

# Contemplations on the Ten Commandments

Volume 3

## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

*By*

His Holiness Pope SHENOUDA III



**COPTIC ORTHODOX  
PATRIARCHATE**



*See of St. Mark*

**Contemplations on the Ten  
Commandments**

**Volume 3**

**THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT**

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# **CONTENTS**

**INTRODUCTION**

**CHAPTER 1 : Permissible Killing**

**CHAPTER 2 : The Importance of this Commandment**

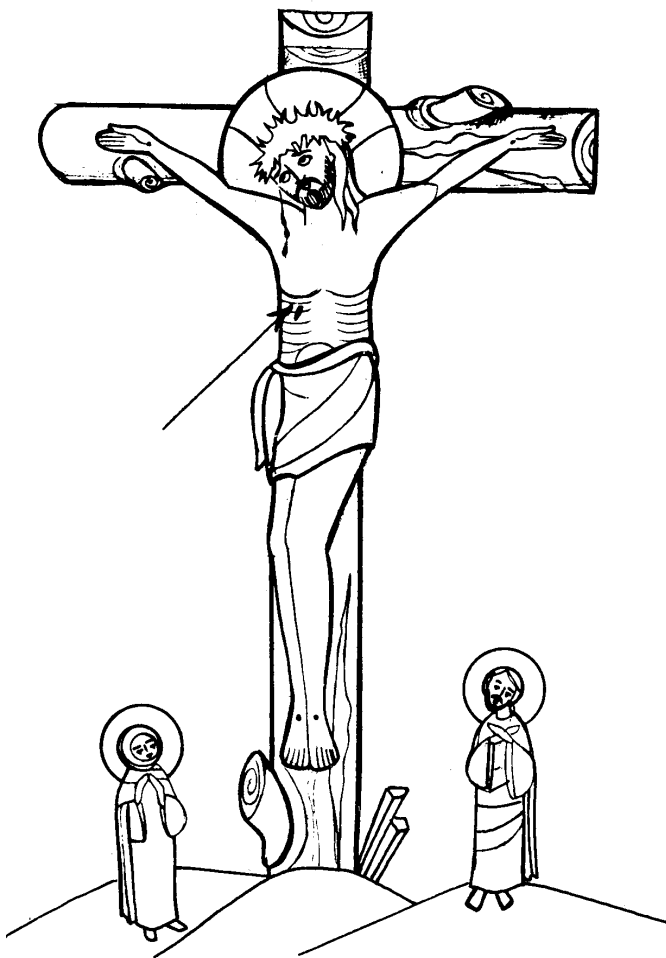
**CHAPTER 3 : Kinds of Murder**

**CHAPTER 4 : Indirect Killing**

**CHAPTER 5 : Killing of the Spirit**

**CHAPTER 6 : Committing Suicide**

**CHAPTER 7 : Answers to Questions related to the Subject**



## INTRODUCTION

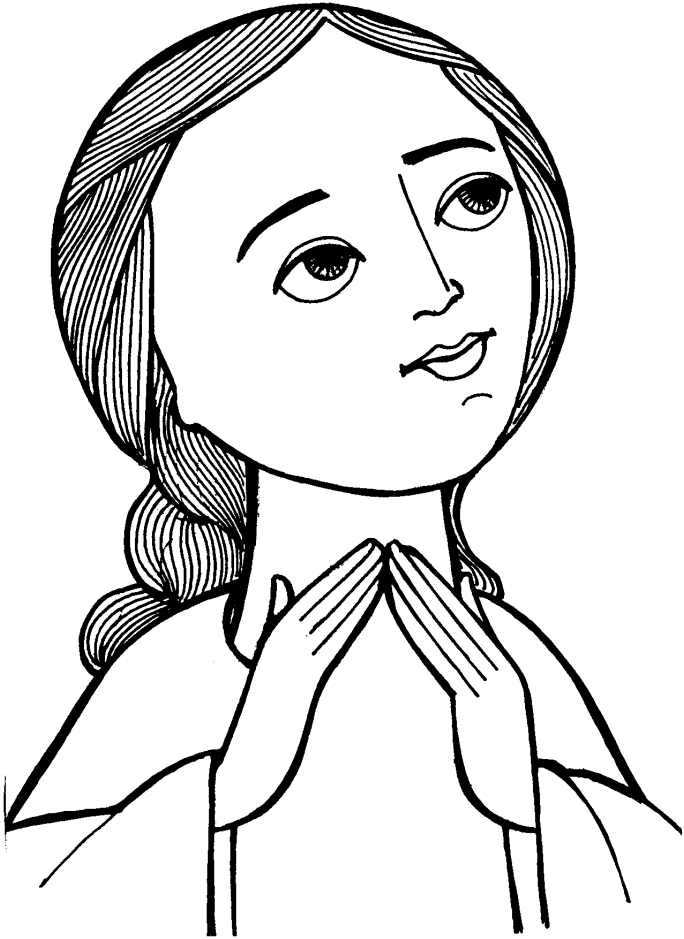
It may well be asked “what have we to do with this commandment that prohibits killing?!”

Such persons might think that this commandment only concerns criminals and murderers while they themselves having nothing to do with it. But, God willing, we would like to point out the importance of this commandment for everyone of us. In this book, we shall examine how this commandment may affect our lives, and whether you have ever violated it since you may have done so unconsciously.

Before we start discussing this topic we would like to explore another issue, that is God completely prohibit killing, or are there certain instances of killing which are not deemed crimes or sins, allowed by God?







## CHAPTER ONE

### PERMISSIBLE KILLING

God said: "You shall not kill, " and yet He permits killing in certain cases. We can go further to say that God not only permits but necessitates killing in certain cases. He made killing an inevitable punishment for whoever committed any sin. It would not be an exaggeration to say that whoever violated any of the first seven Commandments was punished by being put to death.

For example, someone violating the Seventh Commandment that says: "*You shall not commit adultery*", was to be punished, for the Scripture necessitates that "both adulterer and adulteress shall be put to death. " (*Lev. 20:10-16*).

The scribes and the Pharisees were talking with our Lord Jesus Christ about this commandment when they mentioned the woman who had been found committing adultery and said: "*Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?*" (*John 8:5*).

Moreover, anyone violating the Sixth Commandment that says: "*You shall not kill*" was to be put to death whether he acted "*with premeditation against his neighbour to kill him by*

*treachery " (Ex 21:14), or struck a man "so that he dies, " (Ex. 21:12). He was also put to death for indirect killing: "But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death." (Ex. 21:29).*

Persons violating the Fifth Commandment was to be put to death as the law set by God says: *"And he who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death... he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. " (Ex. 21:15-17).*

Persons violating the Fourth Commandment prohibiting work on a Sabbath was to be put to death, for the Scripture says: *"Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day that person shall be cut off from among his people. " (Ex. 31:14).*

Persons violating the Third Commandment by blaspheming God's Name was to be put to death too, as the Old Testament says *"And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death." (Lev. 24:16).* Naboth of Jezreel was unjustly accused of this charge when two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, *"Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!"(1 Kin. 21:13).* Caiaphas, the High Priest, unjustly condemned our Lord Jesus Christ to death by the same charge. Then the high priest tore his clothes,

saying, *"He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!(Matt. 26:65).*

Violating the First and Second Commandments regarding worshipping God alone was also punished by death. God ordered that all idol worshippers be killed and gotten rid of completely. He also said that, *" He who sacrifices to any god, except to the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.(Ex. 22:20).* Elijah executed all the prophets of Baal. *(1 Kings 18:40). "... But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk" (Deut. 13:5).* Even in the case of a whole city, all its inhabitants were to be put to death since the Scripture says: *" you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword; utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword. "And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the LORD your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again" (Deut. 13:16).*

In the same way, paganism was ended, and those calling for it and practicing it, such as magicians and fortune tellers, were also put to death. We find this in the words: *"You shall not permit sorceress to live. " (Ex. 22:18), and again in the words: " 'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.'" (Lev. 20:27).*

Among the laws that dealt with killing was one that stated that: *"He who kidnaps a man ... shall surely be put to death."* (Ex. 21:16).

Putting to death all of those transgressors was neither considered sinful nor covered by the Sixth Commandment. On the contrary, not executing this commandment, by not putting the vicious persons to death, was considered an evil act that would upset God.

The same thing applies to idolatry and evil which the Old Testament looked upon as great dangers which threatened faith. But in Christianity, one committing these offences was neither put to death nor stoned though murderers were haunted by the saying of our Lord Jesus Christ: *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."* (Matt. 26:52).

### **God's Authority in Putting People to Death:**

The Commandment: "You shall not kill" does not imply that God absolutely forbade putting someone to death, for God necessitated the killing of the aforementioned offenders, together with all idol worshippers, in order to protect religion itself. God allowed war in order to get rid of those idol worshippers though He Himself has to authorise it. Thus, if people started war on their own without receiving God's orders or directions to do so, that war would not to be considered in accordance with God's will.

The principle behind this is that God is the real owner of all our souls. He has the right to terminate a person's life at any time and in whatever manner He likes. If He wills them to die a natural death, or after a disease, or by fire He brings down from Heaven, or in a flood, or killed by their enemies, then He has full power to end their lives in whichever way He desires.

