

CHAPTER THREE

The Glorious Call to Holiness

BACKGROUND: Chapter Two ended with Paul's assurances that his motives for teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ reach beyond the earthly life, into eternity. Now he offers proof of this fact.

3:1. Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? The early Church was plagued with many adversaries. Outside were pagans (who worshipped idols) and Jews (who, for the most part, rejected Christ as the Messiah). There were also troublesome factions within the Church, which consisted of those whom Paul called *false apostles* (2 Cor 11:13-15). Some of these false apostles tried to make themselves leaders for their own personal gain; some misunderstood the Gospel and taught heresy; others were Judaizers: Jews who believed Christ to be the Messiah but still thought it necessary to conform to the legalism of the Mosaic Law. Paul expresses concern that he may appear to be boasting when he compares his ministry with these factions in Corinth, which affect the Church adversely. His intent is not to parade his accomplishments but to make it clear that his credentials as an Apostle have been established.

3:2. You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; The very presence of the Church in Corinth is Paul's commendation. That infamous pagan city was notorious for the love of pleasure and lack of morals among its people. Yet, after learning the Gospel from Paul, many there responded to it and underwent an amazing transformation to the Christian lifestyle. This fact is proof of the validity of his ministry.

3:3. you are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. He contrasts his message with that of the Jews—the Gospel with the “Law.” The Ten Commandments, part of the Written Covenant of the Old Testament, were given by God to Moses on tablets of stone (Ex 31:18). The new, final, Blood Covenant between God and man was revealed to the Corinthians by Paul but was written in the hearts of the receptive by the Holy Spirit (Jer 31:31-33). God can use each of us as an instrument to teach the Gospel, but our work will bear fruit only with those whose hearts are open to the divine.

3:4-5. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God... Paul puts his trust in God's final covenant with man, which operates through the saving actions of Christ. He does all he can as his part of this pact but knows that without the grace of God he can do nothing. All who try to do God's work will succeed only if they do their best with the gifts God has given them and trust Him to do the rest.

3:6. who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. The Written Covenant contained not only the Ten Commandments but 613 laws. God's people were required to follow each law to *the letter*—an impossibility. To break one was to be guilty of breaking them all (Jas 2:10), with the result that not even great luminaries such as Moses, Solomon or John the Baptist could find salvation through this covenant. Only Enoch, who lived before the giving of the Law (Gen 5:24, Heb 11:5), and Elijah, who lived during the time it was in force (2 Kings 2:1-11), did not have to pass

through death. They were taken directly into God's presence because they pleased God. They were righteous, not in the complete, death-defeating sense that Christ was, but rather, in relation to the time in which they lived.¹ Enoch and Elijah point to the certainty of eternal life for man and prefigure those who will be alive at Christ's Second Coming, so will not have to pass through death.

But many ask where Enoch was translated, and why he was translated, and why he did not die, neither he nor Elijah, and if they are still alive, how they live and in what form. But to ask these things is superfluous.... For the Scriptures say nothing more than is necessary. Enoch's translation took place immediately at the beginning, and thereby the human soul received a hope of the destruction of death, of the overthrow of the devil's tyranny, and that death will be no more.

CHRYSOSTOM²

The Written Covenant was given to the people of the Hebrew nation to set them apart from others in the world as belonging to God and to give them an opportunity to show faith and love through obedience. Man's inability to follow it perfectly, as required, also illustrated the fact that no one can earn salvation on his own. Under the Law, everyone deserved death. Therefore, *the letter*, the "Law," *kills*.

God sought to form a mind conscious of righteousness, so that being convinced in that time of our unworthiness of attaining life through our own works, it should now, through the kindness of God, be verified to us; and having made it clear that in ourselves we were unable to enter into the kingdom of God, we might through the power of God be made able.... For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God? Oh sweet exchange! Oh unsearchable operation! Oh benefits surpassing all expectation! That the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors.

MATHETES³

The first chapter of the Book of Genesis reveals God's original intent for man: fellowship with Him. Adam and Eve had the opportunity to pursue this potential unhampered if they would obey the one commandment He gave them. When they succumbed to Satan's voice urging them to do things his way—instant gratification of their desires—they found themselves on a path away from God, and the agony of man began. Still, God's hope for man remained the same—but now required a Savior to rescue him from his perilous downward spiral. In God's subsequent dealings with man, some responded to Him and others rejected Him, preferring false gods. Through His Oral Covenant with Abraham and His Written Covenant with Moses and the Hebrew nation, He prepared the family of David to receive the Messiah and purified special people for important roles in His plan to put man back on the road to union with his Maker.

