

*A PATRISTIC COMMENTARY*

*The Book  
of*

# **MALACHI**

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**In the name of the Father, the Son and  
the Holy Spirit  
one God.  
Amen**

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# **THE SHINING OF THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ON ALL THE NATIONS**

The book of Malachi occupies a special position. Representing for the Jews the last book of the Holy Scripture; it is as though it came to present the final divine commandment that includes the goal of the Holy Bible as a whole; where God proclaims to His people in perfect clarity the following points:

1. God loves them; and equally loves all mankind. For His free love for them does not mean His partiality for a certain people on the expense of the rest of mankind.
2. His utter rejection of their offerings and sacrifices, because of their literalism in understanding the Law; and that, in their life, they practice their worship of God by a heart that breaks His commandment, and refuses the fellowship with Him.
3. Having erred on all levels: as rulers, priests, and congregation, the only solution for them is returning to God; namely, repentance, its door is open before all.
4. The book ends by the shining of the Sun of Righteousness on all those who sit in the darkness; so that whoever wishes, whatever is his race or nationality, can enjoy healing by its wings.

It is the book of God's love that knows no partiality; the book of the rich grace of God, which opens the gates of heaven before all mankind; the book of the return to God, who finds pleasure in anyone who accepts the call to have a fellowship with Him. It is the book of every human soul, who is serious in seeking its salvation.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MALACHI

The book is called 'Malachi' in Hebrew; which probably came as short for the word 'Malachia'; namely, "*The messenger of Jehovah*<sup>1</sup>;" translated in the Septuagint version as "*My messenger*" or "*Malchias*," as a title and not a name for the prophet.

Some Jews assumed that the name 'Malachi' is symbolic; and that he has another unknown name. Others assumed that he was an angel from heaven, and not a man, as it came in the book of Judges 2:1.

Some assumed that he is 'Ezra' the Scribe<sup>2</sup>. In the 'Targum of Jonathan ben-Uzzeil,' it came: "He who is called Ezra the Scribe." Others assumed that he is 'Mordecai.'

In an old tradition, it is said that he is of the tribe of Zebulun; and has died young.

And according to the Talmud, Malachi was a member of the great Synagogue.

## HISTORY OF ITS WRITING

There is no strong testimony of an accurate date of its writing. But certain scholars believe that it was written after the temple was rebuilt, when offerings and sacrifices were offered in it (1:7; 3:1); at that time Jerusalem was governed by a ruler representing the Persian empire (1:8); Which implies that it was written after the two books by Haggi and Zechariah, who were provoking the people to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Some believe that this book was written in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. That the 'Governor' mentioned in (1:8) is Nehemiah. And that Malachi prophesied, either before the arrival of Ezra (458 BC), or by the time of Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem (432 BC).

It is to be noticed that the sins condemned by the prophet Malachi, are the same ones that prevailed in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah:(Compare Malachi 2:10-16 with Ezra 9:2; 10:3, and 16-44; and with Nehemiah 10:30; 13:23-31; And compare Malachi 3:7-12 with Nehemiah 10:32-39; 13:4-14).

Some believe that this book was written during the absence of Nehemiah in Shushan (Susa) the citadel, in the year 433-432 BC.

## CIRCUMSTANCE AROUND IT

Some scholars believe that the prophet Malachi started his ministry after the return of some Jews, estimated to be about 60,000, from the Babylonian captivity to the Promised Land; in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. That, then, would have divided the people into two groups:

1- A group that refused to return to the Promised Land, having been, materially and economically, well-established in Babylon. That group, who represented the great majority,

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<sup>1</sup> John Howard Raven: *O.T. Introduction 1910*, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> R. K Harrison: *O.T. Introduction, 1988*, p. 958.

loved the world; although they were living in captivity as slaves to the Gentiles. They did not wish to enjoy the land given by God to their fathers; and were not preoccupied with worshipping the Lord as presented by the Law. We should not however disregard the few remnants, holy to God, in captivity, like Daniel, the three saintly young men, Mordecai, Esther, and the prophet Ezekiel, etc.

2- Another group who returned to the Promised Land to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the temple, and to reset the rites of worship according to the Law. We cannot disregard that among those as well, there were some who preoccupied themselves with building their own houses, instead of caring for rebuilding of the house of the Lord; saying that it is not the right time to start rebuilding it (Haggai 1:4). Among them were also those who were preoccupied with practicing the religious rites without the practical living fellowship with God; to whom the message of the prophet Malachi came, to motivate them to experience the living worship through the holy life.

The prophet Malachi did not call for canceling the high places and the pagan worship, like what the prophets did in the days of the kings; nor called on the people to return to the Promised Land, like Ezra the Scribe; nor to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem like Nehemiah. He was rather preoccupied with entering into the depths, to enjoy the holy life connected to the living worship of God; thus preparing the people to anticipate Him, who is able to bring us over to the worship by the spirit and the truth, through the true holy life - our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **ITS FEATURES**

1- It seems that those returning from captivity, expected a flood of temporal blessings; and that the promises prophesied by the prophets, concerning the Messianic era, would be realized in their days in a material way. As for example, 'resetting the fallen tent of David,' and having a great temporal kingdom and authority. And when nothing of that has materialized according to their thoughts, they started to wonder: "*In what way have You loved us?*" (Mal 1:2).

2- This book deals with several wonderments like:

- ❖ "In what way have You loved us?" (1:2)
- ❖ "In what way have we despised Your name?" (1:6)
- ❖ "In what way have we defiled You?" (1:7)
- ❖ "In what way have we wearied Him?" (2:17)
- ❖ "In what way shall we return?" (3:7)
- ❖ "In what way have we robbed You?" (3:8)
- ❖ "What have we spoken against You?" (3:13)
- ❖ "What profit is it that we have kept His ordinances" (3:14)

3- The prophet Malachi presents to us a magnificent portrait of the holy priest who offers a holy sacrifice to the Lord, for the sake of sanctifying the holy people of God. He warns the priests as well against the deadly literalism, and against presenting sacrifices and offerings that are unfitting for the holy God.

4- He confirms the commitment of the believer to give the tithes and the offerings with a pure heart (3:7-12).

5- The book came Messianic, presenting a living portrait of the work of the Lord Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, who shines over the nations and the peoples.

6- The Old Testament began by presenting a splendid image of the creation of man to live in the garden of Eden, to enjoy the exalted love of God, in an indescribable happiness; And ends in its final phrase by the dwelling of the curse, because of man's sin and rebellion; saying: "*I come and strike the earth with a curse*" (Mal. 4:6). It is as though the Old Testament proclaims at its end that we need Him, who would transform the earth into heaven, and who would take away from us the curse, to enjoy again the exalted divine blessings.

7- Some scholars believe that this book, beside presenting an introduction and an end, presents six important teachings:

a- **A proclamation of God's love for His children** (1:2-5). He chastens Jacob, yet with compassion; Whereas He utterly destroys Edom.

b- **A commitment of the priests to true spiritual leadership** (1:6-2:9); thus present to God the most perfect offer (Deuteronomy 15:21; 17:1).

c- **It dealt with the issues of marriage to pagan women, as well as divorce** (2:10-16); counting these two issues as concerning God Himself. Although the Law allowed divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), Yet God hates it (Mal. 2:16). And according to the Lord Christ, Moses allowed it because of the hardness of their hearts. But God desires that marriage stays holy; as from the beginning, God created man, male and female.

e- **The coming of the Lord for judgment** (2; 17; 3:5).

f- **A commitment to give tithes** (3:6-12).