### **The State's Authority in Sentencing to Death:**

The Commandment "You shall not kill" concerns individual dealings. The faithful community at that time had the right to put people to death within the framework of the law. At present, the State has the authority to execute any murderer sentenced to death without anyone saying that it has violated the Sixth Commandment, for God commands that a murderer is to be put to death by saying: *"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.(Gen. 9:6)*. Our Lord Jesus Christ said to Peter: *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."* (Matt. 26:52). By putting to death those who kill, we do not contradict the Sixth Commandment, for, on the contrary, we will be executing God's commandment regarding them. Paul says: *"he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil .(Rom. 13:4)*.

This is true of the authority of the State, but it does not apply to personal dealings.

## **Killing Animals and Insects:**

Some sensitive persons applied the Sixth Commandment even to insects and animals!! Up till now there are many Brahmans in India whose conscience tortures them if they tread on any insect in the street and kill it. Yet, the Commandment: "You shall not kill" does not say that you should not kill insects, for there are some harmful insects such as scorpions which may kill man himself, and which God gave us the power to step on. Moreover, there are some insects, such as cotton worms, that destroy man's essential requirements. Man's life is more precious to God and to people than that of insects. Therefore, it is not only right but even mandatory for us to kill insects in order to protect man whom God created in His own image.

No one should feel bad about killing an insect and there are even signboards set up by medical care centers to urge people to kill flies before they themselves may get killed by them. The life of an insect is not as important as that of man who bears the image of God, and for whom our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross.

Thus, we should kill insects and savage animals, not only to protect ourselves from any harm they may cause us, but also to benefit by such an act in a scientific way. At the faculties of Medicine, - Pharmacology, and Science, frogs, rabbits and other living creatures are dissected for educational and scientific purposes. This is done for the benefit of all humanity without it being considered wrong.

Besides benefiting by the slaughter of animals in a scientific way, God allowed us to slaughter them after the Flood when He

said: *"Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. (Gen. 9:3).*

### **Animal Welfare:**

I would like to warn you that, although God gave us power over animals, and although He authorised us to kill them to defend ourselves against any harm they might cause us, it would be a fatal mistake to use this authority in a wrong way. We should not kill animals, especially harmless pets, torture them for any reason, nor show them any cruelty. When a little kid plays with a cat and enjoys torturing it, our behaviour should be to teach him that it is wrong to do so and that there is no reason for him to behave so cruelly. That is why Animal Welfare Societies are founded to call for mercy on animals, and to take care of them at times of illness and discomfort. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine even has the responsibility of treating animals when they are sick and of taking care of them.

God Himself advises us to take care of animals and to have mercy on them the reason being that any person showing mercy to animals and causing them no harm would end up showing mercy to his fellow man. A person with a sensitive and kind heart cannot hurt any man nor any animal. The Bible says: *"A righteous man regards the life of his animal. (Prov. 12:10).*

There are many commandments urging people to take care of animals. In Deuteronomy, God says: *" You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." (Deut. 22:10).* By saying this, God means that we should be merciful to a donkey whose strength is less than that of an ox. Regarding the insistence of



the Pharisees on keeping the Sabbath, He wonders, saying: "*What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? (Matt. 12:11).* Jacob's mercy for his flocks and herds is shown in his order not to overdrive them on the road. (*Gen. 33:13*). God also says: "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.* " (*Deut. 25:4*).

One instance of our Lord Jesus Christ's mercy towards animals was evident during his journey to Jerusalem when He alternately rode on a female ass and a male ass in order to give each a rest while on 'the road'. That is our merciful God who feeds little doves that fly in the sky and brings them their food without having to gather or to harvest it; and who "*...gives to the beast its food and to the young ravens that cry.* " (*Ps. 147:9*). He is our All-knowing God who said about the two sparrows that: "*Not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.* " (*Matt. 10:29*). God's mercy towards animals is also evident in His commandment to release animals on the Sabbath: "*...you shall do no work: you, nor your son, ...nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle.* " (*Deut. 5:14*).

You must release your animal and not kill it by making it do too much work with no rest, for if you kill it, you will be a loser, and you will prove that you are far from mercy. If the Commandment, "You shall not kill" is to be applied to animals and insects, it must be wisely applied.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT**

In every sin we commit, we hurt someone in a certain way. But if we kill a man, we destroy him completely and put an end to his existence on earth. Killing is a sin that affects man's life, and its danger lies in the fact that man's life is not his own, but it is owned by God who is the only One who controls people's destinies. Nobody may replace Him in this regard nor control people's destinies. It is God alone who holds the keys of life and death.

Besides, the sin of murder is grave because it is an irreversible act. One may probably compensate any man for a loss one has caused him. One may also apologise to someone for any insult one has dealt him thus restoring him his dignity. But killing can never be rectified since one cannot restore the life one takes away. The sin of murder becomes more grave when one kills a man and ends his life before he repents, for this deprives him of any chance to be prepared for his eternal life. He is killed both spiritually and physically, now and forever, and consequently he will be thrown into hell. What an evil act one would have done?! Moreover, the killer becomes a self-killer since the sin he commits is liable to lead him to his own perdition.

All this is true of killing evil people. How about killing a good person?! It is also considered to be very grave because it means a loss of benefits likely to be obtained from him as a member of society. Therefore, the more useful the person killed, the greater the responsibility the killer bears. Killing a man is a one crime and depriving his society of any benefit such a person could render it, is another crime. The weight of this crime depends upon the number of people benefiting from him and how great the benefit is. Killing prophets and messengers is a great crime and that is why our Lord Jesus Christ blamed Jerusalem as it: *"kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her, "* (Matt. 23:37), and: *"On you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zachariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar."* (Matt. 23:35). The words "all the blood of the righteous" show us the danger of shedding the blood of just men. When Abel was killed, God said to Cain: *" What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."* (Gen. 4:10). Abel never complained, but heavenly justice claimed its rights because God takes revenge on those who shed blood.

How just the Lord God is! He not only avenged Abel, but when the malicious Cain said to God: *"You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground... and anyone who finds me will kill me, "* God answered him, saying: *"Whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."* and *the Lord set a mark on Cain lest anyone finding him should kill him.* (Gen. 4:14&15). This must be considered deeply so that no one may kill an evil person and think that he has committed no crime by doing so. Killing in general is a very grave crime whether the person who is killed is righteous or evil. However,

killing a righteous person is even worse for there is no reason for killing him. Besides, we not only have here a crime of murder but also one of injustice, for it deprives society of the benefits that could be obtained from him. In addition there is also the crime of disrespect towards saints and that of not fearing God ... etc.

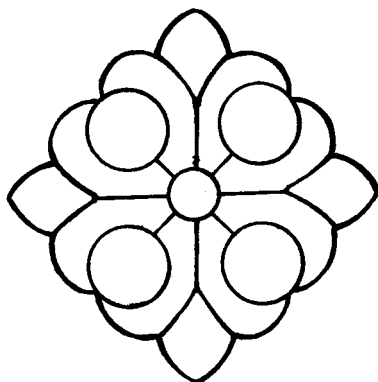
God does not leave blood shed without avenging it. Even in the case of righteous persons who killed others, God took revenge on them. David was not pardoned by God for the murder he had committed but God punished him by forbidding him to build the Temple, and by taking away this great honour from him because his hands had previously been smeared with blood. David mentioned this when he said: *" but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight.' (1 Chr. 22:8).*

God did this with David whom He loved. He said: "I tested David's heart, and found it in accordance with Mine. " The sage Solomon prayed in David's name saying: "For the sake of David, Your slave, do not turn Your face away from me, " and God would perform many good deeds saying every time: "For the sake of David My slave. " Yet because of killing, David himself was prevented from building the temple which was built later on by Solomon who reigned in peace. God not only did this, but He also let blood be shed in David's own home, when a great war sprang between him and his son Absalom. Many were killed during that war and God avenged them.

Thus, those who take revenge for their murdered ones are only hurrying things up, and burdening themselves with an unnecessary task.

*" 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. (Rom. 12:19). God never leaves anybody killed without taking revenge. Even those who had been slain for the love of God's word and for the truth they upheld were promised by the holy Lord that He would sit in judgment, and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"(Rev. 6.-10).*

There are some miserable persons who try to give themselves excuses for any blood they have shed. People like Pilate kept washing their hands over and over again from blood, but it never came off them despite all the excuses they gave to themselves. Pilate himself took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying: "I am not responsible for the death of this man!" Yet the blood of that Man haunted him till the end of his life and forever.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **KINDS OF MURDER**

The commandment "You shall not kill" can be interpreted in various ways. When God says: "You shall not kill" He means that you should neither kill others nor kill yourself. What applies to yourself applies also to others. And He means by that all kinds of murder. A person may sin by deed, by thought, through his senses, or verbally, and all this can be applied to the crime of murder. There is murder by thought, by intention, and by a whim of the heart. Celestial law is broader than civil law. Crime legislation punish for an actual crime and for a murder attempt, but they do not punish for a mere idea haunting one's mind, or for a whim of the heart. A man harbouring these ideas cannot be judged on earth, but God will definitely judge him.

There is partial and impartial killing, physical and spiritual killing, character defamation, direct and indirect killing, killing by one person, and killing in collaboration. There is also killing of the spirit that throws it into hell although the body may seem unaffected.

#### **War and Killing:**

Does war come under the Sixth commandment which forbids killing? We hereby answer by saying that if God prohibited

killing individuals, then it is more logical to prohibit killing groups. Therefore, the use of destructive weapons is against the Sixth Commandment. Indeed, it is a shame that man uses his talents, knowledge, brain, and intelligence for the destruction, killing, and hurt of his fellow man, whereas, if those millions and millions of dollars spent on wars otherwise would be spent for the welfare of humanity, this could result in great benefits.

