a girl finds enchantment in the admiration of people and the flattery of the vile. Thus she adorns herself, not for those at home but for outsiders. Often, too, does a woman find pleasure in entrapping men. This act fills her with confidence in herself and her influence regardless of her responsibility for this sin before her own conscience. She herself may not fall into lustfulness; however she falls into a form of awareness of her personality which is of a worldly type.

This girl may argue that she has not fallen into adultery. However, God will hold her accountable for the blood of those who fell because of her, and she will bear the burden of their sins on Judgment Day. In this connection, the Lord Jesus said, "*.. woe to that man by whom the offence comes it would be*

*better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."* (Matt. 18:7-6). Do you think that the statement: *"We reap blood O Lord, "* in Psalm fifty, that we repeat, is intended only for the blood of the murdered? No, for it refers also to every person whose sin we caused and whose blood God will ask us to account for on Judgment Day.

What has been said here about a woman applies also to a man if he is the cause of sinfulness.

### **Adulterous relationships protected by the law:**

There are certain social relationships that Christianity condemns as adulterous no matter how hard their attempts are to shelter them behind worldly laws that religion does not approve of. The best known of these adulterous relationships are:

#### **1. Marriage following a wrongful divorce:**

The Lord Jesus says about the law of divorce: *"Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."* (Matt. 19:9).

*"Whoever divorces his wife, and marries another, commits adultery."* (Luke 16:18), (Mark 10: 11).

Therefore whoever divorces his wife for any other reason, no matter what judgments he has obtained, has his divorce considered null and void from the Christian point of view, and is still regarded as a married man. If he then marries another, it

will be as if he had taken another wife beside his own. This is what God has meant by His words, "*..commits adultery against her.*" (Mark 10:11).

Many people resort to several ways to obtain divorce. Thus they change their denomination in order to appeal to the law which rules that if a couple belong to different denominations, then the Islamic law is applied to them. In this case, the court of vital statistics will grant a divorce as per the Islamic law. However, in the eyes of Christianity, such a man is still tied to his first wife, for God says, "*Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.*" (Matt. 19:6).

If the man, who obtains such a divorce, marries another woman, he will be committing adultery as per God's words in the Bible. He may try to defend himself saying that it was the church that performed the wedding. Our answer to this is either that he deceived the church, or the priest who performed the wedding made a mistake. In both cases the marriage is considered null and void in the eyes of religion, and the relationship adulterous.

Priests should refrain from marrying divorced people and follow the bible rules. They may refer the matter to the Ecclesiastical Council for review.

## 2. Marrying a divorcee:

One of the things prohibited by Christianity is marrying divorcees. God says in the Bible:

*"Whoever marries a woman who is divorced, commits adultery."* (Matt. 5:32,19:9).

*"Whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband, commits adultery."* (Luke 16:18),

*"And if a woman divorces her husband, and marries another, she commits adultery."* (Mark 10:12).

In this type of marriage both man and woman commit adultery. Why? The reason is that divorce must have taken place either for adultery or for some other reason.

If divorce took place for any other reason but adultery, it would then be null and void and the first marriage would still be considered valid. The woman in this case would be married to two men at the same time; hence she would be an adulteress.

However, if the woman was divorced for adultery on her part, her punishment would be that she remain single and not get married, since she would not be trusted in a new marriage. In case some people protested that the Lord Jesus had forgiven the adulteress, we would say that this forgiveness would save her from eternal condemnation, but it would not be right for her to remarry in this life, which saying is in keeping with the commandment of Jesus Christ Himself who established this law.

### 3. **Consanguineous marriage:**

It is considered a form of adultery when a man marries a woman who is unlawful for him to marry. An example of this was set by John the Baptist when he confronted Herod saying, *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."* (Mark 6:18). A list of those near of kin is included in the Book of Leviticus (18:6-18). The laws concerning consanguineous marriages are kept at the church.

### 4. **Concubinage and polygamy:**

This practice is prohibited in Christianity which considers it as a form of adultery. We have already discussed this subject in detail in the book entitled "The law of monogamy in Christianity."



## METHODS OF TREATMENT

Methods of treatment concerning this sin centre around two aspects: negative and positive ones.

The negative aspects are an escape from sin, by staying away from all things that excite and lead to sinfulness, and an escape from idleness.

The positive aspects are the exploitation of man's energy and emotions in the field of spirituality through love of God that expels love of sinfulness, and through love of people that helps one stay away from sinful love.

### **Avoiding all that may excite and lead to sinfulness:**

Escape is the best method of treatment from the sin of adultery. In this connection, the sage exclaims in wonder: *"Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbour's wife. "* (Prov. 6:27-29).

Do not assume that getting exposed to sinfulness is a form of courage. No, it is not, for it rather is a form of dangerous risk, and any such desire indicates that the heart is impure. He who is virtuous escapes from sins and does not respond to them.



You have to escape from all that strains you and causes your downfall, remembering in so doing the words of the Bible: *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen and repent."* (Rev. 2:5). Escape from sinful sights, hearings, readings, visits, and meetings that may attract you towards sinfulness. Escape from wicked friendships and relationships. Your true friend is the one who draws you closer to God.

If at night you are attacked by sinful dreams, do not go back to them by reviewing them in your thoughts during the day. Otherwise, it will be counted as a fall.

Beware of letting sinful thoughts come to you through your rebuking yourself by reviewing your sins. However, in case you want to place your sin before your eyes at all times, recall it in a general way, but be absolutely careful not to delve into recalling details, for lustful sins in particular may come back through remembering their details. This is what is meant by the words in the Reconciliation Prayer: "Recollection of evil that brings about death".

Escape from the substance of sinfulness. Saints have said that he who is close to the substance of sinfulness has two wars to wage: one on the inside and one on the outside. He who is close to the substance of sinfulness is easy to fall, for he will be like a person standing close to a well into which his enemy is capable of pushing him. If this person is far away from the well, God will send someone to save him before his enemy, whose intention is to throw him into it, succeeds in dragging him to it.

Escape also from your own self if being alone with it may end up in your fall. You should know that seclusion is not merely that, for it should be a sitting with God and being alone with Him. Therefore, your sitting with people is better than being by yourself with the Devil and his defiling thoughts.

### **Escape from sinful thoughts:**

**First, escape from all that may bring about your sinful thinking.**

If sinful thoughts come your way, resist and do not give in to them, and set the words of the Apostle before your eyes: *"..bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."* (2 Cor. 10:5).

You may resist sinful thinking by occupying your mind with some other form of thought, such as prayer, meditation, reading, studying, or thinking about any financial or social problem, or about some useful project. The more profound, powerful, and concentrated the new thought is, the more capable it is of chasing away the first defiling thought.

If you are unable to chase one thought by resorting to another, occupy yourself with manual work or with a harmless means of entertainment.

This will dispel your thoughts and prevent them from being alone with you.

If thoughts go on bothering you, occupy yourself by talking with people, for you cannot talk with them and have sinful thoughts at the same time.

### **Escape from drifting away with the current:**

It is not purposeless that the church asks us to include the following Psalm in the early morning prayer: *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful."* (Ps. 1:1). Therefore, escape from the evil environment lest you should slip into it.

You may have some frivolous companions who may invite you to have fun with them. If you refuse, they will mock you. However, do not go along with them, and do not drift away with their current.

Keep your spiritual principles and let the people say about you whatever they want to say. Do not tread the path of sinfulness driven by your fear of what people may say. People's talk does not stand for the perfection you are seeking, and is not an excuse to save you on Judgment Day. Moreover, a person, whose personality is strong, leads and is not led.

It is not right for us to follow the world in its form of entertainment, its fashions, its frivolity, its jesting, and its permissiveness, for the Apostle tells us: *"And do not be conformed to this world."* (Rom. 12:2), which means do not be like it as we are in the image of God and His likeness.

### **Beware of giving in:**

Beware of the first step, for every step in sinfulness may lead to another. If, however, you slip into taking one of the steps of sinfulness, do not despair, and do not give in to another. Do

not say to yourself, "it's useless, now that I have fallen." Despair will weaken your will-power and will make you surrender. Beware of it!!