The history of the Old Testament is that of elections linked to successive falls. Through these God saves a "remnant," whose patient waiting purifies: through the very dialectic of disappointments, the awaiting of the triumphal Messiah becomes that of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, the awaiting of the political liberation of a people, that of the spiritual liberation of humanity. The more God recedes, the more man's goal is universalized: until the supreme purity of the Virgin is capable of giving birth to the Savior of humanity.⁴

The old Written Covenant prefigured and was fulfilled by the new Blood Covenant. Jesus Christ

fulfilled the old through obedience and ushered in the new. He allowed Himself to be put to death, though He was sinless, thus offering Himself as the Lamb of God, the last living sacrifice under the Law, which required atonement for sin (Gen 22:8, 1 Pet 1:18-19). Christ's death was not a price God had set for man's sin, nor was it a price Satan had a right to demand. His death was, however, engineered by Satan as part of his continuing attempt to deny to as many as possible that which he and the celestial beings who followed him in rebellion had lost for themselves (Rev 12:7-9). God allowed the Devil this liberty because He knew that through it Satan would be caught in his own trap. In bringing to death one who did not deserve it, Satan overstepped his bounds—he went too far.

Death could not hold Christ because He was sinless. He thus achieved victory over death. He also became the *first fruits* of the dead (1 Cor 15:20): the first to be resurrected, never to die again. His Resurrection is assurance that there is life after death; thus it offers strength and courage to those who hope for eternal life with God for themselves and their loved ones.

As long as sin sentenced only the guilty to death, no interference with it was possible, seeing that it had justice on its side. But when it subjected to the same punishment Him Who was innocent, guiltless and worthy of crowns of honor and hymns of praise, being convicted of injustice, it was by necessary consequence stripped of its power.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA⁵

Those who are a part of the mystical Body of Christ through Baptism and a life of faith also cannot be held by death when it comes to them. Because they share His victory, they only pass through death, to God's presence. And while they are alive they are not bound by *the letter* of the Law—literally having to be perfect according to its tenets. Rather, they are willingly bound by love to its *spirit*, which turns man to Christ and accomplishes what the Law could not: righteousness which springs from a heart softened by love and grace.

The Law is the shadow of the Gospel and the Gospel is the image of the good things to come. For the former checks bad activities and the latter provides good actions.

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR⁶

After Christ's Crucifixion, the terms of God's covenant with man changed radically as far as what God provides and what He requires from us. He not only sent His Son to accomplish what we cannot—objectively earn our own salvation—He also gave us a partner to help us fulfill the commitment and spiritual growth He does expect from those who desire union with Him: the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In the Law, he that has sin is punished; under the Gospel, he that has sins comes and is Baptized and is made righteous, and being made righteous, he lives, being delivered from the death of sin. The Law, if it lay hold on a murderer, puts him to death; the Gospel, if it lay hold on a murderer, enlightens and gives him life. And why do I single out a murderer? The Law laid hold on one that gathered sticks on a Sabbath day and stoned him (Num 15:32,36). This is the meaning of *the letter kills*. The Gospel takes hold of thousands of murderers and robbers, and Baptizing delivers them from their former vices. This is the meaning of *the Spirit gives life*.

CHRYSOSTOM⁷

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (a). What are some of the other ways in which the precepts of the Old Testament prefigured and were fulfilled by those of the New Testament? (b). Under the secular law of our land, murderers are sometimes put to death, as they were under the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. How does

this fact correlate with the Gospel, which Chrysostom writes “enlightens the murderer and gives him life”? (c). Which Orthodox icon illustrates the fact that before Christ died to redeem man from his sins there was no access to the Kingdom of Heaven? (d). How does knowledge of the Written Covenant of the Old Testament help us in our walk with Christ?