If war is looked upon as something bad that God forbids except when He Himself commands, authorises or calls for it, how much more aggressive war is when domination and injustice are its goals.

God allows man to defend himself, and if war is merely for self-defence, or to protect the whole community, God agrees to it as a protection for individuals in a community. Generally speaking, war is detested by God who wishes love and peace to prevail amongst His people. No doubt, hostile war comes under the Sixth Commandment. That is why international courts were formed after World War II in order to try "war criminals" because people found out that some leaders were unjust to all humanity since they were responsible for the war that caused the death of a great number of people thus ignoring God's commandment: "You shall not kill. "

For all that, governments have issued regulations and laws in order to decrease the danger of killing individuals and to do away with the savagery and cruelty of war. There are inhumane, fatal, distorting, and destructive weapons in wars. There are also other laws prohibiting any attacks on hospitals, civilians, and humanitarian institutions, as well as laws for the

preservation and protection of civilian hostages. A humanitarian principle during wars is not to harm children, women, places of worship, priests, monks, and sick and old people.

This is all done to relieve the world of some of the bad results of war which is nothing but a murderous process that everyone wishes to avoid. Duels that were so frequent during the Middle Ages and which lasted until a recent time in some countries are also considered a sort of war. Two rivals would stand to fence with swords or pistols, and most likely one of them would be killed by his adversary while witnesses watched the whole encounter. What looks strange here is that the one who killed was looked upon by the community as a chivalrous, strong, respectable, and fearful man, while in fact he was nothing but a villain who killed his brother in public and violated the Sixth Commandment in front of some witnesses.

### **Killing by Sterilisation:**

Sterilisation is an operation which prevents man from having any future offspring and consequently it signifies the inherent termination of his reproduction. This operation was sometimes performed on Negroes and slaves in some countries in order to put an end to their reproductive ability. Sometimes, castration was used instead of sterilisation and it led to the same results. This is an example of the civilised nations unjust treatment of the uncivilised ones and how they tried to conquer them by means of war, killing, sterilisation or castration which are against what the Sixth Commandment calls for. We are also



aware that through this same process the Australian aborigines were gradually terminated by the end of the last century.

### **Abortion:**

Abortion is a form of murdering a living creature which, although not yet born, has a soul that we do not have the authority to dispose of. There are two kinds of abortion: intentional, and unintentional. Intentional abortion is performed when a woman or her family or friends decide to get rid of the foetus by medical methods. The doctor who does it, is partially responsible for it and is deemed an essential partner in this incidence of killing. Abortion may also be executed by other methods very well known to women. In this case the responsibility falls very clearly on the woman who does it. Yet, the aim behind abortion determines the weight of responsibility, for it may be considered a crime committed to hide another crime.

Those helping in the performance of abortion may think they have done something proper, such as preventing a scandal, but actually they just participate in a crime of murder. A woman may have an abortion because she is not willing to give birth to children, but this does not make her innocent of the crime of murder. Abortion may also be done to protect the mother if delivery threatens her life. Doctors may kill the foetus to rescue the mother, and they excuse themselves for doing so by saying that they sacrifice one soul to save another. Thus, the question here is being discussed to show how great the responsibility may be.

An unintentional miscarriage may happen when a mother is so negligent that she loses her baby through exhausting herself. An employer may make a pregnant employee work so much that she ends up having a miscarriage. Such an employer will be responsible and will have violated the Sixth Commandment in this respect. A husband may bear this same responsibility if he does not care about the health of his pregnant wife thus causing her to miscarry.

### **Killing by Intention and by Thought:**

Someone may not actually kill, but may think of killing. He may meditate on how to kill someone, or how to urge others to kill him. He may end up imagining that person already killed in front of him which makes him feel happy and satisfied. This is killing by intention and has its spiritual responsibility, exactly like committing adultery by mere thought, or imagining stealing ... etc.

Man is liable for the mere thought of killing, even if he never actually intends to perform the act of killing. Mere thinking of killing does not go along with love, tolerance and good wishes for other fellow men. A man may not think of killing another man, but nevertheless, he may wish to see him dead and may be happy if he dies, for he really wishes to see him dead whether through him or by others, or he may wish that God deprive him of his life. By doing so, he is considered to have sinned in his heart through intention.

Hatred is a kind of murder. The disciple John says: *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. "* (1 John 3:15). Would we

dare after that to say that we have nothing to do with the Sixth Commandment, or that it concerns only criminals, and killers? Our Lord Jesus Christ considered anger as a part of the crime of killing when He said in His teaching on the mountainside: *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. "* (Matt. 5:21&22).

Anyway, anger and hatred are two negative sides, while the commandment of "You shall not kill" is a positive thing that can lead a person to love. Thus if you love your brother, you neither can kill nor think of killing, hurting, or even offending him.

### **Moral Killing:**

Killing is not only that of a physical nature, but there is moral killing that affects man's name. If one ruins a man's reputation, slanders him or discredits him amidst people, this is called moral killing. If one criticised the personality of someone with the intention of slandering him in public and with the result that he was disgraced before people, this simply would be killing that person morally. We even have a colloquial expression which says that a person's personality has been put an end to if someone damages his reputation. Unfair criticism is one kind of this form of killing.

There is also killing or destruction of personality such as when a cruel father ruins his son's personality to the extent that he

grows up so helpless and weak that he cannot confront important issues. Such behaviour may also be shown by a cruel husband who treats his wife in this same way, or an employer who treats his employees in a similar way. This takes place through ill-treatment, frustration, or discouragement, or through giving someone the feeling that one is good for nothing, that one is helpless and a failure in all fields. Those people holding this authority never give others the chance to develop their personality, but, on the contrary, make them have such a low morale that they end up as failures and collapse. All this is moral killing.

### **Partial Killing:**

Under partial killing we may list bodily or physical aggression, beating, hurting, and torture. Thus, someone may hit someone else causing him a permanent deformity. He may cause him to lose an eye, may break one of his legs, or may disfigure his face. This is all partial killing since one part of the human being is put an end.

Generally speaking, beating is considered a form of killing. In Upper Egypt, when someone says: "so and so killed" he means: "so and so beat me." Even in Arabic we say: "They killed each other" meaning "They fought, or hit each other." So, beating is included in this commandment whether it is severe beating that leads to death or to a deformity, or just mere and simple beating. The Bible forbids such beating. We normally conclude that every aggression has something to do with the Sixth Commandment, even if it were simply just hurting someone's feelings. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ, in His

sermon on the mount, when He was discussing the commandment of *"You shall not kill"* said that *"Whoever says to his brother. , 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council "* (Matt. 5:22).

Practically speaking, anyone offending another is just causing him to be indirectly killed through a destructive operation to his body cells and blood corpuscles.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### INDIRECT KILLING

#### **Annoyance:**

There is a sort of indirect murder such as that of nerve-wrecking and teasing. For instance you may disturb and tease someone to the extent that you wreck his nerves, and make him lose control and become very upset. He may thus have bad thoughts which may lead to deep sorrow, pain, vexation, irritation, sickness, high blood pressure, or any other disease. He may stay in bed and may even die as a result of what people have done to him. You may pretend to sympathise with him or even attend his funeral and console his family while actually you are the one who killed him and are responsible for his death.

Do you think, brother, that killing is just when you stab someone with a knife, or shoot him with a pistol. No, for mere deadly words, or destructive behaviour that is full of contempt and despising, or an action combining insult and humiliation, may make someone very emotionally disturbed. Although such a one person may not be killed immediately, this would happen after a while, for such words would slowly but surely kill him though the cause may not be known to man but is well known to God. This too is considered a violation of the Sixth

Commandment because from the exclusive scientific point of view, bad, humiliating and teasing words cause the destruction of a human body and are a sort of indirect killing. Look deep, brother, inside yourself how many persons you have indirectly killed in such a way, how many persons you have teased, humiliated, mocked or made subject to laughter, mockery and fun, and how many persons you upset, or caused to blush while talking with you. You are being accused of violating the Sixth Commandment because of doing all this.

One of the phrases mentioned in the Old Testament shows that severe words are a form of killing. Thus it says: *"Their tongue is an arrow shot out. " (Jer. 9:8); and also " The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords." (Ps. 55:21).*

Injustice is listed under this kind of killing, because the one who wrongs others forgets that "God gives justice to the wronged." This includes all kinds of cruelty that someone treats others with. The first effect of injustice and cruelty is lowering the morale of a person. They degenerate his psychological status as well as his ideals.

### **Exploitation of Employees as Murder:**

The Sixth Commandment also applies to a rich individual who exploits workers and gives them very little wages, not sufficient for their food. Such an individual kills the persons he hires because he knows very well that the wages he pays

them are not sufficient for them and, consequently, they starve, while he himself cares nothing and has no mercy on them.

The Bible says: *"Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."* (James 5:4). The worker or employee whose rights you deny or postpone and whose salary increase, promotion, or award you ignore, thus making him unable to meet the essential requirements of his life, that person is simply killed by you, and you will end up being accused by God for all this. The Holy Bible blames the person who does not pay his employees on time saying: *"The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. "* (Lev. 19:13), and also: *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is 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 on it,, lest he cry out to the Lord, and it be sin to you. "* (Deut. 24:14&15). Also, taking employment from anybody without serious reasons is a form of indirect killing. Hindering the hiring of someone applying for a job is also considered killing, for if you stand in the way of anyone trying to earn a living in order to support himself and his family, you practically kill him, or force him to commit a crime. This is a form of killing his soul, or pushing him to death as it is an act of killing his body.