Sin does not rest until it has become complete. Therefore, do not give it the chance to accomplish this. If you commit adultery through sight or hearing, repent and do not move on to adultery through thinking. If you have already arrived at committing adultery through thinking, escape and do not move on to adultery through the heart and lust. If you fall into lust, do not complete it through action. Struggle and resist remembering the Apostle's admonition to us, "*You have not yet resisted bloodshed, striving against sin.*" (Heb. 12:4).

Saint Isaac said: "The victorious soldiers are not the only ones that are crowned, for so also are the soldiers whom the enemy have beaten and broken their limbs, since they did struggle and fight bravely on without surrendering." So be like them.

### **Escape from idleness:**

Leisure and idleness are the greatest enemies of youth. Conversely, a busy person is not free to think of sexual matters. He does not also have the time to participate in futile and shameless meetings. Therefore, the majority of those who are occupied are not attacked by sins.

A hard-working student, who is persistent in his studies and mindful of his future, in no way speculates about sin. Moreover, since his mind is at rest from these sinful thoughts, he is mostly devoted to his studies, for one strengthens the other.

Therefore, be a productive person. Be one who knows the value of his time and life and who invests every minute in what is of benefit. Fill your time with work, prayers, spiritual meetings, service, reading, and acquiring knowledge. All these will not afford you the chance to think about sin. Moreover, extensive work uses up that extra energy that the youth possess and does not allow it to wage a sexual war against them. This extra energy may have its source in the natural heat of the young or in the amount of rich food that the young consume in their years of growth.

This leads us to a discussion of the positive treatment of this sin through the love of God and of the people.

### **Love of God:**

If God's love takes over man's heart, it drives out his love of sin. Rather, it makes him hate it, shrink from it, and remain unaffected by it. Spiritual feelings take him over giving him strength to resist sin.

In order for a person to avoid adultery, it is not enough for him to escape from its causes: he has also to fortify the inside of his heart with God's love. This is attained through the means that bring about God's grace i.e. prayer, meditation, reading the Holy Bible, spiritual books and biographies of saints, regular attendance of church mass and spiritual meetings, self-judgment, confession, communion, fasting, invocation, service, benefiting by spiritual friendships and good examples.

Through these spiritual means, his heart is purified, and he becomes inherently strong. If he is faced with war, he struggles and does not stumble. If, however he falls, it will be a light one, and he soon stands up and repents.

### **Energy and Emotion:**

The whole problem of sex centres around the wrong or physical orientation of two aspects: energy and emotion.

Energy, which is an extra bodily heat, is one of the characteristics of the youthful age. If it is not well-oriented it becomes easy for it to destroy the young. Leaders and educators of young people try to have this energy consumed through physical education, trips and various activities in both the intellectual and bodily fields. On the other hand, men of the spirit are interested in exploiting this energy in the field of worship, service, integrity in work, and activities within the church.

As for emotion, young age is one of emotion and rashness, especially if the person in question is naturally emotional and rash. In addition, some young person may be deprived of this emotion at home or within his environment. It may also happen, for some particular reasons, that he is deprived of love, kindness, compassion and emotional interchange. Hence, his problem becomes one of compensating all these in a wrong way.

On the other hand, a person who is emotionally satisfied is less liable to fall from the sexual point of view. Therefore, it is

mandatory that the youth's emotions are satisfied in a sound spiritual way.

The best way to accomplish this is through God's love, a more profound one does not exist. It is a love that when people encountered, they gave up their families, friends, money, position, and everything else, driven by their love for the King, Jesus Christ. Related to the love of God is love for the church, enthusiasm for it, and zeal for the salvation of people's souls, their reaching up for God, and their adherence to Him. Hence the service become a principal factor in the emotional satisfaction of people on a spiritual level that is higher and deeper than the bodily one.

Generally speaking, those who pursue the means of grace, who adhere to God's love, and who are active in the service are the least indulgent in the sexual aspect.

When man's spirituality weakens, sin starts waging its war against him. A mere visit to a patient, sympathising with a grieving person, sitting with children in a class for church education, or sitting with children in an orphanage is enough to fill the heart with sublime feelings that are capable of erasing all thought related to sexual matters. However, it is mandatory that man should continue to do this service in depth and love, and in a spiritual way.

### **What remains after that?**

The life of purity and chastity requires the special assistance of the Holy Spirit. This assistance is acquired through the spiritual way of living and through the constant prayer.

This life requires that man refrain from condemning others, for this condemnation of anyone else causes God's grace to gradually abandon him until he falls and feels that he is too weak to condemn anyone.

Our kind and righteous God, who bestowed chastity upon Augustine, Pelagia, Miriam the Copt and many of the other fallen ones, is capable of bestowing it upon all His people, especially the strugglers and the humbled among them.







## **THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT**

*"You shall not steal."*  
(Ex. 20:15, Deut. 5:19).

*"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God."  
(1 Cor. 6:10)*

# CHAPTER ONE

## WHAT IS THEFT?

### FROM WHOM DO YOU STEAL?

#### **What is Theft?**

Theft is not, in its general sense, the acquisition of someone else's belongings. Thus, when the Lord's disciples felt hungry and plucked some corn in the field, He did not rebuke them. The criticism of the Pharisees centred around one point: that they did that on the Sabbath, (Matt. 12:1-2), which means that it was permitted for a hungry person to pick up some corn on the way and eat it. The law states *"when you come into your neighbour's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure; but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbour's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand; but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbour's standing grain."* (Deut. 23:24-25).

Therefore, theft is not partaking of the belongings of the others, but stealing them; for if you partake of them with the owner's consent and permission, or through his generosity, then your act is not theft.

Theft may take place in camera without the knowledge of the robbed one, such as what embezzlers do, what Judas did when

he used to help himself from the box without the disciples' knowledge (John 12:6), and what robbers do when they break in and steal (Matt. 6:19) while the owners are absent or asleep.

However, if great love, companionship, and friendship exist between you and a friend, and if you need and help yourself to something that belongs to him knowing that he would not object even if he was present at the time, then your act is not considered theft, on condition that you inform him of what you have done and seek his forgiveness.

**Other forms of theft are those committed in secret.** These thefts take the form of deceit, fraud, forgery, and the like. In all these forms, the robbed one is unaware of what is taken from him. To all these forms of theft another sin is added: the sin of lying.

**Theft may also take place openly before the robbed one's eyes and in his hearing, yet without his consent.** Such is the case when someone's money is stolen from him by force, by coercion, or by extortion in what is called "armed robbery" performed by kidnappers, highway robbers, and pirates. These acts may sometimes also be accompanied with injuries to the victims.

**Theft is not only confined to "stealing" something, but it also includes "damage".** He who damages something that belongs to another is actually causing him some loss of his belongings. This is included under the headline of theft

especially when it is performed on purpose. In this case the sin of theft is coupled with that of "non-loving". In general, he who causes damage to someone should repair it or compensate him for it.

A worse case is that of causing deliberate damage. A thief may benefit by stealing in a material way, but he who deliberately damages another's possessions aims at nothing else but to satisfy his hatred.

Included in the above item also is the damage someone causes to public property, as in the case of demonstrations where street lamps, trees, or public transport vehicles are destroyed. This is considered a form of theft of the country's funds or the people's property.

**In general, theft is a form of disrespect for other people's rights and property.**

Theft denotes that the thief is vile and dishonest. It destroys his character in the people's eyes, and calls upon them to beware of him, to despise him, and not to mix up with him. It even makes the thief himself look despicable in his own eyes.

However, we should not cast the same look at it when the matter concerns young children who do not differentiate between personal possessions and the rights of others. They see everything before them as common and simply lying there to be picked up without any sense of committing evil. A child may even help itself to something that does not belong to it, doing it secretly, not because of any feeling on its part of committing theft, but rather out of fear it may be taken away from it.

Through the passage of time and the factor of development, intellectually, psychologically, and educationally, the child starts to comprehend the meaning of private property, to respect the rights of others, and to understand that taking whatever belongs to others will cause him remorse and arouse in him feeling of wrong doing. Then, their act is considered theft.

**Theft may sometimes also be regarded as a form of sickness - a mere psychological sickness that requires treatment, not punishment.** When having this sickness, a thief steals things that he neither needs nor knows how to benefit by. However, he experiences satisfaction in keeping them and taking them away from others. He may be driven to steal by internal motives that are beyond his will-power, he may sometimes cry for committing such a deed, but he is just unable to resist such an impulse.