3:7-8. *But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?* The Ten Commandments condemned man to death and separation from God because of man’s sinfulness and his inability to follow them perfectly, as required. The Written Covenant brought death, not because it caused sin but because it defined sin. Yet this old covenant was glorious because it was a part of God’s overall divine plan for the salvation of mankind, which He revealed to His people in stages. Therefore, when Moses came down from the mountain after having received the Commandments from God engraved on tablets of stone, *the skin of his face shone*. Aaron and the people were *afraid to come near him* (Ex 34:30) because he radiated divine glory. However, the glory that shone in Moses’ face would fade when he was away from God’s presence, symbolizing the fact that this covenant was not permanent. Paul’s point here is that if a transient covenant was so glorious that its radiance shone on Moses’ face, imagine the degree of glory that is attendant to the permanent Blood Covenant through Jesus Christ, which is written in man’s hearts *by the Spirit of the living God* (2 Cor 3:3).

The children of Israel could not look directly at Moses’ face, a mark of their great weakness and groveling spirit ... seeing that even of a glory that is to be done away, or rather is in comparison no glory at all, they were not able to be spectators.

CHRYSOSTOM⁸

3:9. *For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.* As part of the family of fallen man, we were born with a tendency toward sin. Through faith that Christ is the Messiah, our Savior according to God’s divine plan, we rise above this sinful nature and are saved from the condemnation of being found guilty by the Law. As part of the Body of Christ through Baptism, we take on Christ’s righteousness before God—partake of divine nature (2 Pet 1:4)—if, as we are able, we try to live Christ-like lives: our profession of faith. Faith, expressing itself in the attempt to be obedient, is the activator. He who demonstrates faith is aided by the Holy Spirit towards growth in holiness in the image of Christ. This is the *ministry of righteousness*, which is more glorious than the *ministry of condemnation* of the Old Testament because it leads to eternal life.

Since then the Spirit has given us life, let us remain living and not return again to the former deadness: for *Christ dies no more; for the death that He died, He died unto sin once* (Rom 6:9-10) and He will not have us always saved by grace: for so we would be empty of all things. Therefore, He asks us to contribute something also from ourselves. Let us then contribute and preserve to the soul its life.

CHRYSOSTOM⁹

If our lives demonstrate faith as our part of the Blood Covenant with God, we walk toward eternal life with Him. The inevitable sins committed along the way (succumbed to unwittingly through weakness of flesh or immaturity of faith rather than indifference to or rejection of God) are forgiven through repentance and the Sacrament of Confession. On the other hand, if our lives do not show faith, we walk in a direction that takes us away from God eternally. Only these two

options are possible. There will be no respite from the agony endured by those who cut themselves off from God through lack of faith because *Christ dies no more*: there will be no additional atoning sacrifice for those who do not recognize and respond to “the single, all encompassing and unrepeatable one that Christ offered once (Heb 9:28).”¹⁰

Groan when you have sinned, not because you are to be punished (for this is nothing), but because you have offended your Master, one so gentle, one so kind, one Who loves you so and longs for your salvation so that He gave even His Son for you. For this groan, and do this continually: for this is Confession.

CHRYSOSTOM¹¹

Each of us has one opportunity—our lifetime—to respond to God’s divine plan for the salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ. The required life of attempted obedience is not easy but not impossible either because of the grace to which God has given man access.

Our body, before Christ’s coming, was an easy prey to the assaults of sin. For after man’s fall a great swarm of passions entered also. And for this cause it was not nimble for running the race of virtue. For there was no Spirit present to assist, nor any baptism of power to mortify (Jn 7:39). But as some horse that answered not the rein, it ran indeed, but made frequent slips, the Law meanwhile announcing what was to be done and what not, yet not conveying to those in the race anything over and above exhortation by means of words. But when Christ had come, the effort became easier and, therefore, we had a more distant goal set us, in that the assistance given us was greater ... Unless we stoop down very low to it, sin will not get the better of us...for grace remitted our former sins and secures us against future ones.

CHRYSOSTOM¹²

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (e). A person may have life in his body yet be dead spiritually. What are the signs of death of the soul? ...of life in the soul?

3:10-11. *For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.* Though the old covenant had glory, by comparison with the new it had no glory at all—as the brightness of the moon is dulled by the rising of the sun.