## **Loans, Usury, and Pledges:**

Another kind of indirect killing prohibited by heavenly laws is depriving people of their essential living requirements. God prohibits usury when dealing with the poor and says: *"If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a money lender to him; you shall not charge him interest."* (Ex. 22:25), and also: *"You shall not ... take a widow's garment as a pledge."* (Deut. 24:17).

Regarding those requirements, God also says: *"No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes one's living in pledge. "* (Deut. 24:6). The words "takes one's living in pledge" are quite a proof that this is a form of killing. Therefore one should never take in pledge the tools and instruments of any worker because if he does, he would be hindering him from earning his living, and would thus be taking his life in pledge.

## **Refrain From Giving Help:**

Killing is not only putting an end to someone else's life, but if a man faces death, and you do not give him a hand to save him you are practically killing him, and so you fall under the judgment of the Sixth Commandment. The fine words of the Holy Bible in this regard say: *"Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard. "* (Prov. 21:13). For example, when some countries have an abundance of wheat yet do not help poor countries like India where the inhabitants die of hunger or eat tree leaves, doubtlessly, we feel that those rich countries actually help the killing of a group of

human beings by not offering them the support they need, and the Holy Bible says: *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. "* (James 4:17).

What we previously said about denying giving food to those who need it, can also be said about denying them medicine and medical treatment. Likewise, not giving an ear to the voice of the hungry and the sick until they die, is a clear crime of killing. Neglecting them until they get acute or dangerous disease is a form of partial killing.

Therefore, to refrain from giving charity to those in bad need is a clear violation of the Sixth Commandment. An example of this is the rich man who had no mercy on the beggar called Lazarus. (*Luke 16:19-22*).

The same applies to the priest and the Levite mentioned in the parable of the good Samaritan, for both passed by the wounded man thrown on the road giving him no assistance and leaving him to die. Perhaps they gave themselves excuses such as lack of time since their religious services, worshipping, and offering sacrifices were more important to them. But our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice. "* (*Matt. 9:13*), indicated that both the priest and the Levite did not do what they were supposed to do.

Although the wounded did not die, as the good Samaritan was sent by God to save his life, both the priest and the Levite were culpable under the Sixth Commandment. One may wonder: If the good Samaritan had not shown up to save that man, he

would have died, and God would have avenged his death, not only by penalising those who had wounded him, but also the priest and the Levite who never tried to rescue him!!

### **Killing by Responsibility:**

One may not try to kill someone else, but he may still be accused of doing so if he is found to be the cause or the instigator of the actual killing. The Old Testament explains this in the story of the ox when it says: " If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. *"But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death."* (Ex. 21:28&29).

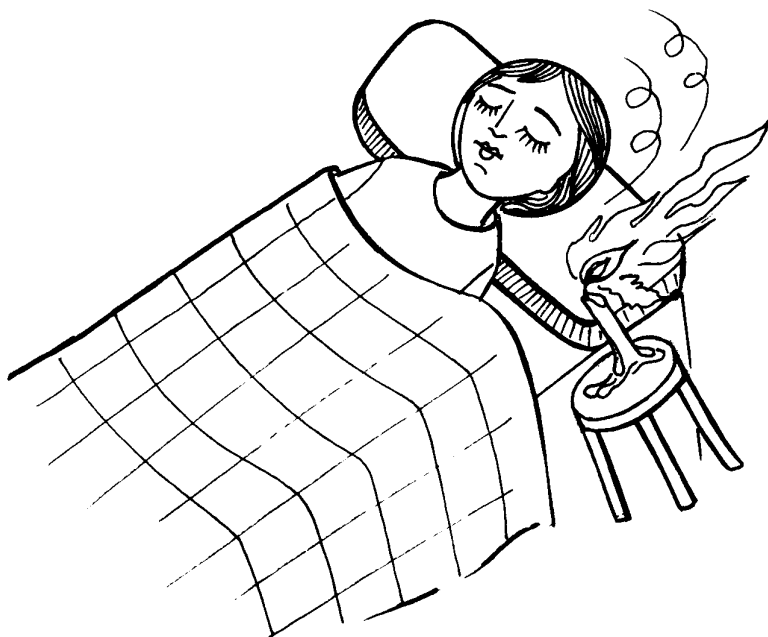
The same thing may be said about a man who owns a mad dog and leaves it loose without chaining it to prevent it from hurting or biting people. That person is deemed responsible for any harm caused by his dog or by any other similar animal. The same is true when one removes the cover of a well, or digs a well and leaves it uncovered; then *"if an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the well shall make it good. "* (Ex. 21:33&34). Moreover, if a man falls into it and dies, the owner of that well shall be accused of the loss of that man's life.

What we say of the well is also true of walls and similar items. The Holy Bible says: *"When you build a new house, then you*

*shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it." (Deut. 22:8).* This verse of the Bible condemns the architect who designs a bad construction that leads to the death of a human being, or who does not estimate the appropriate quantity of cement required to construct a house. If such a house falls down and some inhabitants die, he is to be condemned. Likewise, the contractor who reduces the quantity required to build a block of flats, resulting in a fragile building that falls down on the heads of the residents is also liable. If such a thing is done on purpose, then it is considered as another crime to be added to the first.

The same is true of the driver of a car who does not make sure whether his car is working properly or not. If the brakes are faulty and he hits a man, he will be considered responsible. If the car is working properly, but its owner uses a drunken, insane, short-sighted, or overworked person to drive it half asleep, an accident may take place and someone may get hurt. If the owner is fully aware of the behaviour of his driver, then certainly he is to be condemned per the Sixth Commandment. What is said about a rash driver can also be applied to a child who is not well brought up and may be aggressive to people, yet his father leaves him without punishment and guidance. The same is also true of an employer who hires a rowdy employee. The latter may hurt those around him or cause them mischief. He may end up causing them to be fired from their work or be hurt in any way. An employer is supposed to be responsible for the attitude and performance of all his employees. He therefore may direct or punish them in case they made any mistake.

The responsibility of killing others also lies with you if you have in your house a butane stove that is not working properly, for it may cause the suffocation of others if you do not repair it. The same is also true if you do not warn people that have a certain device that may kill them if they do not use it properly. So, you must explain to everybody around you how to use and operate it properly so that nobody around may get hurt. You may also keep it away from the reach of children and of those who do not really know how to use it.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### KILLING OF THE SPIRIT

#### Examples of killing the Spirit:

It may be killed by separating it from God thus throwing it into hell. This expression of killing the spirit and casting it away is mentioned in the Bible when God refers to sin, saying: *"For she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. "* (Prov. 7:26).

In his discussion with the Jews about Satan, Jesus says in John: *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.(John 8:44)*. We never heard that Satan killed a man in the proper sense of killing, but the words: "He, from the first, was a murderer," means that Satan inflicts death on people's souls and throws them into eternal hell. The same meaning is clear in: *"The letter kills."* (2 Cor. 3:6). So, what does "to kill" mean here? It means that whoever interprets God's commandments literally is just killing himself or inflicting death upon his spirit. So, it is spiritual murder as opposed to physical murder. An example of spiritual death is when a person is kept away from understanding the true faith, when he is neglected and not brought up sensibly, when he is given a bad example to follow, or when he causes others to fall or to be unjustly excommunicated.

## **Religious Inventions and Heresies:**

Those who teach wrong beliefs, or guide people along a wrong path which spoils their spiritual lives are spiritually inflicting death upon those people. By so doing, they throw them into hell. For example, heretics and innovators inflicted death upon the thousands they misled and millions whom they killed in a way that is even worse than physical death, for in the case of physical death, the soul may be rescued, but heresy spoils man's belief and religion and leads him to eternal death. So, Arius, Makdonius, Nestor, Luther, the Jehovah's Witness, and those calling for the Sabbath, come at the top of the list of killers. Therefore, you have to be very careful when teaching not to present your own personal points of view as true facts, especially those contradicting the Fathers' sayings. It is not appropriate at all that you get fascinated by something new or by developments and start propagating new principles lest you should inflict death upon others, and do away with their faith. The Holy Bible says: *"Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set. "* (Prov. 22:28). We have to say this because many heresies started so easily when someone, through meditation, suddenly reached a new conclusion or an idea he liked. Thinking that people would admire the novelty of his idea, and looking upon himself as a pioneer, regardless of whether his idea contradicted the public opinion or the prevailing traditions or not, he introduced new heresies into religion.

One has to be careful not to bring new ideas into religion and not try to become a hero by doing so. In James 3:1&2 there is the following warning: *"Let not many of you become teachers,*

*knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. " We are all betrayed into committing faults, therefore we should be careful lest we should spoil people's beliefs. Therefore, you have to read in the Bible about heretics who called for innovations in religion thus bringing about disasters and inflicting death. God will accuse them of wasting the lives of people who deviate from true religion as a result of their heresies. Also, literal interpretations of the words of the Holy Bible is a way of inflicting death upon people because the Bible says: "The letter kills." (2 Cor. 3:6). Those who cannot reach into the spiritual meaning behind the words, and just interpret them literally inflict spiritual death upon others. Therefore: "Do not be too eager, brethren, to impart instruction to others; be sure that if we do, we shall be called to account all the more strictly."*

### **Negligence of Pastoral Work:**

Another example of inflicting spiritual death is manifested by those fathers who do not exert the efforts required of them thus leaving people to the enemy. Those men of God are warned by Him in the following words: *"At the end of seven days the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Son of man, I have made you a watchman ... ; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand." (Ezek. 3:17&18).* Look, brethren, how the Bible considers the sinners spiritually dead and condemns men of God for not trying to help them when it says: *"Yet, if you warn*



*the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul." (Ezek. 3:19).* So, if a priest neglects the people he is responsible for, he is considered a killer of their spiritual life and God will accuse him of being the main reason for their failure since it is all due to the priests negligence in teaching them, caring for them and following up on every one of them.