Such a person is in need of treatment and an investigation of the causes of his sickness and its roots that lie buried in his life-history, in his environment, and his upbringing.

The illicit money acquired by a thief is capable of dissipating the good money that he already has. As the saying goes: "Illicit things take the good ones and dissipate them." Theft is a fire that burns away what the thief himself has. In this situation he resembles someone who has eaten rotten food: as soon as this food reaches his stomach, he throws up the good and bad food together that are inside him.

How beautiful it would be for people to live together in honesty and in mutual trust and confidence, then one would have anything anywhere to find it later where one had left it. One would let the door of one's house open without anyone else helping himself to anything in it. If one forgot his mail or confidential papers somewhere, he would be confident that no one will go through them.

**Theft was regarded as a mean act, despised and hated by people, even before the holy law where God said: "You shall not steal "** This indicates that, by his nature and conscience man has an aversion to it.

When Laban went up to Jacob and accused him saying: "Why did you steal my gods?" (meaning his idols), Jacob felt the repulsiveness of the accusation and answered saying *"With whoever you find your gods, do not let him live."* (Gen. 31:30-32). Thus he condemned the thief to death being undeserved to stay alive. This incident took place before the holy law. The same condemnation may also be found in the story of Joseph and his brothers. When the latter were accused of stealing his cup, they became immensely upset and answered haughtily and loftily, *"Why does my Lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing... With whomever of your servants it is found... let him die."* (Gen. 44:7-9).

**Theft is a sin that is so ashamed of itself that it works in the dark, and a sinner becomes disgusted with it, repudiates it,**

**and tries to cast it away from him.** Thus it is said:

"If the theft demon treads a road, the lying demon will say: take me along with you."

It is hard to find a thief who does not lie to cover up his crime, though he may also lie to be able to accomplish it. He may lie during or before the theft in order to deceive the victim and be able to rob him. Such is the case with cheating in trade. He may also lie to whoever is watching or suspecting him.

Since theft resorts to lying, confessors should pay close attention to this point. Thus whoever confesses a sin of theft should also be asked about its relation to lying.

Two factors add to the burden of the sin of theft:

1. The degree of harm done to the victim.
2. The identity of the victim himself, especially if he is poor and needy, or if the stolen article is a sacred one.

Therefore we have to pose the question:

**From whom do you steal?:**

The poorer and more needy the victim is, the greater the sin is. It is therefore an immensely horrible sin for someone, for instance, to steal an orphan's or a widow's money. That is what led Jesus Christ to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees, saying: "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses. Therefore you shall receive greater condemnation.*" (Matt. 23:14, Mark 12:40).



The degree of seriousness of a theft is not measured by the value of the stolen article but by its value to the person from whom it has been stolen. For instance, if someone stole a tailor's needle or a painter's brush, these two objects might not in themselves be worth anything. However, they are of vital importance to their owners whose work and means of earning a living might be crippled by the theft.

The stolen object may, in itself, have no value, but, to its owner, it may represent a dear memory or be of special importance, thus, losing it inflicts a profound pain upon his heart as it may be irreplaceable .

Stealing from a needy person denotes the non-existence of any sensitivity in the heart of the thief. For instance, usury and pawning applied to a person, who finds it hard even to acquire his daily bread, would be like stealing his own and his children's food. This needy person would not have resorted to borrowing or pawning but for his poverty. Would it be appropriate to apply usury to this person instead of assisting him with a spirit of love?

Usury is a form of theft that is devoid of mercy, which is the reason why God prohibited it as He also prohibited pawning the necessities of life. Thus He said, *If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbour's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down: For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in?*

*And it shall come to pass, when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious." (Ex. 22:25-27).*

*He also said, "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger, or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no usury or interest from him, but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit." (Lev. 25:35-37).*

*He also said, "You shall not charge interest to your brother, interest on money, or food or anything that is lent out at interest." (Deut. 23:19).*

The excess money that a usurer takes from a poor person is an act of stealing his necessary requirements. It is different from the interest paid by banks and financial institutions, which invest the money of depositors, set up projects, and make a profit, for these banks and institutions regard the depositors as partners in their capital and pay them their share of the profit.

If this usury, that is applied to the poor, is regarded as a form of theft, regardless of what the merciless say that it is legal, then what should we say about the obviously horrible theft where a thief breaks into the house of a widow or a poor needy person?!

Despite the fact that we talked much about the wickedness of stealing from the poor, it should not mean that robbing the rich is permissible or of no consequence! No, if robbing the rich

who possess more than they need is a mean crime, then it should even be more so if someone should rob the poor and needy or do them an injustice that would affect their means of living!!

**If robbing common people is a horrible matter, then what about robbing a church or a priest?**

Stealing of sacred things is a serious matter, and robbing altars and churches is unimaginable. That is why churches all over Europe are constantly open and unguarded despite what they contain. Nobody can expect or even imagine that a human being would find it in himself to break into the house of the Lord and steal something. Everything inside there, in God's house, is sacred, and everyone entering it is overcome with humility, awe, and a desire for repentance.

What should we say about those who steal a candle, a book, a parcel, or the like in a church? They have no excuse even if they say that they did it for a blessing! A blessing is not attained through stealing.

And what should we say about someone who steals from the church funds, endowments, or homes, and uses what he steals for himself and his home? It is God's money, the poor's money, and sacred money.

What should we say about those who steal the saints' bodies, bones, and treasures to transfer them stealthily to their churches or countries protesting that it is a blessing?! The body of St. Mark was stolen in the ninth century, and the thieves justified their act before their conscience saying that they took it as a

blessing! How many manuscripts were stolen from monasteries and churches in the name of love of knowledge and understanding! All these are excuses that cannot be justified.

**The most horrible thing of all is: What should we say about a person who steals from God Himself?**

A person steals from God when he refrains from paying tithes, first fruits, and offerings. This matter is expounded in the epistle of Malachi the prophet where it is said, *"Return to Me and I will return to you, " says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings... Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, " says the Lord of hosts."* (Mal. 3:7-10).

This money that we steal from God, that belongs to the poor yet we keep to ourselves and not give to its rightful owners, the needy ones, is unrighteous money about which the Lord says: *"Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon."* (Luke 16:9). The reference here is to the money that we keep to ourselves though we do not own. It belongs to the poor whom we have done injustice to by not giving them that which is due to them. Therefore, it is unrighteous money that we should return to its owners who are then won over as our friends who pray for us.

In the same way that we steal from God, the Church's and the poor people's money, so we do steal also time from Him.

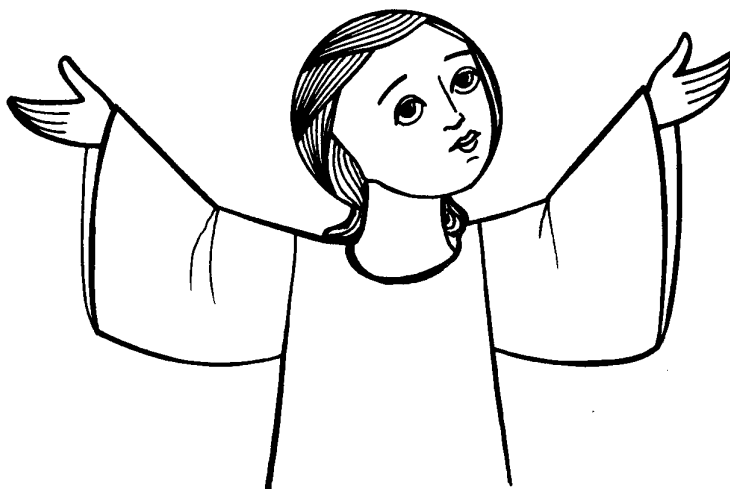
There is for God, in our lives, a certain time that we steal from Him and which we spend in other pursuits. For Example:

**(a) The day of the Lord:** The Lord has a certain day of the week that belongs to Him and not to us. We do not have the right to use it in any way we wish, for it should be devoted to God's sincerity and worship. If we spent it otherwise, we would be stealing God's day from Him.

Another point is that, in Egypt, Christians employees are given two hours off every Sunday morning (from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.) in order to give them the chance to attend mass. If a Christian employee did not go to Church on Sunday morning but spent those two hours at home doing some other business of his choosing, he would be stealing that time kept aside for God.