It is certain that everyone will enjoy, either the fruit of his living practical faith, or that of his evil and pride (3:13-4:3).

## **ITS DIVISIONS**

**1- The accepted offering**

**Chapter 1.**

**2- The holy priest**

**Chapter 2.**

**3- Fellowship with God**

**Chapter 3.**

**4- Shining of the Sun of righteousness**

**Chapter 4.**

As some faithful people, who have come to the Promised Land, with the intention to return to the ways of their early fathers; did not fall into idolatry, and built the walls of Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple; Yet, because they did not enter into the depth of fellowship with God, and did not walk as fitting to the people of God, the prophet presents to them a living portrait of the offering accepted by God; of the holy priest who supports the people of God; and reveals to them the need for the coming of the messiah, in order to bring them over to the deep fellowship with God the Father; who would shine on them with His righteousness, to live as is fitting for the children of the heavenly light.

- ❖ Come, O beloved brethren, It is time to observe the feast. As the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), shining on us with His divine rays proclaims its date. We should obey Him and celebrate it; lest, if we miss it, we would miss the pleasure as well<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ As for us, brethren, Let us exalt ourselves above the pagans, and observe the feast in spiritual faithfulness, and purity. Let us ourselves exalt above the Jews; and observe it, not through the letter or shadows, but in being enlightened by the light of the truth, beholding the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2).

Let us exalt ourselves above the dissenters, not to rip off the garment of Christ, but to eat in one house – the Catholic Church – the Passover of the Lord, which, according to His holy commandments, lead us to virtue, commanding us to observe the purity of this feast. For the Passover is clear of evil, to be trained in virtue and move over from death to life<sup>2</sup>.

- ❖ These things concerning the feast are not anymore connected to the earthly Jerusalem, but could be observed wherever God chooses: *“In every place incense shall be offered to My name”* (Mal. 1:11).

Although, historically, the Passover had to be observed in Jerusalem; Yet, when the ‘fullness of time’ came, the shadows passed over. The preaching of the gospel spread everywhere; and the disciples observed the feasts all over the world. They asked the Savior: *“Where do You want us to set it?”* to which He responding by transforming the letter into the spirit, promised them that they will no longer eat the flesh of the lamb, but will eat His own body; saying: *“Take, eat, this is My body, and drink, this is My blood”* (See Matthew 26:26-28).

Taking these things into consideration, we would indeed, O brethren, be observing the true Passover<sup>3</sup>.

- ❖ What is the feast, but to worship God, confessing godliness, and the perpetual prayer from all the heart?!... Wishing for us to be always like this, we are advised by the apostle Paul to rejoice all the time; to pray incessantly; and to give thanks for everything; not individually, but collectively in unity. And we are also told by the Psalmist to *“Come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation”* (Psalm 95:1).

Who is that slothful rebel to the divine voice; who does not forsake everything, and rush to the collective assembly of the feast?! Which is not any more observed in one place; but, according to the Psalmist, *“Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world”* (Psalm 19:4); and, according to the prophet, the sacrifice will not be offered in one place, but in all the nations (See Malachi 1:11).

The praises and prayers will thus be raised in a like manner, and everywhere, to the good Father, the Grantor of goodness. The Catholic Church everywhere, will joyfully offer the

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<sup>1</sup> *Paschal Letters, 1:1.*

<sup>2</sup> *Paschal Letters, 5:4. Paschal Letters, 5:4.*

<sup>3</sup> *Paschal Letters, 4:4.*

- same worship to God; and will sing the same song, saying: “Amen<sup>1</sup>.”
- ❖ Other saints, who had a like trust in the Lord, have joyfully received like temptations; Job, says: “*Blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 1:21). And the Psalmist says: “*Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart*” (Psalm 26:2). As, when the strong are justified, the weak become guilty. And when the strong see the process of purification, and realize the blessings of the divine fire, they would not be scared before such temptations, but would rather rejoice by them; They would never be harmed by such things, but would be brought over to more glittering glories, and would be refined as gold by fire (Mal. 3:3; 1 Peter 1:7). And as said by him, who was tested in such a school: “*You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me, and have found no wickedness in me; I have proposed that my mouth shall not transgress*” (Psalm 17:3)<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Athanasius the Apostolic**

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<sup>1</sup> *Paschal Letters, 11:11.*

<sup>2</sup> *Paschal Letters, 13:3.*

## CHAPTER 1

# THE ACCEPTED OFFERING

In this chapter the prophet Malachi demonstrates that, despite their true knowledge of God, as a heavenly Father and a Master, Yet they did not practically honor Him as a Father, nor feared Him as a Master and a Lord. It is fitting for us to have our knowledge and faith connected to our practical life in God's love and fear.

God reveals His love for Jacob, and pours it over his descendants who walk according to his thoughts. It is a free love given to those, serious in seeking the salvation of their souls.

- 1- The need for God's work            1-5.
- 2- The practical honoring of God    6.
- 3- A defiled offering                7-9.
- 4- The pure offering                 1-11.
- 5- A blemished offering            12-14.

### 1- THE NEED FOR GOD'S WORK

*"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi" (Malachi 1:1)*

The word 'oracle' is here interpreted as a "burden". As the word of the Lord to Israel, in his evil, does not present pleasure, joy, or sweetness, as much as it openly reveals their wounds. They considered it a burden that caused so much grief, that they were not able to hear it. It is a burden for those who do not seek their salvation. But those who are serious in seeking it, would rather find it "a light and sweet yoke" (Matthew 11:30).

*"I have loved you," says the Lord. Yet you say, 'in what way have you loved us? 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' says the Lord. 'Yet Jacob I have loved'" (Malachi 1:2)*

Revealing the call for all the nations and peoples to receive faith, this book begins by confirming that God's love for His people is free, and with no worthiness on their part. Yet, because they did not care for His love, despised His name, and defiled the offerings and sacrifices, God is not pleased with them anymore; and is opening the door before all the nations all over the world, for His name to be glorified everywhere.

He started opening the wounds of His people to cleanse and heal them; confirming to them that He is doing this, not out of hate, but out of love and compassion. That is why God's message starts by saying: "I have loved you," as He always used to confirm on the tongue of His prophets: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jeremiah 31:3). "When Israel was a child, I loved him" (Hosea 11:1).

He starts His talk by proclaiming His love, to confirm that, even if He rebukes, it is because He is a Father: "I reprove and discipline those whom I love" (Revelation 3:19); He rebukes them because they did not love Him back.

Because man needs to love and be loved, God often confirms to His children “*I have loved you.*” But, passing sometimes through circumstances that seem tough and bitter, man wonders ‘Where is God’s love for me?’

They doubt and despise His love and care for them, saying: “In what way have you loved us?” to which the Lord responds, saying: “*Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?... Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated*” (2).

Because the Jews often assumed that God is committed to give them back, the love He owes to their father Abraham; He, as though saying to them: [If that is the case, I would have loved Esau more than Jacob, because He is the firstborn. However, Jacob, through his practical faith, earned My love, whereas Esau, through the hardness of his heart, fell under My wrath.] God’s love is not based on partiality, or on mere flesh relationships. Both Esau and Jacob were both twins who shared the same womb. Yet, Jacob alone, enjoyed entering into a covenant with God; while Esau deprived himself of that gift.

That gift, Jacob got free according to God’s pleasure; not as a commitment on His part; but through Jacob’s response to the free divine gift.