A priest may say: "But I am a kind person who never inflicts death upon anybody!" This is all quite fine, but you are not here just to be a kind man, since God wants you to save people's souls, to exert an effort for them, to exhaust yourself day and night to save their souls, and to sacrifice yourself for your people's benefit. You are in a position to save the souls of those people by exerting a great effort, by shedding tears, sweating, spending nights awake, and fasting. Therefore, if you sit idle as a kind person and do not take care of your people, you are responsible in the sight of God.

The accusation of a clergyman who does not save the souls of the people he is responsible for, is even more grave if he is surrounded by a group of heretics, innovators, or strange sectarians who try to deviate people from their true faith without any attempt on the part of that clergyman to prevent this through his care, attention and correct teaching. The poet says: "Whoever leaves his sheep posturing among lions, and falls into a slumber, will end up having lions take care of them!!" Negligence in caring for people is a sort of inflicting death upon them. On Judgment Day, God will charge some of those responsible for people's souls with neglecting their

responsibilities and letting people lose their eternal life because of their negligence. So, our saints used to flee from holding any position of responsibility knowing how weighty it is. Therefore, we must pay great attention to choosing and electing priests and clergymen in order to prevent various crimes inflicting death. A priest who neglects directing his congregation simply kills them, and the Holy Bible says: *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. "* (Hos. 4:6).

Such a priest will have to answer for this, and so he should do his utmost to educate, instruct and warn them in order to help them follow the right way. As a result of ignoring to warn his children, Eli the Priest was punished by God. (1 Sam. 2:29-34).

### **Unjust Excommunication**

As far as clergymen are concerned any unjust excommunication of a member of their congregation is considered a crime of murder. The teachings of the church indicate that any clergyman who simply excommunicates someone for no good reason is just inflicting death upon the latter's soul instead of rescuing it. Such excommunication may lead to the disbandment of those made religious through the great effort, fatigue, sweating and tears of- the early disciples. Thus the saying goes: "Whoever judges someone unjustly that sentence of injustice, from his own mouth will come onto himself".<sup>1</sup>

Priests should not excommunicate people carelessly without thorough investigation and without considering the dangerous

outcome which may result from this. This is a spiritual crime of murder before God because it means that spiritual support is kept away from someone's soul thus making him liable to die for lack of observing the church sacraments. The church's responsibility is to save and not kill the members of its congregation. Even if there is someone who has to be excommunicated, it is the duty of the church to visit him outside the church in order to try to bring him back once again.

But if you do not hold clerical responsibilities, so how can you inflict spiritual death? If you neither bring up your children in the right way nor teach them to fear God, but instead allow them to lose their way, then you inflict death upon their souls.

### **Negligence in Bringing up Children:**

Just as pastors are responsible for the education of their congregation, everyone of you parents are similarly responsible for the education of your children. So, if your child is not brought up properly, and his soul goes to hell because of your negligence, God will condemn you on Judgment Day and say to you: *"He will die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. "* (Ezek. 3:18).

Sometimes the husband takes good care of his wife to the extent that he neglects his children's needs. He thinks that marriage is a mere relation between him and his wife, thus forgetting his responsibility towards his children, a responsibility which he will have to account for before God look what the Bible says regarding bringing up children: *"And*

*these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house...*" (Deut. 6:6&7). Every responsible father should fear God and should bring up his children with great care. Moreover, he is responsible for his wife's spiritual life after marrying her, for man is the head of a woman. If he does not pay attention to the spiritual life of his household, especially that of his wife and children, and does not always repeat the words of the Holy Bible: "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,*" (Josh. 24:15), God will hold him responsible for killing all those people. Some may think that marriage is just a social function! No, before anything else, it is a spiritual function through which the family beget children for God and for the church. Thus, it is with great esteem and pride that we look upon those mothers and fathers who brought up their pious offspring in such a way as to make of them religious leaders and upholders of the Faith. Those parents were well aware of the sacred and spiritual role they were supposed to play in their marriage.

A vicious and corrupt man should not get married for if he does, it is not possible for him to bring up good children! One has to be well-brought up, well-behaved and fearing God in order to bring up children who also fear God. After all, marriage is a spiritual function. Such a vicious man may think that he would like to please his children so that he provides them with various means of amusement and fun, making his home a place of hell. If one of his children wanted to walk in the way of God, he would have to face many obstacles and hindrances! There is no doubt that such a father kills his children spiritually. He is a real killer, whether he desires it or

not. On Judgment Day, you are going to account for the life of your corrupt son. If you have not done your best towards him, God is going to ask you: "What have you done for him? Your child could have easily been formed any way you wanted. How did you bring him up?"

By attending Sunday School, just for an hour once a week, your child's teacher, with God's help, will bring him up spiritually and teach him God's commandments to make of him a good member of the Church. But what do you personally do for him as a father who spends with him the remaining 168 hours? When you bring your child up, you do not only feed his body to grow, but you take care of his soul so as to make of it a sacred and pure soul, devoted to God. There is a difference between bringing up your children, and breeding sheep to obtain meat, for you bring up good individuals as gifts to God, to society, and to the Church.

### **The Setting of Ungodly Examples by the Parents:**

Parents may kill the spiritual life of their children not by leaving them to corrupting elements, but by giving them a bad example to follow.

A child may be brought up in an environment of quarrel, fighting, disputes and dirty language exchanged between the parents. The child just picks up this bad way of dealing with others, or he may prefer to quit that tiresome house and go out into the street, or join bad company.

After all this, can the father say that he has not killed his child? He has actually inflicted death upon some spiritual elements in his son's character. He has put an end to principles, noble values and ideals that may have been part of his character. Instead, he has set the child a bad example. He has carved out in his sub-conscious deep images of a life that bears no harmony with God's commandments. These are factors that are sure to destroy the soul and spiritual life of a son.

A girl may find herself in a bad environment such as having a mother who wears improper clothes, who uses vulgar make up and who is playful, paying no attention whatsoever to anything. So, the poor girl is made to think that life is just like that. She may join her mother in her playful life, share her carelessness and laughter, and imitate her way of dressing and make-up. This poor girl is bound to walk in darkness that some people prefer to light. Doesn't this mother thus inflict death upon the spiritual life of her daughter?!!

What is much worse is that such a mother is not only satisfied with the bad example she sets for her daughter, but she may also fight her in all possible ways if she ever finds out that she holds fast to piety and to respectable and noble principles. She starts mocking her and making her a target of humiliation. She may also call her names and keep her from upholding religious and respectable ideas. She thus kills all the spiritual aspects of her character. The poor little girl may not be able to resist this current, may thus give up to the point at which she finally becomes lost. God hears the voice of her blood, screaming from the earth, in complaint of that murdering mother.

So, brethren, do not think killing is merely the act of terminating the existence of the physical body, or that it is a human being putting an end to another person's life on earth with a knife or a pistol. No, for there is also the infliction of spiritual death where someone's soul is eternally lost, and principles and ideals evaporate.

What we have already said about the example set by parents can also be applied to teachers, instructors, and those who influence man's soul and set a good example for others to follow. All these people are responsible since if they misbehave, others may be lost through imitating them. The matter should be handled in a positive way and we should give our offspring a very good example for them to follow.

### **The Stumbling Block**

Inflicting death upon one's soul may result from our facilitating for others the commission of a sin. Someone may fall because of you and you would have inflicted death upon his soul. God will then hold you responsible for that. Our Lord Jesus Christ says: *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offences! For offences must come but woe to that man by whom the offence come!"* (Matt. 18:6&7). But God, why do You blame that person who goes against his conscience, and why would it be better for that man to have a large millstone tied round his neck and be drowned in

a deep sea? Because he causes others to lose their faith in Jesus. Woe to him who causes the downfall of another person. So, brethren, beware of making others lose their faith lest they should stumble on their path and consequently, you would be questioned by God on Judgment Day.

The Apostle Paul gave us an example of someone causing others to lose faith by meat originally slaughtered as a sacrifice for idols. He said; *"Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat lest I make my brother stumble. "* (1 Cor. 8:13). He explained the seriousness lying behind this by saying: *"If anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. "* (1 Cor. 8:10-12). Here Paul gives us a marvellous example of how dangerous it is to cause others to fall and the ways to do so. Even if the action itself is not harmful, yet still it makes the weak stumble. So we should not start it in the first place in order not to hurt the conscience of those weak and to prevent their misunderstanding, their doing the same, and their downfall afterwards.