**(b) Worship time:** In the same way that God has a day of the week, he also has certain times every day which should be devoted to prayer, meditation, invocations, readings in the Holy Bible and religious books, attending religious meetings, and service. If worldly affairs took over our lives leaving us no chance for worship, we would be robbing God of His time. In the same way that God is entitled to the first fruits of our money, so is He entitled to the first periods of our time. That is what the psalm chanter means when he says: "*O God, You are my God,. early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You.*" (Ps. 63:1). God Himself said, "*Those who seek me diligently will find me.*" (Prov. 8:17). If we started every morning without God and busied ourselves with things other than His worship, we would be robbing Him of the first periods of that time which due to Him.

(c) **God's seasonal and feast days:** God has other times that should be devoted to Him on certain seasonal days; e.g. Passion Week through which our priests devote themselves to prayers, hymns, and readings in Church; the evenings of the Coptic month of Keyahk which were devoted to glorification and praises; feasts and the other holy days. We should, at all these times, consecrate our time to the Lord and not rob Him of it.



## **CHAPTER TWO SLIGHT THEFTS**

### **What is a thief?**

A thief is not just the person who digs a hole in the wall, breaks into a house in the absence of its owners, or picks people's pockets, for the meaning of the word theft may expand so much as to include a lot of those whose names are honoured, and a lot of acts that go by false names other than theft.

This sin may start with small thefts that seem to be trivial, since, those committing them do not sense their guilt. They may even do so shamelessly before the people.

### **Thefts within the scope of children and married couples:**

A child may take things such as food and toys that belong to someone else without their knowledge. He may not realise in the beginning that it is an act of theft. However, when he grows up, he realises it and may abandon or go on with it fully realising his guilt. This thieving practice then increases gradually when he helps himself stealthily, at play or at school, to things that belong to his friends and colleagues.

### **This age bracket imposes upon us two things to do:**

1. that we do not deprive the child in such a way as to make him steal things in secret, and
2. that we accustom him to be so frank as to always reveal what he takes in secret, without our punishing him for it, or retrieving the stolen thing from him except when necessary, all this while giving him the suitable guidance whenever necessary.

Theft may take place between married couples, and it may be mixed up also with lying. Thus, a husband may conceal or reduce the true amount of his income when telling his wife about it, and the wife may conceal from her husband the true amount of her expenditures, mostly adding to them.

The treatment of this matter requires an atmosphere of frankness, understanding, and cooperation, and a feeling that whatever belongs to the husband belongs also to the wife, and whatever the wife owns is also the property of her husband. This should be accompanied with a mutual understanding of both parties' points of view as regards requirements and capabilities.

### **Forms of theft that may appear minor:**

Many employees may sometimes use the blank stationery that belongs to the business to do their own private work. This stationery, however cheap its price is, is not due to them. This behaviour is inappropriate. The same also applies to using other articles.



Some higher employees use their official cars for their own private transportation. In so doing, they make the State pay for the gas, the car depreciation, and the driver's wages, all of which being inappropriate, since it is they who are using the cars. Some of them even exploit the workers by making them serve them personally. All this may strangely seem so slight that even the "honourable" ones do it without experiencing any sense of guilt.

This same category includes those who board a bus or a tram-car without paying the fare protesting that the conductor was too busy to ask for it. In the same way, a train passenger may occupy a seat in a higher class section of the train without paying the difference.

The stricter the person is in minor matters, the more he/she indicates how sensitive his/her conscience is.

### **Forgetfulness:**

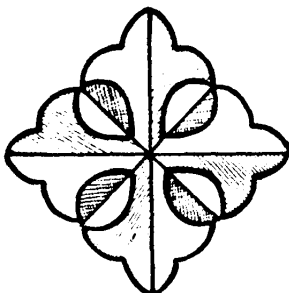
Many trivial thefts occur through forgetfulness, especially when one borrows something and forgets to return it to its owner who in turn forgets to ask for it. This borrowed thing may remain in your constant possession, as if it were yours, though you have no right to it.

You may go into a friend's library, find a book that you like and ask for it that you may read and return it. The book may stay so long in your possession that you forget who it belongs to especially that it may not carry the name of its owner. The latter, in turn, may have forgotten the one who has borrowed the book, thus losing it. In the meantime the book remains in

your unlawful possession. This too is included in the category of unpremeditated thefts. Many people lose their books and pens in this way.

You may want to write something in a rush, but you find that you have no pen. You borrow a pen from someone, write what you want, then unintentionally and by force of habit you put it into your pocket. There it lies forgotten by you and by its owner.

Therefore you should either have a good memory, keep a record of what you take from people, or keep in the book a slip of paper carrying the name of the owner. If you are already in one of those situations, reveal it to your friends and acquaintances telling them that you have a certain book which you do not know the owner of, or that you have taken a pen from someone and that you still have it. Such notifications may reveal the identity of the owner.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEFT IN COMMERCE**

Many a time one's conscience becomes so loose in commercial dealings that it is said it may swallow a camel. A merchant of this sort imagines that this is a form of skill and art that brings him the utmost profit. The following examples illustrate this theft in commerce:

#### **1. Theft through cheating:**

An example of this is selling a damaged object as if it were sound and taking advantage of the buyer not noticing the damage. How noble it would be for a seller to draw the attention of the buyer to the defect or damage in the article. In so doing, he would win respect and confidence of those dealing with him.

Some may say that then he would sell nothing. Not so, for he will sell his goods at a price commensurate with the defect in them. It would be a lesser price, but the money would be legitimate and blessed.

What would you say if a merchant, for instance, sold you fruits or vegetables, then put a large quantity of damaged, Corrupt or unripe products in the bottom of the bag and covered it with a few chosen ones of excellent quality? You would be deceived,

would pay the price, and would not discover the trick until you went home! You would then realise that the merchant was dishonest. This category may include selling of damaged articles as sound ones, selling of used articles as new ones, and agreeing to sell a certain brand but delivering one of a lesser quality or value.

**Another form of cheating is selling something under brand name of another.** An example of this is when merchant sells you synthetic as natural silk, since you are no expert on silk and its varieties, or a gold coated metal as pure gold and at the price of the latter. False jewellery and antiques are also included in this category. A merchant may also sell you a fountain pen as a Parker pen while it is only an imitation.

**All that cheating is a form of theft coupled with lying.** In committing it a seller receives a price that his merchandise is not worth, and the difference in price is unlawful money stolen from the buyer. What makes this sin more horrible is that it is accompanied with false propaganda to deceive the buyer.

**A clear and obvious type of cheating is the use of incorrect measures, weights and scales.**

In this type, cheating does not take place in the kind or quality of the merchandise but in its quantity, since the buyer receives a quantity that is less than what is due to him.

## **2. Theft through greed and price increase:**

Unreasonable price increases are included in theft because it is a form of embezzlement of the buyer's money. God allows a merchant to make a reasonable profit, but an exorbitant profit that is full of greed and void of mercy is not approved by any religion.

**This type of theft may occur through monopoly, where a merchant is the sole manufacturer or importer of the merchandise, or the sole agent authorised to sell it.** In this case he may impose exorbitant prices, thus exploiting the buyer's need and stealing money from the people who are compelled to buy from him.

**This theft may also occur in the form of a black market.** A merchant may store the merchandise until it becomes unavailable on the market, or buy it and store it until the other outlets are empty of it, then he offers it for sale at an exorbitant price, exploiting the buyers' need and embezzling their money.

These are forms of theft performed through exploitation. The merchant in this case is the sole seller, the buyer is in need, and time favours the seller who imposes a certain price, forces the buyer to pay it and makes an exorbitant profit which is then a form of theft.

## **3. Thefts through economic manoeuvring:**

There are other practices, such as market manoeuvring, which are considered forms of theft. Thus speculation practiced by

merchants, who raise or lower prices, may lead to the bankruptcy of small traders whose money is embezzled by big speculators: e.g. what used formerly to take place in the cotton market.

Another example of theft in trade is the practice of some banks, Corporations, or individuals of declaring a premeditated and intentional bankruptcy whereby all the investors' money is lost.

Further, the illusory economic projects whereby people's money is amassed through tempting advertisements which prove later on to be a fraudulent means of theft.

#### **4. Thefts committed by buyers:**

A thief in sales may be the buyer not the seller. This takes place when the buyer resorts to excessive bargaining, especially with poor sellers.