- ❖ God knows the sinners beforehand, when they are still in their mother’s womb (See Genesis 25:23)<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ “The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3)... How is that? Let us look more closely! While Rebecca was still pregnant with the twins; God said: “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated” (Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:13); and “The older shall serve the younger.” God’s judgment was then hidden. But from the very source, the wicked are estranged. From what are they estranged? From the truth ... from the blessed city... from the blessed life!<sup>2</sup>

#### **St. Augustine**

- ❖ Cain despised Abel his brother; and despised God as well. How did he despise Him? By his rude response to God, saying: “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*” (Genesis 4:9). So did Esau; He despised his brother, and despised God as well. That is why God said: “*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated*” (Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:13)<sup>3</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ Although it is correct to say that God loves justice and hates oppression; Yet that does not mean that He prefers someone to another; as this is an attribute of men. But it rather means that He, as a Judge, loves and helps the righteous, and turns His face away from the wicked<sup>4</sup>.

#### **St. Athanasius the Apostolic**

God proclaimed His love for Israel, saying: “When Israel was a child, I loved him; and

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<sup>1</sup> On Psalm 58:4.

<sup>2</sup> On Ps. 107 (106).

<sup>3</sup> Homilies on Timothy, homily 7

<sup>4</sup> Four Discourses Against the Arians, 1:12:52.ترجمة مركز دراسات الآباء بالقاهرة.

out of Egypt I called My son” (Hosea 11:1). He called him a child and His son. But, as Israel persisted on their evil ways, St. John the Baptist said to them: “Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7). God has no partiality.

❖ It is the fruit of their foolishness and childish mind, to suffer this punishment. I called them out of Egypt, and set them free from that cruel bondage. And yet they denied Me and chose for themselves to worship the idols. I taught them how to walk; I healed them from their horrible behavior; I showed them fatherly compassion. And I kept them from a double destruction by the invaders. Yet they dug their claws in Me, and I love them as if that’s a chain<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Theodoret of Cyrus**

❖ Israel, since they were in Egypt, have been symbolically called God’s son (Matthew 2:15). But they lost their sonhood title, granted to them through God’s grace, in the days of Moses, through their worship of Baal, and offering incense to the idols; to be given by John a more fitting name “*Brood of vipers*” (Matt 3:7)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. Ephram the Syrian**

**“But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness” (Malachi 1:3)**

Having challenged the God of Israel, and disregarded His divine will, Edom (Esau) fell to an eternal desolation; Whereas Israel, who was under chastisement, gained the blessing of the proclamation of God’s glory in his territories. This situation is spiritually perpetual. If a Jew or a Gentile challenges the God of hosts, he would turn into a spiritual Edom. God will be longsuffering. Yet, when his cup is full with evil, he will fall into eternal perdition. Whereas several Gentiles, who used to be adversary like Edom; in case they return to the Lord, they will turn into a New Israel, filled with divine glories.

Esau, who has been violent against his brother and his parents; and took for himself two Hittite wives, who were “*a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca*”(Genesis 26:35), drank from the same cup he filled for his family; desolation befell his heart, and was reflected even on the mountains of Seir, his inheritance, that were destroyed by the armies of the Chaldeans, to become so barren to be a dwelling place for the jackals of the wilderness.

The children of Esau or Edom who gloated in the desolation of Jerusalem, likewise drank from the same cup they filled for others. God was so longsuffering, a generation after another, that some thought His threats against them to be just words with no action. Ultimately, Yet Edom eventually fell into perpetual desolation.

❖ Rebecca was pregnant with both Jacob and Esau; who, though of the same seed, yet were different! They wrestled and fought even in their mother’s womb, that Rebecca was told: “*In your womb are two people!*” It is the same way in the church: the wicked fight against the

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary on Hosea 11:1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron 3:8.

good, within the womb of the same mother<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ Who is so foolish and evil to claim that God is unable to alter the wicked will of some people, to become good, however, wherever, and whenever He wants. When He works, He works through mercy. And when He does not work, it would be through justice; “*He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens*” (Romans 9:18). In so saying, the apostle praises the grace about which he talked as he connected it to the twins of Rebecca’s womb. “*(For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to the election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger’*” (Romans 9:11, 12). Successively he refers to another prophetic testimony: “*Jacob I have loved, and Esau I have hated*” (Malachi 1; 2-3). Realizing that what he said may disturb those whose understanding could not bring them into the depth of this grace, he added: “*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!*” (Romans 9:14) However, it may look unrighteous, and with no worthiness based on good or evil works, that God loves one and hates another. Now, If the apostle intended for us to understand the probability of future works – which were certainly known by God – he would not have said: “*not of works*” (Romans 9:11), but would have said instead: ‘of future works.’ Hence intending to solve the problem; or rather not to leave it unsolved; he adds: “*Certainly not!*” to ascertain that there is no unrighteousness with God, who says to Moses: “*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion*” (Romans 9:15). Now, who is but foolish, who thinks there is unrighteousness with God, either when He punishes who deserves to be punished, or show mercy on whomever is not worthy of it? Finally the apostle says: “*So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy*” (Romans 9:16)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. Augustine**

- ❖ Since the beginning of the world, it was the case between Adam’s two sons; the younger Abel was the chosen one; whereas the older Cain – being a symbol of the non-believing Jews – was judged. Later, in the days of Abraham, the same symbol was realized in Sarah and Hagar. Sarah was barren for a long time, as a symbol of the Church; whereas Hagar, as a symbol of the Jewish assembly, quickly got pregnant with a son. Yet the younger son – Isaac – got the inheritance, whereas the older Ishmael was denied. This same fact seems to be realized in Jacob whom God loved, whereas Esau was hated (Malachi 1:2-3). This symbol was also known to be realized in two sisters whom Jacob took as his wives. He loved Rachel, the younger one more than her sister Leah. Actually, by the former, Joseph was born, who was sold in Egypt, as a symbol of our Lord and Savior. Leah’s eyes were delicate and weak, while Rachel was graceful and beautiful; which was also significant: Leah refers to the Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> *On the Gospel of St. John, tr. 11:10.*

<sup>2</sup> *Enchiridion 25:98.*

assembly, while Rachel refers to the Church. Like him, whose eyes are infected, and cannot look at the splendor of the sun; so was the Jewish assembly, who had the eyes of their heart full of the poison of envy and hate against our Lord and Savior, could not behold the exaltation of Christ “*the Sun of Righteousness*” (Malachi 4:2)<sup>1</sup>.

**Fr. Caesarius of Arles**

*“Even though Edom has said, ‘We are shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins,’ desolate places.*

*Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘They may build, but I will tear down, until they are called the wicked country, the people with whom the Lord is angry forever’”(Malachi 1:4).*

Edom assumed, as it happened with Jerusalem that he is capable of rebuilding the desolation that dwelt over him, on his own, without reforming the heart and driving out the inner jackals; but he fell into vain hopes.

By saying, “*We will rebuild the ruins,*” they assume that they have the matter in their own hands, and that it all depend on military possibilities and planning; whether this conforms with the will of God or not. But so says the Lord of hosts: “*They may build, but I will tear down.*” No one can challenge the will of God!

By their challenge they become an example and a lesson to the souls that are haughty before God. “*They are called the wicked country, and the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.*” This reminds us of the wonderment of ‘Job’: “Who has hardened himself against Him (against God) and prospered?” (Job 9:4).