What can we say then about such blatant instances as that of a girl who causes others to fall by her indecent way of dressing, by her way of talking, and by her tempting others? Wouldn't she be inflicting death upon a man's soul by so doing, and so stand guilty before God for violating the Sixth Commandment? What can we say about a corrupt person who insists upon



dragging his friends into the same ungodly path, converting them into sinners? What can we say about someone offering an employee a bribe, encouraging a passenger to smuggle, or explaining new ways of breaking the law to a new unsuspecting friend? What can we say about a man who tempts his friend to commit new sins thus corrupting his innocence with lustful ideas he was unaware of before? We cannot but say that such people inflict death upon others' spirits, even though they may never have touched a knife in all their lives.

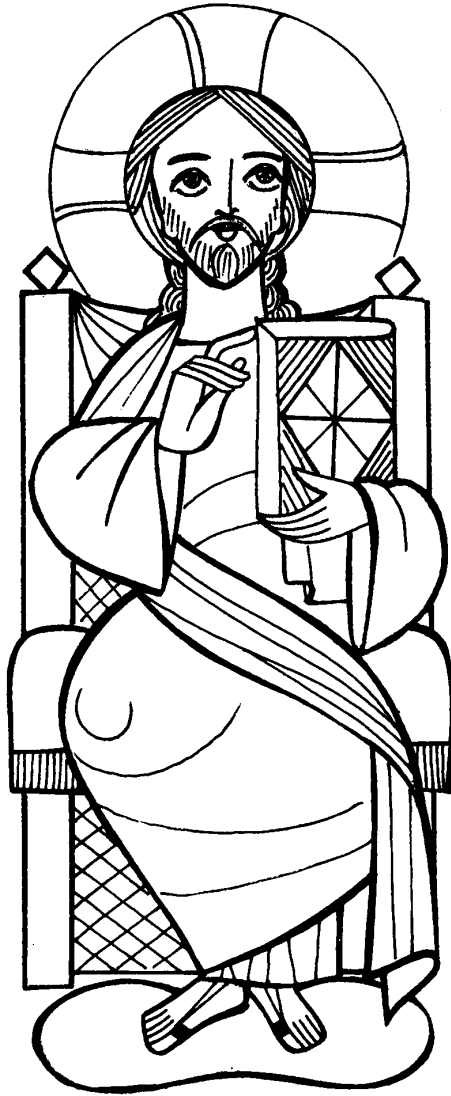
Therefore go deep into yourself and ask if you have ever been the cause of someone's stumble or sinfulness in any way. Causing others to fall is serious and should be severely punished. If killing is punished by death, causing others to fall should also be punished the same way, and God insists upon this punishment, saying: *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, 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. 18:6). God blames whoever is the cause of a stumble, saying: *"Woe to the world because of offences! for offences must come but woe to the man by whom the offence comes!"* (Matt. 18:7).

As for punishment on Judgment Day, God mentions those causing others to fall before He refers to those committing sins. Thus He says regarding His Second Coming: *" The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt. 13:41&42).

Thus, the charge against Balaam and Jeroboam was serious because Balaam caused people to sin (*Rev. 2:14*), and Jeroboam's son Alijah brought guilt upon his own house (*1 Kin. 13:34*). How dangerous it is to cause others to sin especially if it is a great person who causes many to fall.

### **Spiritual Suicide:**

Man may be spiritually killed or may spiritually kill others. The first thing one may inflict upon his soul is death through sinfulness, for sin is death, and Paul says: "*We were dead in trespasses.*" (*Eph. 2:5*). Also "*The wages of sin is death.*" (*Rom. 6:23*), and: "*For to be carnally minded is death.*" (*Rom. 8:6*). By committing sins man kills himself spiritually since he isolates his soul from God and throws it into hell. Therefore, sin is actually spiritual suicide by means of which man ruins himself. Also, man kills himself, from the spiritual point of view, when he ignores the spiritual media, i.e. by stopping prayer, meditation, spiritual readings, confession, having the Holy Communion and other means of obtaining grace. The soul then becomes weak, dissolves and becomes lost. The man himself is 'lost'. A man who follows the whims of his body, and indulges in the lusts of the world violates the Sixth Commandment. God says: "He who secures his own life will lose it." Man who accustoms himself to ungodly ways is just destroying both his soul and his will. So, keep away from destructive customs.



## CHAPTER SIX

### COMMITTING SUICIDE

Killing oneself, or committing suicide, is the same as killing others. There is direct suicide which means the immediate death of a person, and indirect or gradual suicide, where a person dies bit by bit over a long period of time, as we will explain.

#### **Committing Suicide:**

Suicide is a form of murder. Man does not own his own life nor does he have the liberty to do anything he likes with it. It is owned by Christ, for when He redeemed our lives by His own Blood, He bought man's life which then became His. He created it from nowhere. It is a gift that cannot be thrown away, but should be used for the glory of God's name. That is why the Church does not conduct a funerary mass for an individual who commits suicide, simply because death takes place after the commission of a crime of murder. Such a person dies after committing a sin which he does not give himself a chance to repent for. Still, we can make an exception to this rule in the case of a person who proves to be completely insane when committing suicide, since an insane person should be absolved from whatever wrongdoing he does. In addition to

the crime of committing suicide, we also have other crimes such as losing hope and getting filled with despair as did Judas. Hope is one of the three major virtues mentioned by St Paul in: *"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."* (1 Cor. 13:13). A pious man should never lose hope for God's mercy. So, if ever one commits suicide, this means one has lost all hope and has fallen to the pit of despair which in itself is a sin. It also signifies that one has lost hope for God's mercy and for His power to interfere and to dispose of desperate situations. All this is nothing but lack of faith in God's love, care and attention.

Committing suicide also signifies lack of endurance. It also signifies disbelief in life after death. A person committing suicide believes that death is going to help him put an end to all his trouble, which is not true, for if he ever believed in life after death, he would be aware that by killing himself he would go to hell where he is liable to find endless torture. Therefore, committing suicide does not end one's problems, but rather brings up worse problems and more complicated dilemmas. It is as if one came out of a pit to fall into a deep well! The one who commits suicide never thinks of life after death, for if he knew about it he would be afraid to kill himself.

Committing suicide is neither a spiritual nor a practical solution for problems. A person who commits suicide often has a nervous or mental health problem and is unable to think properly. His mind may get perplexed or stagnate before a problem. He is unable to think but gets confused and incapable of finding a way out. Thus, he commits suicide. Suicide is an actual destruction of the soul.

## **Gradual or Indirect Suicide:**

There is a great diversity of ways for people to commit suicide without them being aware that such things are included under the term of committing suicide. Negligence of health care is one of these ways. There is no need for us to explain this point any further except that we should be fully aware that our human body is a gift granted us by God. A person is supposed to take care of it and to keep it safe and sound as much as possible in order to be able to perform the required spiritual tasks in the best of ways. Christianity does not call for killing the human body but for overcoming physical lusts through observing the sacraments set by its true teachings. Christianity calls for austerity, piety, and humility but not killing the human body itself. Paul says: *"For Your sake we are killed all day long." (Rom. 8:36)*, and: *"So then death is working in us." (2 Cor. 4:12)*. God says: *"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." (John 12:24)*, and we say in the Nine o'clock prayer, "Mortify our physical senses, our Lord Jesus Christ, and rescue us." We do not kill our human body at all, but only kill its lusts. When we say, "Mortify our physical senses," *we mean preventing those senses from conflicting with the spirit. The Apostle Paul says: "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection," (1 Cor. 9:27)*, which means force my body to abide by the regulations set forth by the soul. He also says that man *"nourishes and cherishes it (his body)." (Eph. 5:29)*. For the sake of the body's safety, God gave us the 'Sabbath law' in order to give our body some rest so that we may be able to accomplish what is required of us by God. Our Lord Jesus Christ paid attention to people's bodies and cured every disease and weakness in them. God wishes us to have healthy bodies

by means of which we may serve His name. A healthy body enables one to stand up while praying, to kneel before God, to stay awake late at night in order to pray, to go on serving people, and to fast and be able to perform all our spiritual and physical obligations. A weak and unhealthy body often disrupts the tranquillity of the mind. Therefore, for the sake of glorifying God's name one should take care of one's own body in order to make of it a shrine for His presence since our bodies are owned by Him (*1 Cor. 6:20*). We should not kill our bodies through carelessness and negligence.

It is indeed a pity when people ruin their own bodies through unhealthy customs such as overeating which is liable to expose them to many diseases, weaken them and bring about an early death. People are apt to ruin their health through complicated ways of cooking, and through eating various kinds of desserts and sweets which exhaust their bodies during the process of digestion. In the past, nobody did this which is why our ancestors used to have healthy bodies. Similarly, monks are healthy due to the simple, uncomplicated and raw food they eat. The human body gets tired when one eats quickly, does not follow a well balanced diet and eats between meals. In such cases the human body has to deal with half-digested food or food that is not digested at all. In this way, the stomach is made to suffer as a result of man's greed and gluttony. Excessive amounts of fat hurts one's body because it is difficult to digest. Yet, many people think that the more fat they eat the better their health becomes. But this is contrary to what all doctors and nutritionists say that non-fat meat is better digested

than fatty meat. Overeating also exhausts the liver, gall-bladder and the stomach and puts a heavy burden on the body making it suffer and develop high blood pressure.