Sometimes a merchant is poor and in dire need to sell his merchandise at any price in order to get his daily bread, or because he has a sick person at home. When some dire necessity compels him to act in this way, he sells what he has at any price mindless of whether he gains or loses.

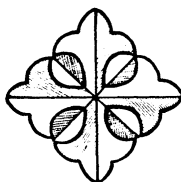
A buyer may exploit a merchant's need and impose upon him a price that does not coincide with the value of what he wants to buy nor with the seller's efforts and his right to a legitimate profit. It is possible that the merchant may accept the transaction out of necessity, which acceptance may put the buyer's conscience to rest. However, this is an injustice done to the merchant who is actually robbed of his earnings.

The theft may not have led to the poor merchant assuming any loss in what he sells, but he may have made a very small amount of profit which is not enough to feed him and his family. This situation is brought about by the instance of the buyer who robs the seller of his profit, and yet who goes away with an untroubled conscience and a happy heart. Thus it is well said in the saying that: "A concealed charity lies in buying & selling."

One of the fathers once said: "When you go to buy something, do not be stringent in setting the price as the laymen do. Whatever is said to you about the article, increase its price a little and take it."

Many of the bargains conducted with poor merchants indicate the cruelty of the buyer's heart.

A poor merchant deserves your charity, even if you do not buy anything from him. Therefore, the least you can do to him is to offer him this charity through buying from him without hurting his feelings. Be assured that the poor merchant's invocation for you is more valuable than the difference in price.



## CHAPTER FOUR INJUSTICE AND UNPAID LABOUR

### 1. Unpaid labor and low wages:

#### **Unpaid labour is a form of theft.**

If someone uses another to do him such unpaid work, he will be stealing his wages. If he hires him and pays him very low wages below the borderline of sustenance, he will be stealing his effort and labor.

For example, if a servant works for you, but you do not pay him enough for his lodging, his food, his children's expenses, you will then be stealing his labor and actually killing him.

God took a stand against unpaid labor during the days of the Pharaohs and said: *"I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters."* (Ex. 3:7).

In the same way, Saint James, the apostle, says about low wages: *"Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you keep back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath ."* (James 5:4).



## **2. Suspension of rights, or wasting them:**

Unpaid wages or delays in paying them are part of unpaid labor and low wages. In this connection God says: *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren, or one of the aliens who are in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor, and has set his heart upon it, lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you."* (Deut 24:14-15).

Included in this category is the director who delays an employee's raise or promotion if the latter deserves it. In this case the director is stealing the employee's earning through depriving him of his rights. It is no excuse for him that he has not pocketed the employee's earnings but has left it for the country's budget. Does the poor employee's heart not scream against the director, saying, "You have done me an injustice. You have eaten up my earnings!!" The same applies in the case of an employee who works some hours more than his regular time, yet his manager denies him the overtime he deserves. This also is robbing him of his earnings.

The same applies to a director who deducts money from an employee's earnings without any justification. It is true that it is a director's right to penalise his employees if they commit something that justifies a deduction from their salaries. However, if the penalty has no justification, the director will then have committed the sin of theft.

Therefore, theft is not only an act of stealing people's money for oneself, but it also includes denying the right of someone, whether it is to keep it for oneself or for someone else.

Hence, an injustice committed in money matters is a form of theft. An illustration of this is what took place with Zacchaeus, the tax collector who said: *"...and if I have taken any thing from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."* (Luke 19:8). Zacchaeus did not openly steal, but through defamation and denouncement, he oppressed the people, who thus lost their rights. Such an act falls within the scope of theft.

The same thing also applies to a tax collector who is not just. If he exaggerates in assessing someone's taxes he will be robbing that person of his money. On the other hand, if he imposes upon him an amount that is less than he should pay, he will be robbing the State of its dues. In both cases, he does not take anything for himself, but he robs one party of a certain amount of money that he hands over to the other. Therefore, such an employee should be very fair in his assessment and should not favour any party at the expense of another.

### **3. Bribery:**

Bribery also is a form of theft, for it is an unmerited embezzlement of people's money. An employee should perform his work without charging the public anything in return for his services for which he receives a salary. If, however, he receives a bribe, then it is clearly committing theft. This is more so if this bribery takes the form of an imposed

tribute where such an employee does not serve anyone without first receiving a certain bribe.

As for the bribery an employee receives to exempt someone from a duty imposed upon him by the State, it means that he is actually committing two thefts: he is stealing that person's money by receiving a bribe from him, and he is stealing the State's money by wasting the rights due to it from that person. The person paying the bribe is also committing an act of theft since he is robbing the State of its dues from which the bribed employee has exempted him.

Bribery is not relieved of its liability when it takes up a name that is different from its disgraceful one. Thus it may assume the form of a gift, which in truth it is not, for gifts are exchanged among lovers and friends without any condition attached that a certain deed be performed in return.

Bribery does not include a tip that is given to a porter or a servant if it takes the form of charity or assistance offered in love to a poor person who is not required to break the law in return.

#### **4. Dishonesty at work:**

In the same way as the employer robs an employee or a labourer through corvee, by depriving him of his rights, his raises, or promotion, or by inflicting unjust punishments upon him, the labourer or the employee may rob his employer in several ways, such as:

**(a) Stealing time:**

Working time does not belong to the employee but to the employer who pays him for it. Therefore, if an employee exploits working time in attending to his/her own personal affairs, in spending it having fun with his/her fellow workers, or in taking illegal casual or sick leaves, he/she will be stealing this working time or the pay he/she receives for it.

**(b) Dishonesty:**

An employee is paid for the time he spends doing a certain job. If, however, he neglects his work, does not perform it as honestly, diligently and skilfully as he should, does not accomplish the service required of him but evades it in every possible way, postponing it carelessly, or shuns it by referring it to someone else; he will be stealing the pay due to him for performing the job, since, he actually breaks the agreement that requires him to work in return for his pay.

**(c) Destruction of tools:**

We often notice that a worker who owns a tool takes very good care of it. However, if he is a hired hand who uses his employer's tools, he often neglects them and does not care if they become damaged, though damaging such tools is a form of theft where the employer's money is stolen. This is to be noticed when we compare the case of a taxi driver who owns his own taxi and another who works for a pay on someone else's car.

## **5. Theft in other forms of injustice:**

**There are many forms of injustice that fall within the scope of theft. Some of them are:**

### **(a) Wrongful agreements:**

An agreement may be concluded between two parties whereby one is wronged and the other is put in a position where he can rob the first. An example of this is what takes place sometimes in contractual work which leads one to be exploited by the other party.

### **(b) Exploitation of authority:**

Someone may sometimes exploit his authority over someone else and compel him to do things that involve injustice and theft, in the same way as King Ahab did when he wanted to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite (1Kin. 21), and tithe-collectors did when they robbed people and coerced them. Under the pressure of authority, and in the presence of the factor of threats, man may accept something despite the fact that it includes an obvious form of robbery and injustice.

### **(c) Circumventing the law:**

Certain people use their intelligence and resourcefulness to circumvent the law. In this way, they amass money for themselves in an unlawful way, or evade their obligations towards the State or towards each other, their conscience being rendered dormant by their worldly delight at acquiring a fleeting gain.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THEFT IN DEALINGS AND TRANSACTIONS

Theft is not confined to plunder, robbery, and abduction, for it also becomes apparent in dealings and transactions such as:

#### 1. Denial of a trust, or of something found:

If someone entrusted a friend with something, then the latter denied receiving it or refused to return it, that friend would be a thief. This applies also to a person who refuses to return something he has borrowed, or to repay a loan, a mortgage, or a debt. About such acts the holy law says:

*"If a person sins and commits a trespass against the Lord by lying to his neighbour about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbour, or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it.. because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found."(Lev. 6:2-4).*

Theft particularly includes, not only denying a trust or something found and not returning it, but also damaging or using it.

## **2. Letting accounts stand uncorrected:**

Included in theft is the case where two people have joint financial dealings. One of them may discover a mistake in his favour increasing his financial share. He accepts it and does not correct it, though he should have returned the extra money which he has unrightfully taken.

For instance, a boy may buy something, hands the seller a bill, and receives his change. How great his honesty would be if he counted the change, discovered that he had received more than was due to him, returned to the seller, and gave him back the extra change he had wrongfully received.