Having rejected the Lord Christ, opposed His gospel and His Church, the Jews became Edomites, and this saying is realized in them. When they attempted to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem in the days of Emperor Adrian, God tore down what they had built, through an earthquake and fire; that they had to stop their attempts<sup>2</sup>.

❖ If God utters a thousand words against us, we shall not be able to utter one single word in response; As “*In (His) sight no one living is righteous*” (Psalm 143:2)<sup>3</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

❖ “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgression to the Lord,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my heart” (Psalm 32:5). I shall not argue against Your judgment, I do not want to deceive myself, for fear that my iniquity would stand against me<sup>4</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

*“Your eyes shall see this, and you shall say, ‘Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel’”(Malachi 1:5).*

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon 104:1

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry: Commentary on Malachi 1.

<sup>3</sup> On Jon 9:4.

<sup>4</sup> Confessions (Cf. N&P N Frs., vol. 1, p. 47).

When Edom's heart were laid waste, with no trace of love, his mountains turned into desolation, and his inheritance became for the jackals. Now, as Israel, while under chastisement, seeks the divine intervention, God is glorified in his territory, as well as in his inner depths. It is God's pleasure, that the whole world would become the new spiritual Israel, bearing His glory, inside and outside.

The Word of God came to transfer us, through Baptism, from sonhood to the devil, to that to God; and to transfer us from being Edom, bearing the barren jackal's heart, to the new Israel, bearing the divine glory.

## 2- THE PRACTICAL HONORING OF GOD

***“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’” (Malachi 1:6)***

By the law of nature, a son honors his father. And by the laws of the world, a slave fears his master, obeys his commands, and is keen on serving him. A son who does not honor his father would fall under the curse of the natural law. And a slave who does not obey his master would fall under the laws of the society. How then, would it be for the priest who is governed by the divine Law? What is more worthy of obedience, the divine Law, or those of the nature and the society?

If the priest wishes to be called a ‘father’ (Judges 18:19); and to be looked at as a leader who should be obeyed; he is committed to deal with God as a son and a slave. How could a priest call on the people to honor God as a Father, and to submit to Him as a Master, if he does not bear the same spirit! St. Paul says: *“We have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?”* (Hebrew 12:9)

- ❖ God says to all creatures: *“If I am a Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?”* (Malachi 1:6). If the human life does not have a Master to supervise it, it would turn into an utter chaos. That is what happened when the heavenly forces rebelled and hardened their necks against God; when the created refused to obey the Almighty Creator!<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ It is said: *“The son honors his father; and the servant his master”* (Malachi 1:6). The creature gives servitude of the servant; but the other one, which can be described as a kind of an intimate friendship, is realized through the Holy Spirit<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Basil the Great**

- ❖ Our prayer should conform with the good will of Him, to Whom we pray; and Whom we glorify at the beginning of the prayer, saying: *“Our Father who art in heaven.”*

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<sup>1</sup> On the Spirit, 51. ترجمة د. جورج حبيب

<sup>2</sup> On the Spirit, 46.

Indeed, in the pages of the Holy Bible, there are several words that glorify God; yet we never find a commandment to the Jewish people to address God as “*our Father*.” They pray to Him, not as sons, but as slaves, having been still living according to the flesh.

They could have had God as a father, if they have not disobeyed the Law that they were commanded to keep. That is why the following texts came:

“I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me” (Isaiah 1:2)

“I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High’ (Psalm 82:6)

“If then I am a Father, where is My honor?” (Malachi 1:6)

These texts show their rejection as children to God; As well as being a prophecy about how the Christians will look at God as their Father; according to the words of the Evangelist St. John: “*He gave them the right to become children of God*” (John 1:12); and those of the apostle St. Paul: “*The heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all*” (Galatians 4:1); This also refers to the spirit of sonhood that we have gained, by which we cry out, saying: “*Abba, Father*” (Romans 8:15)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

- ❖ The glory of the fathers is the sanctity of their children; and the honor of the masters is in the reverence of their servants. Contrary to that, it would be both insult and chaos; saying: “*Because of you, my name is blasphemed among the nations*”<sup>2</sup>.”

**Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**

- ❖ “*I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me*” (Isaiah 1:2)... He is not referring here to their fellowship together with all mankind, with a reference to the exaltation of their birth; but rather to an exalted grace, that they became His children. God often starts things by granting gifts: When He created man, even before making him, He honored his sonhood by saying: “*Let us Make man in our image, according to our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26)<sup>3</sup>.
- ❖ Those who became children and are enjoying the spiritual food, have the right to glorify their Father, according to the words of the Holy Bible: “*The son honors his Father, and the servant his Master.*” You have become His son, and enjoys the spiritual food. You eat His body, and drink His blood, which grant you a new birth. Hence, you should repay this favor by glorifying Him, who granted it to you. Say: “*I will extol You, my God, O King*” (psalm 145:1). If you present a testimony of your intimate relationship, God would say about you, as He did about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: “*I am God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob*” (Exodus 3:6). I mean, When you say: “*My God, O King;*” and present a testimony about your love; He will, in turn, calls you: “*My servant, and My companion,*” as He did

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<sup>1</sup> *Sermon on the Mount 2:15.*

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, 7:2:14.*

<sup>3</sup> *On Isaiah 1:2.*

about Moses<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ Who reveres is not curious but in contrary he offers praise and glorification<sup>2</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ Last week, I talked enough about reforming those who do not present due thanksgivings to the Creator, for the divine gifts they enjoy; Those unworthy denying people, who, while enjoying the heavenly compassion, they do not revere God like servants toward their Master, nor honor Him like children toward their Father. About whom, God says through the prophet: *“If I am a Father, Where is My honor; And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence?”* (Malachi 1:6). If you are a servant, you should reverently serve your Master. And if you are a son, you should show your Father the honoring love. If you do not love nor revere God; you are then a haughty servant or an arrogant son! A good Christian should perpetually praise his Father and Master; And should practice all the good works for the sake of His glory; according to the words of the apostle St. Paul: *“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:31)<sup>3</sup>.

**Maximus of Turin**

- ❖ Concerning God; who is unique as being both a Father and a Master, We are committed to love Him, being His children; and to revere Him, being His servants<sup>4</sup>.

**Lactantius**

- ❖ That reverence, or love, concerning which God rebukes us, saying: *“A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am a Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?”* (Malachi 1:6). We should observe, each one of us according to what suits him. *“That servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes”* (Luke 12:47)<sup>5</sup>.
- ❖ There are two kinds of fear:

1. The first kind for the beginners; namely for those who are still under servitude; of which is said: *“A servant reveres his master”* (Malachi 1:6). And, *“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing”* (John 15:15). And in the Bible He says, *“A slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever”* (John 8:35). That is why God teaches us to move on from the fear of punishment to the fullness of the freedom of love, and to the confidence of the beloved children of God. And the blessed apostle, by the strength of the love of God, crossing over from the stage of fear, to despising the earthly things, and to proclaiming that he became rich with the good things of God; says: *“God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1; 7). And to those who flared with a perfect love toward their heavenly Father, and

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps. 145.

<sup>2</sup> On the Incomprehensible Nature of God, homily 2: 39.

<sup>3</sup> Maximus of Turin: Sermon 73:1.

<sup>4</sup> Lactantius: The Divine Institutes, 4.

<sup>5</sup> St. Cassian: Conferences 11: 9.

through the divine adoption, became sons and not servants, the apostle says: “*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’*” (Romans 8:15).