3:12-13. *Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.* Because the glory that shone in Moses’ face would fade with time after he left the presence of God, he put a veil over his face after he spoke to the people of Israel, so they would not notice and become disheartened. Paul has nothing to hide. The glory of the final Blood Covenant is not temporary—nothing will replace it. On the contrary, its glory will increase, reaching its fulfillment at the Second Coming of Christ. Therefore, he is bold in proclaiming it.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (f). Why did Moses’ face shine (Ex 34:30), rather than the tablets upon which God had written the Ten Commandments?

3:14-15. *But their minds were hardened. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.* The Hebrew nation in general did not recognize Christ as the Messiah when He announced the new covenant—the fulfillment of the old. It knew

the letter of the Law but did not understand the spirit which imbued it with life: the promise of the Incarnation of the Son of God, Who would release them from the bondage of the Law. It looked instead, as it still does, for a messiah to lead them to perfect conditions on earth rather than in Heaven with God. *Their minds were hardened.* That is, they were not *meek* (Mt 5:5), the Hebrew word for which means, “capable of being molded.” To be one of God’s people we must be willing to let Him mold us according to His image, and to try with all our might to live according to His truths. A synergistic effort between God and man is required. The minds of the unenlightened Hebrew people were hardened with self-will, so the truth could not penetrate. Therefore, to this day they continue to read only the Old Testament and to misunderstand it, with the result that there is still a veil between them and the truth.

He said not, “the veil remains on the writing,” but in the reading
CHRYSOSTOM¹³

That is, the fault lies not in what was written but in the way it is perceived. This is an example of the fact that Scripture can be misunderstood, which is why it is important to look, for its true meaning, to the Church and the truths it has preserved through the Ecumenical Councils and the consensus of the writings of the Fathers. If we give our own interpretation to Scripture, we distort it according to our own will and deprive ourselves of that which God intends to convey.

... *their minds were hardened.* What has this to do with the veil? It prefigured what would be. For not only did they not then perceive; but they do not even now see the Law. And the fault lies with themselves, for the hardness is that of an unimpressible and perverse judgment...For if the Law was brought to an end by Christ, which it was, and the Law said this by anticipation, how will they who do not receive Christ, Who has done away with the Law, see that the Law was done away? Being incapable of seeing this, it is very plain that even of the Law itself which asserted these things, they do not know the power nor the full glory¹⁴ ... for the glory of the Law is to turn men to Christ.

CHRYSOSTOM¹⁵

Those who recognized and accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God and their Messiah removed the veil from their hearts and their minds.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (g). What Biblical event symbolized this removal of the veil between God’s people and the truth?

It is important to remember, however, that our roots as God’s people are in Judaism; that Jesus, the Apostles and all the first Christians were Jews; and that those of Hebrew heritage who accept Christ as their Messiah are still His “chosen people,” *natural branches* called first to introduce God’s truths to the world (read Romans 11). It is good, therefore, to try to share the Gospel with them and with all people of the world whenever possible, as Paul did. When he entered a town he would first go to the local synagogue to tell the Jews that the Messiah they had been waiting for had arrived. Then he would go wherever Gentiles gathered, to preach the Gospel (Acts 18:4-6).

3:16. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Exodus 34:34-35 relates that when Moses returned to the presence of the Lord he removed the veil from his face, an act symbolic of the fact that when one actively turns to God, he receives understanding. Chrysostom says this verse also points to the general conversion of the nation of Israel,¹⁶ which is one of the signs of the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ (see Rom 11:19-32; Is 59:20).

When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...all Israel will be saved (Rom 11:26), at

the time of His Second Coming and the end of the world.

CHRYSOSTOM¹⁷

When the Jews, as a people, hardened their hearts with regard to Christ, His Gospel was brought to those not bound by the Law. At a time known only by God, when the number of Gentiles to be saved has been reached, He will soften the hearts of the people of Israel and they will *turn to the Lord*. They will begin to comprehend the message of the Old Testament: that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah Who came to rescue them from the futility of looking to the Law for salvation. They will remove the veil from their faces. They will turn from the letter to the spirit of the Law, and will understand.

3:17. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. The Lord to Whom the children of Israel must turn is the same Lord into Whose presence Moses went to receive the Ten Commandments. But He wants them now to have a fuller understanding of Him, as a triune God. Through them God revealed the truth that there is only one God—one Creator—not many gods as the pagans thought. He gave them indications of His tripartite fullness through the Old Testament (i.e., Gen 1:26: *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness;"* Gen 18:1-3: *Abraham looked up and saw three men. He ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "My Lord..."*). In time, the Incarnation and Transfiguration revealed the person of God the Son, Who revealed the person of God the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26), Who, in turn, breathed life into the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2). Since then, when the Holy Spirit leads a person to Christ, he is led to God the Father (Jn 14:6) and through this Holy Trinity receives liberty from the bondage and condemnation of the Law. He finds himself free, as Adam had been, to grow in communion with God.