## **3. Gambling and Betting:**

Money won from someone through gambling is illicit as it is unjustly received. So also are all those tricks used to cheat children out of their money.

## **4. Participating in Theft:**

One is regarded as an accomplice in a crime when one joins a thief in the act or "*Whoever is a partner with a thief.*" (Prov. 29:24). The same applies to whoever harbours or directly encourages him, or whoever justifies his act or eases his sense of guilt.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **STEALING IDEAS AND SECRETS**

#### **(PLAGIARISM)**

#### **Types of thefts:**

Stealing ideas means that someone takes the idea of someone else and ascribes it to himself, or quotes something without referring it to its originator as if it belonged to himself.

An example of this is one who steals someone else's piece of music and inserts it within his own composition as if it were all his, or one who steals a plot, the concept of an invention, or the thoughts for a book. In literature, there is a well-known chapter about "poetic plagiarism." Some writings are literally plagiarised, while others are slightly modified.

Some may try to cover up their plagiarism by calling it "adoption" or "learning", though what they are supposed to do is mention the reference quoted.

Hence, laws have been issued to uphold copyrights, and the rights of publishers, printers, inventors, etc.



## **Cheating in Examinations:**

In the same way as one steals an invention that belongs to someone else, one may steal a degree for oneself, or someone else's ideas and attributes them to himself.

Cheating falls under the domain of plagiarism as does helping others to cheat, for an accomplice is the same as the wrong-doer.

It is to no avail that some try to include helping others to cheat within the scope of mercy or cooperation, for the methods and procedures of morality must be as good and moral as it, in itself, is. The means does not justify the end.

If it was said that the act had taken place by the supervisor himself by his permission, we would respond saying that he had not the right to do so, and that he had, through his act, made himself liable to be prosecuted.

Cheating is not a mere act of theft, for it rather includes many other sins.

## **Stealing Secrets:**

One may steal someone else's secrets through spying or eavesdropping where one hears things he has no right to hear. One may also read someone else's letters or notes without the latter's knowledge.

One is supposed to respect the secrets of others and never allow oneself to try to know them. Stealing of secrets is the lowest

form of theft, for they pertain to the person himself and not to his belongings.

It is nobody's right to read, in secret, someone else's letters, even those of one's sons. However, if upbringing sometimes forces one to do it, one has to ask the son's permission beforehand. However, a father may, through love, convince his son to voluntarily tell him his secrets for the purpose of consultation and getting the father's advice. However, it is improper to do it in secret.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### OTHER TYPES OF STEALING

There are other types of stealing beyond what we have mentioned, the most important of which are stealing of countries, and stealing of souls. Stealing of countries is done through occupation and colonialism, while stealing of souls is accomplished by heretics and the followers of strange religious sects. Jesus Christ referred to the latter as: *"All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers."* (John 10:8).

About these thieves and robbers, Gamaliel, the doctor of law, said: *"For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed."* (Acts. 5:36-37).

**These are the innovators who steal souls..**

Such were the followers of Arius and Nestorius, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the other innovators who took away the church

children from their embrace only to lead them astray as they themselves had been led astray before them.

The Bible called upon us to beware of them saying:

*"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him not into your house, nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (2 John 10, 11).*



## CHAPTER EIGHT MOTIVES FOR STEALING AND THEIR TREATMENT

### **Motives for Stealing:**

Lust, greed, love of money, and possessiveness, as well as lack of love for the others, disrespect for their rights, injustice, cruelty, and mercilessness are all reasons and motives for stealing.

The reason for stealing may be a meanness that has been given rise to, through heredity, imitation, or corrupt upbringing.

Poverty, indigence, and destitution may also lead to stealing.

Stealing may be a sickness, a habit, or a pleasure in a lowly soul. Hence what Solomon said: *"Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."* (Prov. 9:17).

Theft, when committed by the rich who are not in need, is more hideous. It may be a form of sickness, or an insatiable greed, destitution, and love of money. Thus the Wiseman said: *"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full"* (Eccl. 1: 7).

The rich are not innocent of the theft committed by the needy poor, for maybe, it is the miserliness of the rich and the destitution of the poor person that lead the latter to it. Theft also

may be a form of vindictiveness that the poor have against the rich.

However, theft committed by the poor cannot be justified by their need. Thus the Bible says: *"People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore seven fold,. he may have to give up all the substance of his house."* (Prov. 6:30-31).

### **Treatment:**

The first treatment is planting into one's soul love for honesty and elevating it above the low baseness of stealing.

People must also accustom themselves to loving others and respecting their rights. If people loved each other, they would take care of each other's possessions and would never betray each other. Even if one found something that another had lost, one would think with a sense of love and with the spirit of the loser. He would try hard to identify the latter and give him what belonged to him.

People should know that illicit money is a fire that eats up the licit as well.

The poor should get used to a life of contentment, and people should all become accustomed to the pleasure of making an honest profit and to the beauty of earning a living by working hard. Those who enjoy a life of plenty should be generous and lavish and not let others be in dire need.

Young people should stay away from the life of luxury, entertainment, lavishness and frivolity which requires a lot of

spending and, in particular, relationships with women and late parties of drinking, buffoonery, and gambling. They may not afford the expense and may slide into the pit of stealing either by forcing their parents and families into unbearable situations, or by seeking to get unlawful money.

### **Repentance for Stealing:**

It is not enough that a person confesses that he has stolen and has the priest read his absolution, for he has to do his best to return or make up for what he has stolen, though in camera and in secret.

In the Old Testament it was not enough for one to return what one had stolen. In many instances, one had to double it several times.

In the Book of Leviticus we read that a person *"shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted."* (Lev. 6:4)

In the book of Exodus we read that *"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it, or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep."* (Ex. 22: 1)

Refer also to (Exodus 22:7,8 ) and Proverbs (6:30-31).

In his repentance, Zacchaeus declares, *"If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."* (Luke 19:8).

If a thief cannot return all these doubles, he should at least return the stolen object. If he is ashamed to do so, he has to choose a way that will not reveal his identity.

## **THE NINTH COMMANDMENT**

### **YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS**

***"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour."***

(Ex 20:16 - Deut 5:20)

***"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."***

(Prov. 12:22)

***"You shall not steal.. nor lie to one another."***

(Lev. 19:11)

***"Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour."***

(Eph. 4:25)



## TYPES OF LIES

A false witness is a lie, and lying is vile. It indicates fear and a personality weakness. A truthful person, on the other hand, is courageous and clearly shoulders the responsibility of his actions.

Lying is an easy solution resorted to by the weak and non intelligent. Most often it is exposed, leading the liar towards a cover up using another lie. Thus he goes from one lie to another in an endless vicious circle.

Nobody trusts the words of a liar. Even when he tells the truth, people do not believe him. He may resort to swearing to prove the truth of what he says, but people even doubt his oaths, for his words have simply lost their authenticity.

Lying is a double sin that most often hides behind it another sin. It is a cover up for a previous sin, or a ruse of a future one.

Therefore a confessor should ask a penitent, who admits that he has lied, about the other sin that drove him to lying.

The Devil is the first liar. He lied to our first foreparents when he told them through the serpent: *"You will not surely die."*

(Gen. 3:4). His motive for lying was his envy of them and his desire to destroy them. God said about the Devil:

*"He is a liar, and the father of it."* (John 8:44). Therefore a liar is actually the devil's son.

### **Lying may be direct or indirect.**

Thus, the bearer of lies is himself a liar and an accomplice who shares in and perpetuates lies. Under the same heading fall those who circulate false rumours. Some simple-minded people believe everything they hear and circulate it as a fact without examining and ascertaining it. We cannot, in truth, call this simple-mindedness in its true sense; for Christian simplicity ought to be wise. Thus Jesus Christ said: *"Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."* (Matt. 10:16), i.e. simple (harmless), and wise.