Adultery is a sin that damages the body and physical indulgence spoils it and causes it to develop many serious diseases. People may also damage their own bodies by too much exhaustion without giving them the required rest they need. Because God knows the nature and requirements of our bodies, He gave us one day a week to rest, saying: "*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.* " (Mark 2:27). So, if you happen to exhaust you own body more than it can stand, and do not pay attention to its weak nature, you will, no doubt, be partially killing it. Too many people have suddenly passed away or have heart attacks as a result of too much exhaustion beyond their endurance. In 1948, a colleague of mine suffered so much from cancer and from severe pain that he could not sleep at all despite the care given him. Even injections relieving his pain ceased to have any effect and could not put him to sleep. I visited him at Qasr-el-Einy hospital and asked the specialist doctor, who was a colleague of mine at Sunday school, about his condition. The doctor said to me: he has only a few more days left on this earth, and if cancer does not kill him, exhaustion will, due to his lack of sleep. His heart was not able to stand all that wakefulness and inability to rest. This is exactly what happened to this friend of mine who died of exhaustion and terrible pain.



## **Smoking:**

Cigarettes contain poisonous materials such as nicotine, hydrogen sulphate, and carbon sulphate. It has been said that the quantity of nicotine in twenty cigarettes can kill a man if he takes it at one time. However, it will not kill him if he takes it at intervals, but this does not stop its gradual destructive effect on his body. Smoking causes many diseases to the throat, teeth, mouth, lungs, oesophagus, besides its bad effect on the blood, heart and nerves. It has been found that many cases of mouth, gum, and lung cancer result from smoking. Actually, smoking has such a bad effect on the respiratory tract and the lungs, that smokers often develop a dry cough. I know a brilliant swimmer who used to dive and remain under water for more than a minute, holding his breath. But, after becoming addicted to smoking, his health deteriorated so much that he neither swims nor dives any more. There are other sportsmen who used to run very well, but who have lost this ability after becoming addicted to smoking. Thus it is that smokers are no doubt self-killers. I remember that twenty three years ago I gave a piece of advice to one of my colleagues to stop smoking. I kept explaining to him its drawbacks. He told me that he was more aware of the harsh effects than I was. When I asked how, he explained: "Once I smoked a cigarette and then examined its filter to find that it had turned black. I knew then that all that smoke affected my lungs, windpipe, throat and teeth." Although that young man knew the bad effects of smoking, yet he could not give up that bad habit although it ruined his health as well as his will-power. Actually I had never before been aware that smokers swallowed the smoke of

their cigarettes. I had always thought that they took the smoke into their mouths and then blew it out. Then, later on I was told that smokers actually swallowed the smoke letting it into their windpipe and lungs thus damaging everything in its way.

There is a funny story about the first man who started smoking in the United Kingdom. He was once sitting at home smoking when his servant came into the room and saw smoke coming out of his master's mouth. He thought that something had happened to his master. So he ran fast, brought in a pot full of water and poured it onto the head of his master whom he thought was on fire. Today, this scene has become so normal that nobody gets excited about it. This hot flow of smoke which goes into the lungs has such a great effect on the blood and the red corpuscles that it raises the blood pressure. It is said that during smoking, blood pressure goes up to 200 or more thus badly affecting the heart. Some diseases, such as angina pectoris, result from smoking. In addition, smoking has a bad effect upon the stomach and the intestines. It is well known that smoking causes one to lose one's appetite and many smokers eat very little which, no doubt, damages their health and weakens their bodies. In poor districts, many people use their scanty money to buy cigarettes instead of food with the result of damaging their health. Regarding the low standard classes, we regretfully mention those young boys who collect cigarette stubs thrown in the streets to sell them to people who, trade in them. It is known that cigarette stubs are the most dangerous part of cigarettes, for there poisonous elements become concentrated. Besides, they carry the smokers' diseases and the dirt of streets and of those collecting them. Those who collect them, empty the tobacco in them and roll it up into new

cigarettes or add new material to the tobacco and sell it under the name of Meassel. This poisonous stuff kills people who buy and smoke it.

So, if you meet a victim of smoking, advise him to keep away from it. One must also not forget the effects of smoking on the financial aspect of man's life. With each burning cigarette, man burns his own money and his family's food. Can you imagine that \$3000 million a year are spent on cigarettes in the USA?! It is a huge sum that can be the budget of a whole country. However, it is burnt to become smoke polluting the air!! In Egypt, we consume 12 million kilos of tobacco a year, which is ridiculous. Thousands of acres are used to cultivate tobacco in the world, and millions of pounds are spent on smoking with the result that people's health and economic condition deteriorate in a most regrettable way.

### **Reciprocal Killing:**

Most smokers not only kill themselves, but also share in killing others. This crime is not limited to those who trade in this poison, advertise it, encourage it and tempt people to smoke, but it also includes those who offer cigarettes to their friends. When you offer someone a cigarette, you will be doing something wrong and you will be violating the Sixth Commandment, for you will be helping your friend kill himself, although you may think that you are just be in hospitable and generous!! Generosity may further tempt you to insist on your guest or friend accepting a cigarette. If he insists upon refusing, you get upset, but why should you? You are

only killing him if you so insist. You would actually be like a pedestrian who falls in the mud and wishes everybody else to fall like him.

I recall that when I was young, some people tried to make me smoke, but I absolutely refused. One of my professors at the University was a very good friend of mine, and I had a very close relationship with him. I used to pay him frequent visits at his home. Once, this teacher offered me a cigarette, but I refused. Yet he insisted and offered it again but I said with a loving smile: "Don't you wish to stop smoking?" He answered: "Of course." Then I replied: "If so, why do you want me to do something you don't want do?" He replied: "As you like," and kept silent and never offered me any more cigarettes.

Don't think that when you offer someone a cigarette, you will be a generous and hospitable man and so boast about it or think highly of yourself. That very cigarette you offer your friend is apt to kill him and ruin his health. It will rob him of his money and damage all his life. It is a kind of slow and indirect killing over time. Once, somebody said to me: "Smokers curse the person who offered them their first cigarette." Of course we don't like anybody cursing someone else, but this at least shows how poorly smokers consider those who taught them to commit the sin of smoking.

Someone may acquire the habit of smoking from his parents through imitating them either in secret or openly.

The father may happen to know that his son smokes, yet be cannot ask him to give it up while he himself cannot do it. Such

a father will be accused before God on Judgment Day. If smoking on men's part is not acceptable it is much more so on the part of women. It is actually a disgusting scene that does not go well with women's shyness and decency. A woman who smokes cannot bring up good children and will thus be accused before God of shunning her responsibilities.

### **Alcoholic Beverages and Addicts:**

Alcoholic beverages hurt the body with the alcohol it contains. Its harmful effect increases with the increase of the quantity of alcohol in it. If we put a snake in alcohol, it is liable to die. If alcohol can kill a whole snake that is full of poison, what can it then do to man's body?!

Alcoholic beverages damage the liver, the stomach and the intestines. Too much drinking leads to alcoholism. This renders a person dizzy and nauseated. It also has a bad effect on the brain and the nerves. Too much drinking may cause one to lose one's consciousness, fall motionless on the ground, utter bad words, and behave in an indecent way. This state is called "drunkenness" and the person is described as "drunk". A drunkard may lose his balance as well as the respect of people. His will and self-control are spiritually, socially, and mentally killed by alcohol. In addition, such a person ends up losing his money and decreasing the quantity of food required for his children. The Bible condemns drinking alcohol by saying: "*Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup... At the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper.*" (Prov. 23:31&32).

Also: *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." (Prov. 20:1).*

The Bible forbade the drinking of wine *"in which is dissipation." (Eph. 5:18), and: "Do not be deceived... drunkards... will (not) inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 6:9&10).* and said to us: *"... not to keep company with... a drunkard." (1 Cor. 5:11).*

### **Drugs:**

Drugs are poisonous to their users. They spoil man's nerves, weaken his body and exhaust it, make him lose his mind, will and self control. Since the whole world started realising their danger, all countries and governments have prohibited them and passed laws to arrest all those who take them, trade in or even possess them. This is a clear point that needs no further explanation. There remains for us to say that all those who kill themselves by taking drugs, drinking or smoking give birth to weak and fragile children who inherit their parents' weaknesses and poor health. So they not only kill themselves, but hurt others as well.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Answers to Questions Related to the Subject

**QUESTION:** Can we include fasting in the subject of self-killing? My father and mother force me to have breakfast during exams. So what can I do?

**ANSWER:** In fact, fasting is not self-killing. On the contrary, it helps us become healthier if we fast in the right way. Fasting relieves the liver, the stomach, the intestines and the whole digestive system. By fasting, a person releases his body from the great effort it exerts during non-fasting periods. Vegetable food is useful and beneficial and many vegetarians lead a long life and have healthy bodies. Man remained vegetarian and lived to be over 900 year of age until after Noah's time (*Gen. 9&5*). So, do not be afraid of fasting and of eating vegetables. Parents who force their children to have breakfast prove that their love revolves around the physical but not the spiritual side of their life. By doing so, instead of teaching them how to be true and pious persons, they make them suffer. They just bewilder, confuse, and make them unsure whether to obey them or obey God. So, they make them suffer instead of providing them with the tranquillity and comfort they require especially during the time they are required to prepare for their exams. We know that during

exams, one gets closer to God by praying to Him, for one feels the need for His assistance. If a student is sinful, he normally abandons his specific sins during his exams, so that God may be merciful to him. But does this go with breaking one's fast during that period? Impossible. You, my son, don't break your fast during the time of your exams especially when you remember the story of Daniel the prophet who, after fasting, enjoyed better health (*Dan. 1:9-16*).

Fasting is not harmful to one's health, but too much eating, especially of fatty food, eating in between meals, as well as quick eating, affect people's health. On the contrary, those who fast and eat simple food improve their health and I would like to inform you, brethren, that health goes always "hand in hand" with everything that is spiritual...