3:18. But we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Love makes man a willing slave (Rom 6:22). With liberty from the Law and a fuller understanding of God, those who have committed their lives to Christ are able to look upon His glory and to become reflectors of it to the extent of their faith and love.

As soon as we are baptized the soul beams even more than the sun, being cleansed by the Spirit; and not only do we behold the glory of God but from it also receive a sort of splendor. Just as if pure silver is turned toward the sun's rays, it will itself also shoot forth rays, not from its own natural property only but also from the solar luster; so also does the soul, being cleansed and made brighter than silver, receive a ray from the glory of the Spirit and send it back.

CHRYSOSTOM¹⁸

In this present life, with the veil removed for true Christians, we can see God and His divine plan for our salvation, though still only indirectly. Because of the dazzling brilliance of the sun, the human eye cannot look directly at it without damage. When a solar eclipse occurs, the moon is positioned between the sun and the earth. During this phenomenon, much or most of the sun's brilliant light is blocked by the moon, but still the sun's rays are so powerful that we are cautioned not to look at it directly but through a mirror, which allows a view but deflects its power. In similar fashion, God and His divine plan are so glorious that we are unable to have first-hand knowledge of them but are given reflected glimpses in proportion to our zeal and spiritual maturity. As we strive to be obedient—demonstrating faith—we are transformed and continually grow in His image *from glory to glory*, that is, from one glorious state of spiritual growth in holiness and awareness of God to another, through the help of the Holy Spirit.

When the mind of man ... is raised on high and sees the Word, and in Him also the Father of the Word, it takes pleasure in contemplating Him and gains renewal by its desire toward Him...as Adam is described in the Holy Scriptures as having at the beginning had his mind God-ward in a freedom unembarrassed by shame and as associating with the holy ones in that contemplation of things perceived by the mind which he enjoyed in the place where he was—the place the holy Moses called in figure a Garden. So purity of soul is sufficient of itself to reflect God, as the Lord also says, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* ATHANASIUS¹⁹

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (h). Why are the stages of spiritual growth called *glorious*?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT COMMENTS

(a). What are some of the ways in which the precepts of the Old Testament prefigured and were fulfilled by those of the New Testament?

(1). Old Testament sacrifices were commanded by God from those guilty of breaking the Law, to teach man that sin required atonement (see Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). They pointed to and were completed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the last living sacrifice, Who gave His life to redeem mankind from sin, once and for all.

(2). The Hebrew Passover (Ex 12:1-14) was instituted by God when He sent the angel of death, who “passed over” (and thus did not bring death to) the first-born of the homes marked by the blood of the lamb according to divine instruction. This first Passover prefigured the New Passover (1 Cor 5:7): the shedding of the Blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Those marked as God’s people by the Blood of Christ (through Eucharist) will not be held by death. They pass through death to eternal life with God.

(3). That which was called the “Feast of Weeks” in the Old Testament (Lev 23:15-22) was the Hebrew Pentecost. It commemorated God’s giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses and the harvest from the new land. Hebrew Pentecost prefigured Christian Pentecost (the descent of the Holy Spirit and the resultant harvest of souls brought to faith). Christian Pentecost occurred fifty days after Christ’s Resurrection, on the very day the Jews were observing their Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

(4). The Old Testament commanded that the Sabbath (Saturday), the day upon which God rested from His work of creation, be kept holy (Gen 2:2-3, Ex 20:8-11). The Old Testament Sabbath prefigured the Great and Holy Sabbath when Christ rested in the Tomb following His Crucifixion. In turn, Christ’s Resurrection on Sunday, the Lord’s Day (Rev 1:10), prefigures life in the Kingdom for those in-Christ. The Sabbath continues to be honored as a day of preparation for the Lord’s Day (Gr: Kyriaki): the day on which Christians worship God and profess faith in Christ’s Resurrection and hope for their own.