Therefore, our advice to every one of those people is: "Do not believe everything that is said." Moreover, "Do not judge without investigation." If we were living in an ideal world, we would believe everything said. However, since lying exists in our world, it is our duty to investigate and verify before we believe. That is why the Bible, in both the Old (Deut. 17:6) and the New Testaments (2 Cor. 13:1 and Matt. 18:16), stipulates that there be witnesses to the facts. It keeps repeating and emphasising the following important principle:

"By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

A sole witness to a piece of news, or its sole bearer, should not be taken as a proven source, for he may be ignorant of the truth of the matter, have no sure and certified knowledge of what he says, be an exaggerator, have wrongly heard the news, have doubtful sources from which he got the faulty news, have personal reasons that force him to suppress facts or to plot against and sow dissension among people, or have a personal motive making him wish to hurt someone in particular. Thus the Bible says: *"Let the lying lips be put to silence. which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous."* (Ps. 31:18). The speaker may not be an enemy, for he may be a joker who loves to say things as a joke in order to see how it will affect others.

It is not right for someone to suspect the behaviour of a friend, or of an enemy at that, just because of what he has heard about them, without careful investigation into it.

Some may say that they have heard the same stories, not from one source only but from many. My answer to this is that we should not pass judgments just by listening and without investigation even if the sources were many, for many a time, the words of the many had the same mistaken source. Many a time also, a large number of people would conspire to tell a joint lie, as did Joseph's brothers who untruthfully informed their father that *"a wild beast has devoured him."* (Gen. 37:33).

Therefore it is not right to be content with the words of several witnesses, for they have to be righteous and sure of what they say.

The reason for what I am saying is that many witnessed falsely against saints, in the same way as the chief priests "*sought false testimony against Jesus.*" (Matt. 26:59).

### **False Witnesses Against Saints:**

Many people witnessed falsely against Saint Stephen, the archdeacon, when the Jews wanted to kill him:

*"They set up false witnesses who said.. This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place. (Acts 6:13).*

Queen Jezebel brought forward false witnesses against Naboth the Jezreelite to say: "*Nabath has blasphemed God and the King!*" Thus, by using this device "*they took him outside the city and stoned him.*" (1Kin. 21:13).

Two elders witnesses falsely using bad words against the chaste Susanna, and Paul, the apostle, had many people witnessing falsely against him to the extent that he described his own service as done "*by evil report and good report.*" (2 Cor 6:8). He meant by his that "evil report" had sometimes been rumoured about him.

Time does not permit us here to cite all the false witnesses against the saints: The apostolic Saint Athanasius who was falsely accused of adultery and murder, Saints Ephram the Syrian, Maccarius the Great, and Marina who were accused of adultery, and Saint George who was accused of being a sorcerer when he drank poison without being hurt by it.

Therefore, it is not right for a person to lend his ear to false accusations as is the case referred to by the poet who said:

Lies influenced him, and falsehood engulfed him.

What a parrot he is, his mind lying in his ears.

The commandment stating that "You shall not bear false witness..." applies to the listener as well as to the speaker, for he who listens to and accepts lies encourages the liar to continue lying and the insincere evil-doers to surround him. Two people participate in such a sin: the speaker and the receiver of lies. The Bible says in this connection: *"If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked."* (Prov. 29:12). Church laws have thus made it a condition that a priest should not be "a hearer."

Many are the accusations that are all lies, intrigues, and slander, for the evil ones have left nothing for the virtuous. It so happens that sometimes an evil person may plot an accusation against a saintly one in such a way that the latter cannot escape it or defend himself. This accusation is worked out in such a strange way as befit the "wisdom" of the devil in plotting evil.

### **How words evolve on their way to the listener:**

If word conveyance is a sin and causes problems, the least harmful of those conveying words are those who do it accurately, in the same way as an honest recorder does in conveying everything without adding anything to it.

Yet there are those who take the words, add to them their own opinions, deductions, and claims as to the intention and purpose of the speaker, and present them all to someone else as the direct words spoken by whoever they listened to!!

Look at the Nile water in flood when it is brown in colour because of a large amount of silt it carries. This brown, silt-laden water was once clear water falling from the sky on the mountains of Abyssinia. However, throughout its trip, it eroded silt from the rocks and got mixed up with mud until it reached you in this form. Such are the news that come to you, saturated with mud, after probably being pure and clear at their source. The difference between them and the Nile water is that the mud carried by the latter is useful for the land, while the mud added by people corrupts relationships.

Many of the news that come your way are very different from the actual happenings. The following is an example of this:

One tells another: Haven't you heard? Such and such have happened to Mr. X. The listener responds, saying: It must have made him very angry. The first speaker says: But of course, he must have been very upset. The news is carried to a third party who is told: Mr. X became very upset when such and such happened to him. The third party answers: It is impossible that he should only become upset. He will certainly seek revenge. A fourth party receives the news that Mr. X will avenge himself. He says: As far as I know his true nature, he will certainly be preparing a scheme to avenge himself.

The news reaches a fifth party who says: He may send a letter to his department accusing him of certain things. A sixth party

responds to this, saying: it is not beyond him to say, for instance, that he is a communist. The news reaches party number seven who goes to the person in question to say to him: Beware. So and So sent a letter to your department accusing you of being a communist.

This whole episode may take place though, meantime, the party in question actually became angry, then rid himself of his anger and put an end to the whole matter by forgiving his wrongdoer. On the other hand, he might have taken the matter simply without getting upset by it.

Thus someone may come to you to say, "I am angry with you." When you ask for the reason, you find out that some untruthful statements have reached him. Would that person, instead of getting angry, have firstly come to ask, "Is it true that such and such have taken place?" However this is better than the other who listens to some intriguing words, becomes angry, keeps the matter to himself, and gets worked up without the other party being aware of it.

However, there is that other type of person who is accused, does not defend himself, is innocent, and whose silence is not an indication that he is guilty.

It maybe in someone's nature not to defend oneself, as was the case of Joseph the righteous or it may only be one's modesty or shyness. It may also be that proving one's innocence may lead to the revelation of some secrets that need to be concealed, or may incriminate someone else or reveal one's mistakes, which is something that is undesired. Proving one's innocence may

bring about other problems caused by the spiteful and the accusers. Sometimes evil appears to be cruel, frightening and despotic, and the speechless one may have left the matter of defence in God's hands and not in his own. One may also be unaware of what is being spun against one.

*"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. "* (Prov. 17:15).

Someone may say that the condemnation of an innocent person is unjust and a lie, but what is the sin committed by the one who "justifies the wicked," and, is not his act, one of love and sympathy? In order to clarify this point I hereby cite the following example:

A young man asks a girl's hand in marriage. You know that he is evil and troublesome. If your opinion is sought and you commend that young man, you will be ruining the poor girl's future, and your behaviour will be subject to the Lord's words: "He that justifies the wicked.. is abomination to the Lord."

In the above case, the one who justifies the wicked is a false witness.

Another example is when you recommend a poor person to fill a vacancy at your friend's business although he is inefficient or dishonest and will definitely disrupt the work.

By justifying and recommending that person to your friend you become a false witness and you betray your friend. Your kindness to a poor person does not absolve you.



**This leads us to another branch of the sin of lying:**

**Flattery and Favouritism:**

Excessive and false commendation is outright lying that often hurts and deceives the person concerned. Many upstarts attain their goals in this easy way.

What makes this sin more abominable is the hypocrisy of the upstart who commends a person when facing him and criticises him in his absence.

Some may flatter the family of a dead person thus paying the latter so many compliments that those attending become weary and lose faith in the eulogy.

**Other Forms of Lying:**

One well-known form of lying is "half-truths." In this case, the speaker conceals the other side of the truth that may reverse the situation. An example of this is the disclosure of persons' weak points and the concealment of his good ones thus presenting a distorted image that is completely opposite to the actual one.

Another example is bad faith and wrong interpretation.

One example of lying is excessive exaggeration, and another is flattery.

I hope to return to these topics in my book about "Silence and Speech."

## **Factors that Augment the Abomination of Lying:**

The greater the personality of the liar and the more he is trustworthy to the point that his words are believed without examination, the more abominable is the sin of lying. Also, the higher the position of the person lied to, the more abominable is the lie. This is the same as happened when Joseph's brothers lied to their father, the same as when someone lies to one's confessor, and the same as Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit and the Lord struck them dead. (Acts 5:3-4).

Of the examples of lying to God are false prophets, fake christs, and false prophets who attribute to God things He has not said to them. God, for example said to such: *"Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken."* (Ezek. 13:7), and about false prophets He said: *"... the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name."* (Jer. 23:25). The Bible also refers to: *"False apostles."* (Rev 2:2), to *"Lying wonders."* (2 Thess. 2:9), and to *"The diviners envision lies."* (Zech. 10:2)

## **Lying: Reasons and Treatment:**

Some think that lying saves, and so they resort to it to conceal a certain sin. Our advice to them is to resort to proper methods since the rope of lying is short and is mostly revealed.