2. As to the other kind of fear, the prophet speaks about the seven-sided Spirit, who, according to the mystery of incarnation, rests in full upon the incarnate God: “*The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord*” (Isaiah 11:2). Then He specifically adds: “*His delight is in the fear of the Lord*” (Isaiah 11:3). Here we notice that He did not go on to say: ‘The spirit of fear shall rest upon Him,’ but he says: “*His delight is in the fear of the Lord.*” The greatness of the riches of this fear is that, when it rests upon someone with its power, it does not take over just a part of his mind, but his whole mind, because of His close connection to the love that never fails<sup>1</sup>.

### **Abbot Chearemon**

It is such a serious accusation against the people, and against the priests. And it is as well an equally serious response: “*In what way have we despised Your name?*” that brings us before a sad and horrible portrait.

The most serious point in all this is the spiritual blindness that came over all, to become unaware that they are despising the name of God. They might even boast that they present offerings and sacrifices, and practice worship perfectly according to the Law.

The Jewish people were proud of having among them, the tribe of Levi, including the priests chosen by the Lord, to present to Him offerings and sacrifices that please Him. Now, God, Himself, reveals to them that the priests who intercede for them to get blessings, have, themselves, lost the blessing, the sanctity, and the pleasure of God; who then, can raise their face before God?

God speaks on the tongue of His prophet to settle an account with the priests. If they were set to become judges in the house of the Lord, it is to practice and to live the commandment, themselves first; lest they would fall under judgment.

❖ Be obedient to your bishop, as your spiritual father. Yet the bishop, in turn, is committed to know that they are priests and are not masters. Let them bring back to the priesthood the honor that was fitting to it<sup>2</sup>.

### **St. Jerome**

❖ It is the duty of the bishop, not to disregard the sins of the people, and not to reject those who repent, lest he would destroy the flock of the lord, or despise the new name He gave His people; And would be rebuked, as it happened to the old shepherds, about whom God said to Jeremiah: “*Many shepherds have destroyed My vineyard, they have trampled down My portion*” (Jeremiah 12:10); and to Zechariah: “*My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and*

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<sup>1</sup> St. Cassian: *Conferences 11: 13.*

<sup>2</sup> Letter 52:7.

*I will punish the goatherds*” (Zechariah 10:3); and to Malachi: *“To you priests who despise My name”* (Malachi 1:6)<sup>1</sup>.

❖ It is obvious that the bishops and the priests, who do that, will not escape God’s judgment<sup>2</sup>.

### **Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**

### **3. A DEFILED OFFERING**

***“You offer defiled food on My altar, But you say, ‘In what way have we defiled You.’ by saying that the Lord’s table may be despised.”*** (Malachi 1:7)

The charge against the priests is despising the name of God and defiling His sanctuaries. And what is more serious is their response, saying: *“In what way have we defiled You?”*, which reveals either a serious ignorance of the truth, being blind leaders who lead the people; Or a more serious, non-fitting, and daring awareness of what they are doing! Either way, it is a very serious charge for the leaders of the people.

***“The Lord’s table may be despised”*** probably refers to the table of, or to the altar of burnt offerings; so called because both the priests and the people were allowed to eat from them; God who receive the sacrifices, wishes to share them with the priests and the people, as though on a table of reconciliation.

By partaking of the sacrifices offered to idols, they despise the table of the Lord. They wish for a fellowship with both God and the idols; or with both God and the devil; by which they are defiling the table of the Lord (12).

They also despise the table of the Lord by offering blemished sacrifices. They give themselves the priority; and count God as unworthy of the best of what they have.

They offer sacrifices on the table of God, or on His altar, and assume that they are pleasing Him; not aware that they are actually despising Him, and defiling His altar. And then they wonder, saying: *“In what way have we defiled You?”* They offer sacrifices, while their hearts are far away from the Lord, opposing Him, rejecting His commandments, and not wishing to enjoy an intimate fellowship with Him.

***“When you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” says the Lord”*** (Malachi 1:8).

They offer the sacrifices, which were not fit for anything else; counting the sacrifice as something to be consumed by fire. By putting aside the beasts fit for selling; and giving God their left-overs; they disregard what came in the book of Deuteronomy: *“But if there is any defect in it, if it is lame or blind, or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God. You may eat it within your gates, the unclean and the clean person alike may eat it, as if it were a gazelle or a deer”* (Deuteronomy 15:21-22).

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, 2:3:15.*

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, 8 2:2.*

The sacrifice of the blind refers to their practice of worship with no spiritual benefit; as someone practicing a duty with ignorance, and without beholding God to recognize His joyful heavenly secrets.

The sacrifice of the lame refers to someone who does not enjoy the Lord Christ, being the divine Way, by whom to set forth to the fatherly bosom; and for his soul to have rest and comfort in the heavenly Father.

The sacrifice of the sick refers to the practice of slothful worship, with no concentration of the eyes on the lord, the heavenly Physician, to seek healing for the sick soul.

In those three mentioned sacrifices – the blind, the lame, and the sick, man worships with the body, but not with the heart; with the letter, but not with the Spirit; slothfully bearing a heart without enlightenment, and without spiritual involvement.

He admonishes them, that what they practice in their relationship with Him, they would not dare to do with a king or a governor, whose favor they seek.

❖ Such was the rejected offering of Cain, the murderer; to whom God said: *“If you do well, will you not be accepted?”* (Genesis 4:7). And so were all the rejected offerings of Israel, who brought on themselves the curse, about which the prophet says: *“Cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and makes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished”* (Malachi 1:14). God rebukes them, saying: *“Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?”* (Malachi 1:8). How can you address God in your prayers with something that show slothfulness or distraction, and then expect it to be accepted by God? Something that would never be accepted even by the lowliest individual! Such a prayer tinted with slothfulness and distraction, is exactly like offering a blemished sacrifice<sup>1</sup>.

### **Sahdona**

God is not pleased by a sacrifice He does not desire, or by an offering He does not require (see Psalm 40:6). But He seeks the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving (see Psalm 51:16; 116:17; Jeremiah 33:11). He accepts it from pure and holy lips; whereas those from defiled lips,... that revile and not bless;... that lie, and not utter the truth;... that judge, and are not compassionate; are all counted as defiled sacrifices; They are like when man offers a blind, lame, or a sick sacrifice.

***“But now entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us. By this is being done by your hands. Will He accept you favorably?,’ says the Lord of host”*** (Malachi 1:9)

Some believe that a pestilence had befallen the land, when locusts swamped the fields and destroyed everything green (Malachi 3:11). The priests have then cried out to the Lord, but because of their evil ways, He did not listen to them. That is why he advises them to return to God by repentance. So He would hear to them on their part and on the part of the people as well. As the Psalmist says, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear”* (Psalm 66:18).

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<sup>1</sup> Sahdona: Book of Perfection 18..

- ❖ Be your own judge; in the depths of your heart, look into your secret place; where you together with God who sees, are alone. Don't find pleasure in iniquity, so that God may find pleasure in you... "Certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer" (Psalm 66:19). "Blessed be God who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me" (Psalm 66:20)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

"*This is being done by your hands*" (9); meaning (The fault is yours). God desires to listen to the prayers of His priests for the sake of His people. Yet, because of their iniquity, He will not, until they return to Him.

## THE PURE OFFERING

"*Oh, that someone among you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain! I I have no pleasure in you,' says the Lord of hosts, I will not accept offerings from your hands*" (Malachi 1:10)

Quite openly, the Lord of hosts proclaims "*I have no pleasure in you;*" revealing that, with the same love He loved them, He loves all mankind; And in broad daylight, He shines His sun on all the nations that offers fragrant incense to the glory of His holy name.