(5). Under the Oral Covenant with Abraham, circumcision was required as a sign of belonging to the one, true God (Gen 17:10-12). It was required on the eighth day of life—the day

with properties beyond this world for God's people. Circumcision pointed to and was superseded by Baptism as the sign of belonging to Christ: in submitting oneself or one's child to this Mystery obediently, faith is demonstrated (see Mt 28:18-19, Acts 2:38-39, 15:1-29).

It is possible for us to show how the eighth day [Sunday/the Lord's Day] possessed a certain mysterious import, which the seventh day did not possess and which was promulgated by God through these rites ...

The blood of that circumcision is obsolete, and we trust in the blood of salvation; there is now another covenant, and another law has gone forth from Zion. Jesus Christ circumcises all who will...with knives of stone²⁰; that they may be a righteous nation, a people keeping faith, holding to the truth, and maintaining peace.

JUSTIN THE MARTYR²¹

(6). The priesthood of the Old Testament, established through Moses' brother Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, offered sacrifices in the Temple on behalf of the people to atone for sin (Ex 28-29). This Levitical priesthood pointed to and was superseded by the high priesthood of Christ Himself after the order of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18, Ps 110:4, Heb 7), which is eternal. This is the priesthood in which males in the Orthodox Church who receive a calling from God participate (Mk 3:14-15, Mt 28:16-20, Acts 6:2-6). The Church, comprised of the faithful, is the Body of Christ; the priest is the image of Christ, the Head of the Body. As such, the priest continually offers to God, sacramentally, the one, final blood sacrifice of Christ in redemption of the sins of mankind. The priest "can fulfill this service only because the priesthood ... is not 'his'... but the one and same indivisible priesthood of Christ, which eternally lives and is eternally fulfilled in the Church, the Body of Christ."²²

(b). Under the Law of the Old Testament, murderers were put to death, as they sometimes are under the secular law of our land. How does this fact correlate with the Gospel, which Chrysostom writes "enlightens the murderer and gives him life"? There is no easy answer to the question of capital punishment. The early Church condemned it but soon realized that, like war, it was sometimes necessary—to protect the innocent and the sanctity of life in general.

Life was created by God and belongs to God. Life is each person's opportunity to discover Jesus Christ, demonstrate faith in and love for Him (the criteria for salvation) and to grow in His image toward union with God. To take a life could be to short-circuit that process--thus the Christian ideal is to reform a criminal through love. But there are those who reject any such attempt, and there are those who may be brought to a state of repentance only by the realization that they face death. This prospect, which offers time to prepare, affords the accused the opportunity to make peace with God (a chance denied murder victims). Also, the sincerity of contrition and change is difficult for any human being or council to judge.

The sixth commandment prohibits murder (Ex 20:13), but Mosaic Law did not strike out the death penalty (Ex 21:12-17). Capital punishment is not murder but authorized killing, which the State has the right to enforce (Rom 13:4). To maintain a civilized society, those guilty of disobeying the secular laws of the land must face the consequences. Christ taught that secular authority is given by God and should be obeyed (Mt 22:21, Jn 19:11). Coming to terms with capital punishment could encourage society to reflect on the fact that actions bring consequences—in this life and the next.

There should, however, be no rush to kill. Christian principles call for a system of law which, first

and foremost, emphasizes reform and rehabilitation of the criminal. The law which deems this unattainable or inappropriate because of the heinousness of a particular crime must guard against mistakes and be fair to all. Capital punishment, therefore, should not be a part of the penal code unless it is used equitably across the board, not just against those whom society does not value and those who cannot afford an expensive defense.²³

No one, however, is ever excluded from the power of the Gospel. Till the moment of death, anyone can call upon the mercy of God. Like the thief on the cross (Lk 23:39-43), he who acknowledges his sin and repents, though he lose his earthly life, may, subject to Christ's judgment of the sincerity of his faith, receive forgiveness and eternal life with God.