We also say that you should not do that thing which you are afraid may be revealed. If you make up your mind to be truthful you will be spared a lot of sins.

Man may be driven to lie by embarrassment, fear, or the questioner's insistence. Our advice here is that silence is better than lying. Therefore, keep silent, change the course of the conversation, apologise for not answering, tell the truth as far as you can, or speak up frankly and bravely defending your position or apologising for your mistake.

Arrogance may be the cause of lying as a means to conceal one's ignorance. However, we say that there is no harm in someone saying at times, "I don't know."

The reasons for lying may be the exigencies of a certain profession as when a lawyer defends a culprit or a doctor deceives a patient. What we are looking for is an honest lawyer who does not undertake the defence of an accused person unless he is sure of his innocence. However, if the accused is guilty, he explains the extenuating circumstances without resorting to lying.

The doctor is also noted to be taking care of the patient's body and his worldly life, and as such, he may deceive the patient who is at the threshold of eternity and make him lose the chance to repent. However, if frankness may cause some cases to deteriorate, we advise the doctor to be judicious in his attitude, though he should not lie and should not also speak with a killing or upsetting frankness. The situation requires diplomacy, courtesy, optimistic words, and a caution that does not inspire despair. At this point we should deal with the following important question:

**Does the concealment of certain facts constitute a form of lying?**

No, for man has secrets that he is entitled to conceal, and he is entrusted with some other people's secrets that it is his duty to keep intact. There are certain matters that it is harmful to make public unless those in authority divulge them at the appropriate time. There are confessions that should remain concealed, facts should better remain unknown, and spiritual mysteries that should remain concealed.

Therefore, it is your privilege to conceal certain facts. You may sometimes be frank and say to the inquirer, "Allow me not to answer this question," or just elude the answer.





## **THE TENTH COMMANDMENT**

### **DO NOT COVET WHAT IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S**

*"You shall not covet your neighbour's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbour's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's. "*

**(Deut. 5:21) and (Ex. 20:17).**

## THE SERIOUSNESS OF LUST AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The statement "You shall not covet." reveals to us an aspect of beauty in the law of the Old Testament. This sublime law was not understood by people because their minds were covered with a veil. Believe me, when Jesus Christ said "*I did not come to destroy, but to fulfil,*" (Matt. 5:17), part of what he intended was to complete people's understanding of the law.

The commandment, that "*whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matt. 5:28), has its roots in the Old Testament law where God said, "Neither shall you desire your neighbour's wife.

Through the commandment "*You shall not covet,* " God penetrated sins to their roots in order to uproot them. Adultery begins with the bodily lust, stealing with the lust to possess or the lust for money, lying with the lust for justification or plotting for something and murder with the lust for revenge or some other lust leading to it. If man fights lust and conquers it, he will have conquered all sins. How beautiful is the sage's statement:

"Rejoice, not for a lust attained, but for a lust subdued. It is an insult calling someone "lustful", for it means that one is led on by one's lusts.

The best way, when you confront lust, is to escape from it instead of engaging it in a struggle where you may be defeated, or where, before scoring a victory, your heart becomes polluted with lust. Profit by the words of the apostle who said, "*Flee also youthful lusts.*" (2 Tim. 2:22).

Since lust does not give up until it is fulfilled, escaping from it is the better way. Why should you engage it in a struggle or discussion? The more space you give it, the more slack you allow it, and the more you communicate with it, the stronger it becomes, and from the communication stage it moves on to excitement, to inflammation and to fulfilment.

You gradually move on from thinking about it, to getting attached to it, to being led by it, to fulfilling it, to repeating it, to getting crazy about it, and to being enslaved by it.

People may resort to wrongful ways to fulfil their lusts: to lying, deceit, trickery, or may be more than that.

### **Disadvantages of satisfying an insatiable lust:**

When a person becomes tired of a lust, he is deceived into saying: It is better to satisfy this lust so that I may quell this longing and get relief!!

Lust is never satisfied. How profound the words of Jesus Christ are when he said: "*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again.*" (John 4:13). When one becomes thirsty, one drinks, only to become more thirsty without end. Whenever a person pursues lust he finds pleasure, and pleasure invites him to another pursuit, and the story never ends.



Satisfying lust does not save a person from it but increases it.

For instance, if a person lusts for money, the more he amasses it the more he longs for more. If a young man looks forward to being promoted he longs for level three when he reaches level four, and when he gets to level three he longs for level two, and so on and so forth (level one is the highest).

In adultery also, when satisfying one stage one longs for the following one.

Adam had all the trees in Paradise except one. He was not satisfied but longed for that one in particular! Ahab who owned a lot was not satisfied with all his possessions and craved for the field of Naboth the Jezreelite! David had seven women, and yet he was not satisfied but lusted for another. Solomon pursued the road of satisfaction to the end and said, "*And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them.*" (Eccl. 2:10). And what was the result? He took on a thousand women and left us his experience in his undying statement:

*"The eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full."* (Eccl. 1:8 -7).

Do not, therefore, think that satisfaction saves you from lust. Nothing will save you except self-control, and the best way is fleeing from it. Joseph, as a bachelor, conquered lust by chastity and escape, and David, the husband of so many, was conquered by lust when he allowed himself to satisfy it.

## **Types of lust:**

There are many types of lust on which the apostle concentrated his statement: *"For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."* (1 John 2:16).

*"The flesh lusts against the Spirit."* (Gal. 5:17). *"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."* (Gal. 5:24).

The pleasure attained through the crucifixion of the body and its lusts is one where man feels the loftiness of the spirit.

The lust of the flesh might be for adultery, food, or enjoyment of sight, hearing or smell.

By the words, *"Neither shall you desire your neighbour's wife"* God meant adultery. As to the lust of food, it is the sin in which Esau fell when he famished for the lentil stew cooked by Jacob and sold his birthright for it. (Gen. 25:29-34). Likewise was the craving of the Israelites when they wept and said, *"If only we had meat to eat! we remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic "* (Num. 11:4-5). The Lord gave them meat but struck them with a very great plague and many died and *"that place was called 'kibroth hattaavah' because there they buried the people who had the craving "* (Num. 11:34).

There is also the lust for money, for possession or property as king Ahab craved for the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. So the

Lord warned us, *"You shall not covet your neighbour's house..., nor anything that is your neighbour's"*.

Collecting post stamps, works of art or even things of no use may be an object of coveting.

There is also the lust for being honoured or becoming famous, the lust for positions and titles and the lust for greatness in general as well as the for adornment and beauty... All this coveting for greatness might take various forms; such as a person who changes his car every time a new model is produced. Another example is the fall of the devil who said, *"I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. "* (1sa. 14:13-14). The same lust can be traced in the fall of Adam and Eve whom the devil tempted to be *"like God"* (Gen. 3:5).

**One of the most dangerous lusts is that of destruction**, an example of which is found in the devil against the human beings. His desire was to destroy them, so the Lord said of him *"He was a murderer from the beginning"* (Jn. 8:44). The lust of revenge falls under this same category...

### **Conclusion:**

A person can overcome such lusts by the spirit of renunciation, by feeling that he is a stranger in the world, that *"all is vanity and grasping for the wind"* (Eccl. 1:14), and that *"the world is passing away, and the lust of it"* (1 Jn. 2:17).

Always thinking of the after life, love of fellow human beings and the spirit of giving is of benefit in this regard.



## IN THIS BOOK

*In the Name of  
the Father, and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit  
One God, Amen*

Though very old, the ten commandments are not for the olden times only but for all times and generations.

Few words they are, but have deep broad concept as David the prophet sang,

*"I have seen a limit to all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad" (Ps. 119:96).*

He said also, *"The commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes", "sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:8,10).*

The commandments were written with God's finger on two tablets which Moses smashed because the people sinned.

Two other tablets were made and kept in the holiest place, in the Ark of Covenant and afterwards in the hearts and lives of saints with letters of light.

I wish you would go deep into these commandments, and let them into your heart that they may turn into life in you.

**Pope Shenouda III**