The priests assume that it is their right to open the doors of the temple, and to kindle fire on God's altar; Yet, behaving as wage-workers who seek their own material benefit, they hear the divine voice saying to them: "*I have no pleasure in you;*" that same voice which proclaimed to them: "*I have loved you*" (2). How very unfortunate! God has no more pleasure in the ministry of those priests, who practice worship, open and close the temple doors, or kindle a fire on the altar, only for a wage! As, according to the prophet Isaiah: "*Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand. They all look to their own way, every one for his own gain*" (Isaiah 56:11).

God allowed "those who minister the holy things to eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar to partake of the offerings of the altar" (1 Corinthians 9:7-14); But not to work for wage or for material benefit.

God calls on us to go into our depths, to re-evaluate the hidden motives of our worship, ministry, and preaching.

- ❖ Malachi, the last of the prophets, openly talks about the rejection of Israel, and the call on the Gentiles<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

- ❖ The Jews, who returned from Babylon, repaired the ruins of the city, rebuilt the temple, and offered sacrifices. But primarily the prophet Malachi prophesied of the present desolation and

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps 66 (62).

<sup>2</sup> Letter 53:8.

the defilement of their sacrifices<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ Don't you see how He calls for ceasing the Jewish worship, and spreads and proclaims the life and worship of the Church?<sup>2</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ Jews, Why do you try to misinterpret these prophetic words according to the whims of your hearts?!<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Why you are so opposing the Son of God against your salvation?... The house of Jacob or Israel is the same people that was called, and is now rejected, because they did not walk in the light of the Lord<sup>4</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

- ❖ Any man, whatever his race is; if he has the knowledge of God, and that of his Christ; ... if he keeps the eternal ordainment of righteousness; He is circumcised with the good and right circumcision; ...He is a friend of God, who finds pleasure in his gifts and offerings<sup>5</sup>.

**St. Justine, the Martyr**

***“For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles. In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering. For My name shall be great among the nations,” says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 1:11)***

In the Old Testament, the praise was: *“In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel”* (Psalm 76:1). Now, all the nations glorify Him; from the rising of the sun, even to its going down.

- ❖ Now, let me go back to Malachi, who prophesied about the Church that greatly spread by the power of Christ, and addressed the Jews, saying: *“I have no pleasure in you,” says the Lord of hosts; nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles. In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering. For My name shall be great among the nations,” says the Lord of hosts”* (Malachi 1:10-11). Now, as we see in our time, how, from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, Sacrifice, according to the order of Melchizedek, is offered in every place. If the Jews cannot deny that their sacrifices are no more accepted, how can they anticipate the coming of another Christ? They read the prophecy, and watch its realization before their eyes! Why are they unable to realize that He who is consummating this is the Christ; as no one else can ever do that!<sup>6</sup>

**St. Augustine**

- ❖ He talks about the Gentiles; namely about us, who offer Him sacrifices in every place – the

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<sup>1</sup> *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians 5:12:3.*

<sup>2</sup> *On Ps. 113.*

<sup>3</sup> *On the Gospel of St. John, tr. 35:7.*

<sup>4</sup> *In Answer to the Jews 9.*

<sup>5</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho, 28.*

<sup>6</sup> *City of God 18:35.*

bread and wine of the Eucharist; by which we glorify the name, you are defiling<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ These sacrifices that the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to offer to His name; namely, the Eucharist of bread and wine, offered in every place of the world, are testified to be the object of God's pleasure. But He absolutely rejects what you and your priests offer<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. Justine, the Martyr**

- ❖ God asked His Only-begotten Son, the Creator of all things, to descend from heaven, to transfer the holy faith in God to the Gentiles; namely, to those who were before ignorant of God; and to teach them the righteousness rejected by the rebellious people, that He warned to do since long time, as is obvious in Malachi<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Lactantius**

- ❖ These words clearly refer to the fact that the old people (the Jews) are to offer no more sacrifices to God; But that, in every place, a pure sacrifice would be offered to Him; And His name would be glorified among the Gentiles<sup>4</sup>.

#### **St. Irenaeus**

- ❖ In place of the blood sacrifice, He designates a mysterious, rational, non-blood sacrifice, of His body and blood; that is realized to represent the death of the Lord... Instead of the divine ministry, being limited to one place, He commands and designates that, from the rising of the sun, even to its coming down, His authority will be glorified (Mal 1:11). By that, He did not nullify the Law, but He nullified its limits<sup>5</sup>.

#### **The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**

- ❖ After the victorious return of Abraham from war against his enemies, he was received by Melchizedek the high priest of the Lord, with bread and wine; a table that preceded and portrayed this mysterious table; And a priest who has been a symbol and an image of Christ, the true great Priest; according to the words of the prophet: "*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*" (Psalm 110:4). That offering which was an image of the pure; namely, the non-blood sacrifice, was the one mentioned by the Lord on the tongue of His prophet, saying that it will be offered to Him from the rising of the sun, even to its coming down (Malachi 1:11)<sup>6</sup>.

#### **Fr. John of Damascus**

- ❖ Any place would be suitable for prayer, if man prays as he should; As, according to the Lord: "*In every place incense shall be offered to My name*" (Malachi 1:11); and, "I desire that the men pray everywhere" (1 Timothy 2:8). But, if I may say so, let every one, if possible, has a

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<sup>1</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho*, 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Lactantius: The Divine Institutes*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 4:17:5.

<sup>5</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 6:5:23.

<sup>6</sup> الأرشمندرية أدريانوس شكور: المنة مقالة في الإيمان الأرثوذكسي، لبنان 1991، ص 236.

chosen holy corner in his own house, to pray in peace and without distraction<sup>1</sup>.

### **Origen**

- ❖ By His words: “Woman believe Me, the hour is coming when you will, neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, *worship the Father*” (John 4:21); and the words of the apostle (1 Timothy 2:8); It is obvious that the Lord allows praying everywhere. Yet the word “*everywhere*,” does not include any place designated for improper human usage; but rather cancels the limitation to Jerusalem, and spreads the worship to other places in the world, designated as fitting for worship, in harmony with the prophecy about the sacrifice (Malachi 1:11); dedicated to God for the celebration of this glorified secret<sup>2</sup>.

### **St. Basil the Great**

- ❖ As circumcision and non-circumcision, belong to the One God; both were nullified in Christ for the sake of the priority that was given to faith, about which it was written “*In His name Gentile will trust*” (Isaiah 42:4; Matthew 12:21)<sup>3</sup>.

### **Tertullian**

- ❖ Having come to the world, the name of the Only-begotten Son, became amazing everywhere ... As according to Isaiah: “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God” (Isaiah 11:9)<sup>4</sup>.
- ❖ When in your opinion, O Jews, did that happen? When was incense offered everywhere? When was a pure sacrifice offered? It could never have been before the coming of Christ! If Malachi was not talking about our era, but was talking about the Jewish sacrifice, his prophecy would be against the Law; as Moses forbade the Jews to offer their sacrifice in any place but the one chosen by the Lord God – the temple in Jerusalem. If Malachi said otherwise, he would be opposing the Law of Moses<sup>5</sup>.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ He is talking about the Gentiles, about us, who, everywhere, offer Him sacrifices; namely the bread and wine of the Eucharist; confirming that we are glorifying the name, which you have defiled<sup>6</sup>.