(c). Which Orthodox icon illustrates the fact that there was no access to the Kingdom of Heaven before Christ died to redeem man from sin? The Icon of Christ's Descent into Hades, also known as the Icon of the Resurrection, depicts the truth that before Christ's Crucifixion, no one (except Enoch and Elijah) entered Heaven (read Heb 11). It portrays the fact that while Christ's Body lay in the Tomb, His Soul descended into Hades²⁴ (1 Pet 3:18-20; 4:6; Eph 4:9-10). On this much anticipated Day, He called forth all who, before He came to earth, tried to live righteously while waiting for Him to rescue them from the despair of being unable to earn salvation for themselves by following the Mosaic Law to the letter. At His descent they (and in the case of non-Jews, those who tried to live according to what they had been able to discover about God), were given the opportunity to accept Him as Lord. This was not a second chance but the opportunity they had not had during their lives. Symbolizing these truths, the icon depicts Adam and Eve being taken from the throes of Hell. Also depicted as having been liberated are Kings David and Solomon, Abraham, John the Baptist, Abel, and the Prophets: Old and New Testament figures who point to Him in the icon as the Messiah they awaited. The figure shown in the blackness at the bottom symbolizes the Devil.²⁵ Through His Crucifixion, Christ put Satan (and death) in chains, restrained them (Rev 20:2). That is, the power the Devil had over mankind after man's sin was death, but the sting of death was now dispelled, for though man would still have to pass through it (until the Second Coming), Christ's Resurrection proved death would not be final to those who died truly believing in Him.

I C O N

Christ's Descent into Hades

The Fathers, however justly they lived until the Coming of the Lord, were not brought into the Kingdom until He had descended Who would open the gates of Paradise by the intervention of His death; they murmured because they had lived justly in order that they might enter the Kingdom, and yet they suffered long delay. It was, therefore, they who had labored in the Vineyard, and it was they who murmured, whom the *abodes of Hell*, however peaceful, had received after their just lives. It was, therefore, after their murmuring, that they received the reward; they who after the long ages of Hell reached at length the joys of the Kingdom. We, however, who have come at the eleventh hour murmur not after our labor but receive our reward because coming into this world after the Coming of the Mediator, we are brought into the Kingdom almost as soon as we depart from our body; and we receive without any delay that which the ancient Fathers merited to receive after prolonged delay.

GREGORY THE GREAT²⁶

The “abodes of Hell” entered by those who had tried to live righteously according to the Law while awaiting the Messiah are said to have been “peaceful,” because they were the regions of Hell most divorced from the realm of Satan (sometimes referred to as "Hades"). Just as those in the Kingdom differ as to their relationship with God, those in Hell are estranged from Him on the same basis.

(d). How does knowledge of the Written Covenant of the Old Testament help us in our walk with Christ? Having knowledge of the Written Covenant of the Old Testament aids our understanding of the fullness of God’s divine plan for mankind and the reason we needed a Savior. As our awareness of the magnitude of what Christ did for us grows, so will our love for and obedience to Him.

(e). A person may have life in his body, yet be dead spiritually. What are the signs of death of the soul? ...life in the soul? Signs of death of the soul are such as we see in the rich man of the parable (Lk 16:19-31):

... who ate and drank and lived in pleasure only.... When the soul does not perform the things proper to it, is it not dead? When, for instance, it has no care for virtue, but is rapacious and transgresses the law. How can I tell that you have a soul? Because you walk? So do the irrational creatures. Because you eat and drink? So do the wild beasts. Because you stand upright on two feet? This tells me only that you are a beast in human form.... How can I see that you have the soul of a man, when you kick like an ass, when you bear malice like the camel, when you bite like the bear, when you are ravenous like the wolf, when you steal like the fox, when you are wily as the serpent, and when you are shameless as a dog.

CHRYSOSTOM²⁷

Signs of life in the soul are such as we see in Lazarus, the poor man of the same parable:

... though wrestling with continual hunger, and not even supplied with the food that was necessary, did not speak blasphemy against God, but endured all nobly.

CHRYSOSTOM²⁸

(f). Why did Moses' face shine (Ex 34:30), rather than the tablets upon which God had written the Ten Commandments? The fact that Moses' face shone when he came down from Mount Sinai, rather than the tablets upon which God had written, points to the fact that God glorifies spiritually, in this life and the next, those who bring glory to Him. God's light radiates through those who do His work. It is interesting to note that at first Moses was not aware that his face radiated glory—he became aware of it through the reactions of others.

Through the glory of the Spirit that shone from his face in such a way that no one could look at it, Moses showed how in the resurrection of the righteous their bodies will be glorified with the glory that their souls already possess inwardly during this present life.