Monks and hermits are usually healthy and many of them live a long life. The great Makarius lived to be ninety years old despite the austere life he led. Who among those who eat meat can live that long? Makarius AI-Askandary lived to be about 93 years old and used to eat a cabbage leaf once a week during Lent. St. Anthony, father of all monks, lived to be 105 years old and was a man of prayer and fasting. St. Paula, the pioneer anchorite, lived to be 100 years old and used to eat half a loaf of bread every day.

St. Shenouda, like Moses, lived to be about 120 years old despite his repeated and lengthy fasting and strict monasticism. There is not enough time to list all the details of this matter, therefore, we will leave it to your own meditations on the lives of saints. The same can be said about vegetarians, and their



long lives. For example, Bernard Shaw who lived to more than 90 years of age was a vegetarian. Of course our lives are in God's hands, but what I mean to show you by this is that vegetarian food does not spoil health as you may suppose. So, why do you feel afraid? This is fear placed on an unsolid base.

We say all this from the scientific and realistic point of view, but we must not forget the spiritual aspect of it all, i.e. God's assistance during a fasting period, and the effects of having a peace-loving heart and the exaltation of the spirit beyond the health of the body.

Believe me, many modern day diseases come from a psychological reason, and religion in itself is a sound treatment for them. Religion helps those who live by the spirit, without any worries, but only with love, joy and peace of mind and heart which are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Such fruits have always proved to be more beneficial to man than fat, meat, vitamins, minerals, ...etc. If a doctor succeeds in making his patient feel he is in a better psychological state, then he has succeeded in treating him.

Therefore, don't worry, for fasting does not kill people but the is for man's benefit since it gives health and strength.

**QUESTION:** Let us suppose that man's physical fitness is not in harmony with the well-being of his spirit. What should he do then, and which of the two natures should he prefer to the other?

**ANSWER:** Sometimes, man forces himself to do certain things for the sake of the spirit. The aim of our life here is not to entertain the body. No, we must put the spirit first before the body. Therefore, refined persons suppress the needs of their bodies in order to achieve their noble goals, and the poet says if people have great goals, their bodies have a difficult task achieving them.

For example, a clever student who studies hard exhausts his body and does what he can in order to achieve success and attain spiritual comfort. So, if he exhausts his body, we do not say or think that he is harming it, for he can easily regain his strength by resting his body later on and regaining what he has lost during his studies. Many are those who managed to regain all their strength after suffering severely from serious illnesses. Also, a devoted person who does his utmost to develop his spiritual status, or who exerts great efforts in serving God's name, may possibly exhaust his body and develop weak health; but by doing so, he offers his life as a sacrifice to God in much the same way as a candle which burns and melts away in order to provide us with light.

The term "gradual suicide" is applied to a person who wastes his health away through the adoption of certain faulty habits such as smoking. What benefit does society get out of his smoking? On the contrary, the smoke which he blows out of his mouth hurts others while he himself loses both his health and money. Wasting his health and money in this way makes his attitude similar to that of the Prodigal Son who spent all his money on luxury. This is actually true of everybody who spends his money in such a way. Contrary to this is the person

who tires himself by serving God and who sacrifices his life for the sake of others. What a great difference there is between killing and sacrifice!! Therefore, when we see some priests tiring themselves in the service of God's name, we should not say they are killing themselves, but that they are martyrs who sacrifice themselves for others.

A great saint like Paul says: *"Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?"* (2 Cor. 11:29). *"I am more in labours more abundant, in prisons more frequently."* (2 Cor. 11:23). Such a saint endured sickness and fatigue that we might have said to him: "You are killing yourself," but the truth is that he was a saint and a martyr. The same is true of every man who exhausts himself in order to achieve his ideal principles.

Men of principle exert and sacrifice themselves for their principles and when they die they rest in peace and their hard work follows them. Likewise, those hermits who exhaust their bodies in deserts and isolated areas, spend whole nights awake, fast a lot, and struggle in their prayers and kneeling, do not in fact kill themselves, but rather elevate themselves to a higher state where the spirit is placed before the body, so that the latter may become sacred and noble.

Paul says: *" always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."* (2 Cor. 4:10&11). He also says: *"For Your sake we are killed all day long."* (Rom. 8:36), and also: *"So then death is working in us."* (2 Cor. 4:12). So, one who sacrifices

his body for the sake of God and His Province cannot be called self-murderer, but self-sacrificer for the sake of God.

This is exactly like one putting a handful of incense into the censer, and burning it to produce a fragrant smell for God. When we look at those grains of incense in the censer, we do not find any trace of them. Did they burn? Yes, they did in order that God might smell a scent of satisfaction out of them. So, the lives of some people are like that incense, for those people exhaust their bodies and sacrifice themselves and God accepts their act as a pure and noble sacrifice.

My dear brethren, our body is liable to decay and we wish it does so for the sake of achieving good deeds.

Many people waste their bodies away for materialistic and not spiritual purposes although the apostle Paul says: *" I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1).*

Hermits and worshippers become extremely thin and meagre, yet their poor and weak bodies are combining with strong spiritual capacities and their spirits with the utmost of strength.

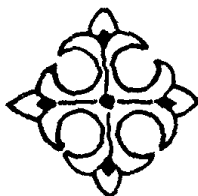
Some people feed themselves so much that they become like sheep ready to be slaughtered. What do they gain out of that? Actually nothing, for their bodies are bound to become rotten after death despite the perfumes that are applied to cover their rotten smell.

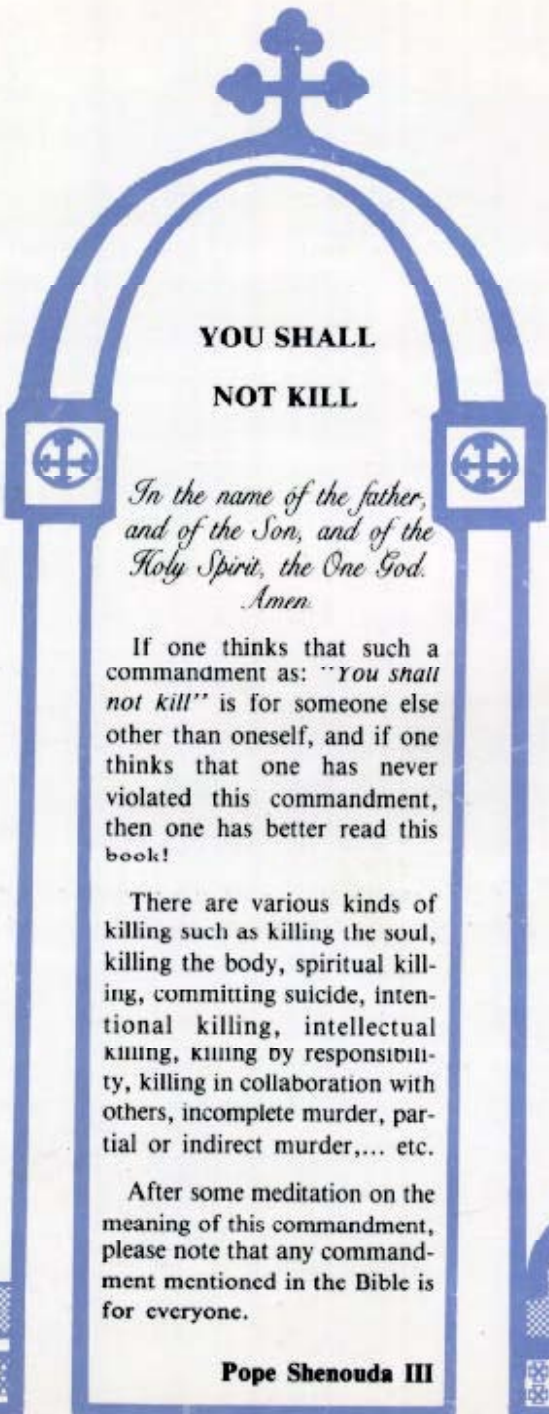
As for you, present your bodies as a sacred sacrament to God and always remember the saying of Paul: *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."* (2 Cor. 4:16).

We should differentiate between suicide and martyrdom. A person who commits suicide commits a crime which is not acceptable before God but the other person who becomes a martyr becomes glorious.

Therefore, a person may sacrifice himself for the sake of God or for others and his body may suffer greatly, but his spirit is highly elevated. Paul consoles us in all of this, saying: *".... if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* (2 Cor. 5:1).

Therefore, you must care more for your spirit, put it first and foremost before anything else and make your body a mere agent for achieving its goals. In this way the spirit is enlightened, exerts great efforts, and endures. You should not give great comfort to your body in order not to kill your soul. A quiet and moderate way of life is the wisest of all and the one you should pursue.





**YOU SHALL  
NOT KILL**

*In the name of the father,  
and of the Son, and of the  
Holy Spirit, the One God.  
Amen.*

If one thinks that such a commandment as: "You shall not kill" is for someone else other than oneself, and if one thinks that one has never violated this commandment, then one has better read this book!

There are various kinds of killing such as killing the soul, killing the body, spiritual killing, committing suicide, intentional killing, intellectual killing, killing by responsibility, killing in collaboration with others, incomplete murder, partial or indirect murder,... etc.

After some meditation on the meaning of this commandment, please note that any commandment mentioned in the Bible is for everyone.

**Pope Shenouda III**