### **St. Justine, the Martyr**

- ❖ The prophet Malachi – one of the twelve – said: “‘I have no pleasure in you,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles. In every place incense shall be offered to My name. And a pure offering. For My name shall be great among the nations,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 1:11). These words clearly show that the old people (the Jews) will no more offer sacrifices to God; that instead, a pure sacrifice shall be offered to

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<sup>1</sup> *On Prayer*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Concerning Baptism*, Cf. *F.C.*, vol. 9, p. 409.

<sup>3</sup> *Against Marcion* 5:4:11.

<sup>4</sup> *On Ps.* 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Against Judaizing Christians*, *Discourse* 5: 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho* 42.

Him; And that His name shall be glorified among the Gentiles. What other name would be glorified among the Gentiles, but that of our Lord; by whom both God the Father and God the Son are glorified? As it is the name of His Son, by which He became incarnated<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Irenaeus**

- ❖ It is now the hour when the Father is worshipped by the true worshippers, neither on the Mount of Gerzim, nor in Jerusalem; but by the Spirit and the truth (John 4:21-23). For, if you are searching for a place for God, He dwells in the pure heart; As according to the prophet: ““In them I dwell. They shall be My people, And I shall be their *God,*’ says the Lord” (2 Corinthians 6:16; Leviticus 26; 12)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Origen**

- ❖ Now, it is proved by the Holy Scripture that the Jews have lost the heritage, because they rejected Christ. And that we took over their place. The prophet Jeremiah says: “I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies. My heritage is to Me like a lion in the forest; It cries out against Me. Therefore, I have hated it” (Jeremiah 13:7-8); And the prophet Malachi says: “*I have no pleasure in you,*’ says the Lord of hosts, *‘Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles’*” (Malachi 1:10-11). Isaiah says: “I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory” (Isaiah 66:18). And in another place: “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles; to open blind eyes, to bring prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house” (Isaiah 42:6, 7)<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Lactantius**

- ❖ In the day of the Lord, gather together to break bread, and to give thanks to the Lord. But, first of all, confess your sins, for your sacrifice to be pure. And he, who is not on good terms with his brother, should not take part in your gathering before reconciling with his brother, lest your sacrifice would be defiled. Because, according to the Lord: “*In every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations*” (Malachi 1:11)<sup>4</sup>.

#### **The Didache**

### **5. A BLEMISHED OFFERING:**

**“But you profane it. In that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled, and its fruit, its food is contemptible’” (Malachi 1:12).**

He renews the serious charge, He addressed to them in verse 7. Having abused the divine

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<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Haer. 4:17:5, 6.*

<sup>2</sup> *Homilies on Genesis 13:3.*

<sup>3</sup> *Lactantius: The Divine Institutes, 48.*

<sup>4</sup> *Didache, 15.*

sanctities and the worship, there is no wonder that God drives them away from Him. They said, not by their mouths, but by their actions, that the table of the Lord is defiled. Because they did not demonstrate to their congregation how to honor the altar, and how to offer to the Lord the best of what they have, they became preachers of dishonoring the Lord's temple and His altar.

***“You also say, ‘Oh, what a weariness!,’ and you sneer at it,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘And bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?’ says the Lord”*** (Malachi 1:13).

The second charge addressed to the priests, is that they claim that their task is a heavy burden that they do with a spirit of weariness. That is why the Lord admonishes His people in Micah, saying: *“How have I wearied you?”* (Micah 6:3). And in Isaiah, He says: *“I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, nor wearied you with incense; You have brought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices”* (Isaiah 43:23, 24).

God does not seek the offering, but seeks the one who offers it: *“My son, Give Me your heart; Let your eyes watch My ways”* (Proverbs 26:23).

The unclean worship turns from being a feeling of pleasure and sweetness in the fellowship with God, into a burden, labor, and weariness. Man becomes haughty in his worship instead of enjoying humility, and feels in some way or another, weariness and boredom, either in his collective or in his personal worship, and in his fasting and giving.

***“But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and makes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished – For I am a great King,’ says the Lord of hosts”*** (Malachi 1:14).

They present blemished offerings, not because of a lack of what is fitting, but out of a lack of respect of the worship to God. Although they have the best among their flocks, and what is fitting to be offered to God, yet they offer the worst among them; and try to give deceiving human excuses for their shameful acts. They claim that they are honoring God, while they are doing the contrary. By their deceit, they are falling under the curse instead of enjoying the heavenly blessings.

He rebukes His priests and people, for acting in ways not done by pagans; The Jews and their priests dishonored His name, His temple, and His sacrifices; Even though His name is great and feared among the nations. As the Psalmist says: *“Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! ... For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth”* (Psalm 47:1).

❖ It is not enough for Him to get the submission of only one nation. For He has presented a great price that came out of His side, to purchase the whole world<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps 47 (46).

***AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MALACHI***  
***(Chapter 1)***

**SANCTIFY ME, TO OFFER YOU A HOLY SACRIFICE**

- ❖ Your voice sounds in the depths of my heart.  
    ‘I have loved, and chosen you as My son’  
    With My blood I redeemed you to enjoy the fellowship of My glories.
- ❖ You have chosen me even before You created me;  
    You knew me even before I was born;  
    You prepared a glory for me even before I even existed.  
    How can I repay You, who loved me first?
- ❖ Take away from me every haughtiness and hypocrisy;  
    I shall never be justified before You;  
    I sinned, when I did not honor You as a Father;  
    Nor feared You as a Master.  
    Flare my heart by the fire of Your love.  
    And nail Your fear in me.
- ❖ Foolishly, I despised Your name.  
    And offered You defiled sacrifices;  
    I did not offer you the first fruits of my time.  
    And did not give priority to my encounter with You.  
    I became preoccupied with temporal things, as though they are eternal.  
    I disregarded my eternity, as though it is a fantasy and an imagination;  
    I abused Your longsuffering;  
    You, who anticipate my return to You.
- ❖ I sinned, when I often was preoccupied with formalities;  
    And when I counted Your worship as a heavy burden.  
    Shine on my heart, to make it attached to You;  
    And let Your Holy Spirit work in me; to make me walk perpetually by the Spirit.
- ❖ I often approached You as a lame;  
    As someone faltering between two ways;  
    Carry me to You and in You, O the true Way;  
    Take away every ailment in my soul, O the heavenly Physician.  
    Lift my face up to You;  
    To count everything as nothing for Your sake.
- ❖ Shine on me, O Sun of righteousness, as well as on my brethren;  
    Let the whole world be enlightened by Your light;

Let them all offer to Your name pure incense;  
Let them all enjoy the Sacrifice of Your body and blood,  
Let Your name be glorified in every man.

❖ Turn the whole world into a sanctuary for Yourself;  
Let all men enjoy fellowship with You;  
Let all men offer You a holy pure sacrifice.  
Where everyone gets connected to the sacrifice of Your cross.  
And You, O heavenly King, reign on all humans.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE PRIESTS BETWEEN THE CURSE AND THE BLESSING

After addressing the people as a whole in the last chapter, to show that they did not care much for the exalted love of God; merely leaning upon the presence of the priests among them, and on their offering of animal sacrifices; Here He demonstrates in particular, the seriousness of the iniquities of the priests.