MAKARIOS OF EGYPT²⁹

This is seen also in such phenomena as “weeping” icons, which some have been privileged to behold. In an icon of the Theotokos that has this propensity for instance, the focus is on her—not on the wood, paint and canvas of these icons, which are but vehicles of revelation. Through her tears, the Theotokos is recognized as having spiritual vitality because of the life of faith she lived while on earth.

(g). What Biblical event symbolized the removal of the veil between God's people and the truth? The tearing of the veil in the Temple in Jerusalem upon the death of Christ (Mt 27:51).

In Solomon's Temple, the Holy Place, in which a lamp of oil burned continuously (Ex 27:20-21) and incense was offered to God daily (Ex 30:6-7) was separated from the Most Holy Place by a veil (Ex 26:33; 2 Chr 3). God was present among His people in the Most Holy Place, *above the mercy seat...between the two cherubim ... on the ark* which housed the Ten Commandments (Ex 25:17-22). No one could enter the Most Holy Place except the High Priest. Just once a year, on the Day of Atonement, he entered the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifice to God for the sins of the people (Heb 9:6-7). The veil symbolized the fact that because of sin man was separated from God, just as cherubim and a flaming sword were placed *at the east end of the Garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life* (Gen 3:24). Through Jesus' death, which atoned once and for all for the sins of mankind, this barrier was removed, thus the veil was *torn in two*. Man once again had access to God and to everlasting life—through His Son.

(h). Why are the stages of spiritual growth called *glorious*? The stages of spiritual growth gradually bring us closer to our Lord in this life and to eternal life in His glorious Kingdom.

Paul's garments wrought miracles (Acts 19:11-12); Peter's very shadows were mighty (Acts 5:15) ... and those looking steadfastly at Stephen, *saw his face as the face of an angel* (Acts 6:15). But this was nothing compared to the glory flashing within. For what Moses had upon his face, these carried about with them on their souls even far more. For the glory shining on Moses' face was more obvious to the senses, but this was incorporeal. And as shooting stars reflect their brilliance upon that which is near them, so does it also happen with the faithful. Therefore, surely they with whom it is thus are set free from earth and have their dreams of the things of Heaven. CHRYSOSTOM³⁰

¹ Chrysostom; Toal, "The Transfiguration of Christ," Vol. Two, p.54-55.

² Schaff, "Homily XXII on the Epistle to the Hebrews," Vol. XIV, p.467.

³ Roberts and Donaldson, "Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus," Vol. I, p.28.

⁴ Lossky, *Theology*, p.86.

⁵ R. Payne Smith, "On the Incarnation," *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, note 1, p.52.

⁶ Berthold, "Chapters on Knowledge," (90), p.145.

⁷ Schaff, "Homily VI on Second Corinthians," Vol. XII, p.307.

⁸ *ibid*, "Homily VII," p.310-11.

⁹ *ibid*, "Homily VI," p.307.

¹⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, p.104.

¹¹ Schaff, "Homily IV," Vol. XII, p.299.

¹² *ibid*, "Homily XI on the Epistle to the Romans," Vol XI, p.411.

¹³ *ibid*, "Homily VII," Vol. XII, p.312.

¹⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.311.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.312, note 4.

¹⁷ *ibid*, "Homily XIX on Romans," Vol. XI, p.488.

¹⁸ *ibid*, "Homily VII," Vol. XII, p.314.

¹⁹ Schaff and Wace, "Against the Heathen," Vol. IV, p.5.

²⁰ Justin explains *knives of stone* as "the words preached by the Apostles of the corner-stone cut out without hands." Roberts and Donaldson, "Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, A Jew," Vol. I, p.256.

²¹ *ibid*, p.206.

²² Schmemmann, p.115.

²³ Harakas, "Capital Punishment" (39), Social Issues, Part IV, p.154-7.

²⁴ Vassiliadis, *The Mystery of Death*, p.164.

²⁵ Photios Kontoglou, *Ekphrasis*, p.180.

²⁶ Toal, "On the Gospel," Vol. One, p.382.

²⁷ Schaff, "Homily VI," Vol. XII, p.308.

²⁸ *ibid*.

²⁹ Palmer, Sherrard, Ware, "The Raising of the Intellect," (62), Vol. Three, p.312.

³⁰ Schaff, "Homily VII," Vol. XII, p.314.