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|---|--------|
| 1- A curse instead of blessings           | 1-4.   |
| 2- A covenant with God for life           | 5-7.   |
| 3- Corrupting the covenant with God       | 8-9.   |
| 4- Dealing treacherously with one another | 10.    |
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| 6- Dealing treacherously with the wife    | 14-16. |
| 7- Abusing the righteousness of God       | 17.    |

### 1. A CURSE INSTEAD OF BLESSINGS

*“And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.” (Malachi 2:1)*

The priests would probably justify their faults, mentioned in the last chapter, by saying that offering the defiled and blemished sacrifices on the altar, is not their fault, but is that of the individual who does not offer the best of what he has to the Lord. The commandment addressed in this chapter to the priests does not concern the offerings and the sacrifices, as much as it concerns the priests’ hearts, intentions, life, and behavior. If the task of the priest, is to intercede on behalf of the people, by offering sacrifices, being a symbol of that of the Lord Christ. It is fitting for the priest himself to be holy. If the priest is not pure, how can his heart cry out for the sake of the purity and the sanctity of the hearts of others?

*“If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart’” (Malachi 2:2).*

God, who searches the hearts, knows for sure that their practice of priestly work is not for the sake of God’s glory; and that the problem is in the heart itself. That is why a curse is sent upon them instead of blessings.

For not giving the Lord their heart, because of temporal glory or material benefit, a curse will befall them, and they will lose even their temporal honor, and their material blessings. They will lose what is heavenly, beside what is earthly.

❖ It is such a great responsibility and a heavy commitment on the priests to defend, and to work for the sake of God’s glory; so as not to seem negligent in this concern, when they hear His

warning, saying: “*And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,*’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings’” (see Malachi 2:1-2)<sup>1</sup>.

### **St. Cyprian**

- ❖ When a shepherd walks along rough and sloping terrains, his flock would follow him and would fall to perdition. Grieved by the bad experience of the shepherds, the Lord says on the tongue of His prophet: “Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture – and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet” (Ezekiel 34:18, 19).

It is obvious that when the shepherds drink of the clear and pure waters, they quench their thirst from the source of truth by their sound understanding. But they would corrupt the holy contemplation by their wicked life, when they foul the waters by their feet. It is only logic that their flock, following the bad example they see, would drink from the water they have fouled with their feet, and would then refrain from following the teachings they have heard. The flocks wish to do the right things they hear from their shepherds; yet they would divert because of the evil they do; and would drink muddy water from a polluted spring.

That is why the prophet says, that the wicked priests have become a snare leading to the perdition of their flock: “*Hear this, O priests... For yours is the judgment, because you have been a snare*” (Hosea 5:1); “*The prophet is a fowler’s snare*” (Hosea 9:8). And the Lord also says by His prophet concerning these shepherds: “*Because they... caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity*” (Ezekiel 44:12).

Nothing could harm the church like those who have the image and the title of sanctity, yet they act corruptly<sup>2</sup>.

### **Fr. Gregory (the Great)**

- ❖ It is your duty, O Bishop, not to disregard the faults of the people, nor to despise the repentant, so as not to lead the Lord’s flock to perdition, or to insult the new name sealed upon His people. You would then bring upon yourself the divine words of rebuke, said on the tongue of the prophet Jeremiah, concerning those old shepherds: “Many shepherds have destroyed My vineyard. They have trodden My portion under foot” (Jeremiah 12:10)<sup>3</sup>.

### **The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**

Falling under curse, the priests in their turn would become a cause of curse for the people who follow their way.

- ❖ I wish that the people would not deceive themselves, assuming that they are secure from

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<sup>1</sup>St. Cyprian: *Epistle 104:13*.

<sup>2</sup>*Pastoral Care 1:2*.

<sup>3</sup>*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles 2: 3: 15*.

contagiousness of sin, when they attach to a sinful priest, and obey an illegal and unjust bishop; Those whom the prophet Hosea rebukes, saying, *“Their sacrifices ... shall be like bread of mourners to them; all who eat it shall be defiled”* (Hosea 9:4). This teaching clearly reveals that everyone partakes of the sin of corruption of the sacrifice of an oppressive and a blaspheming priest<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Cyprian**

***“Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and I will put you out of My presence” (Malachi 2:3)***

The goal of priestly work is to create a joyful heavenly atmosphere among his flock. But because of the corruption of their hearts and intentions, their life turned into a cause of bitterness, barrenness, and grief among the people.

When the religious leaders divert from holiness, blessing will escape and curse will take place. Like when the earth was cursed because of the sin of our parents Adam and Eve, and brought forth thorns and thistles. The prophet Isaiah says: *“Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, Therefore you will plant pleasant plants... But the harvest will be a heap of ruin in the day of grief and desperate sorrow”* (Isaiah 17:10, 11). And the prophet Hosea says: *“They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens will swallow it up”* (Hosea 8:7). And the prophet Jeremiah says: *“They have sown wheat, but reaped thorns”* (Jeremiah 12:13).

- ❖ No fruit is got through ministering to idols that would bring forth heads of wheat struck by the wind; that appear from the outside as though full of grain, while it contains nothing inside<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ When you forget what the beneficent God has done for your sake, you will plant unfaithfulness and reap ungodliness. You will reap the fruits of your own seeds<sup>3</sup>.

**Theodoret of Cyrus**

In the Catholic version it came: *“Behold, I will cut off your arms, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your feasts...”* Instead of the honor, glory, and blessing, that the ministers of God, who work for the edification of their people, are supposed to enjoy; their arms would be cut off, dung would be spread over their faces, and they would lose the joy of the feasts.

By the dung, or residue, he probably means the waste that remains after washing up the sacrifices. Offering blemished sacrifices with defiled hearts, instead of the chosen parts they should eat as the priests of God, God will spread the dung and residues over their faces, as a sign of the shame that would befall them, and of that, they would be despised and dishonored by the people. This is the portion of the ministers who, instead of seeking the glory of God, seeks their

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<sup>1</sup> Letter 67:3.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary on Hosea 8.

<sup>3</sup> Commentary on Isaiah 17:10.

own glory and personal material benefit. They turn into a disposal, worthy of the waste thrown over them.

***“Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you; that My covenant with Levi may continue,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:4).***

Here, God confirms that Malachi is not uttering his own words, but those, which God sent for their repentance, for the sake of his covenant with Levi, to be sanctified on account of the Divine ministry.

In every generation, God intends to set with His children and people, an eternal covenant, to enjoy the heavenly heritage. And as the Psalmist says: *“He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded for a thousand generations”* (Psalm 105:8).

❖ After saying: *“He has remembered His covenant forever;”* which we should understand as being an eternal covenant of justification and eternal inheritance, promised by God by faith, He added: *“The word which He commanded for a thousand generations.”* What does He mean by the word *“commanded”*? The commandment here is faith; *“As the just will live by faith”* (Romans 1:17); and the eternal inheritance is set for this faith<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

❖ *“They did not keep the covenant of God. They refused to walk in His Law. And forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them”* (Psalm 78:9-10). They rebelled against Him, who renewed them, and baptized them in the Red Sea which *“He divided and caused them to pass through; and made the water stand up like a heap. In the daytime, He also led them with the cloud”* (Psalm 78:12-14)<sup>2</sup>.

❖ *“My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him”* (Psalm 89:27, 28). He keeps His mercy forever on the Church; He saves by the covenant of His commandments<sup>3</sup>.

❖ The Law was only the beginning of the covenant; whereas the gospel is its consummation<sup>4</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

## **2. A COVENANT WITH GOD FOR LIFE**

When God set His covenant with the sons of Levi, especially with Aaron and his children, He did not put a heavy burden on them, but set a covenant of “life and peace.” God separated them to become a cause of life for His people, and peace for them through their holy ministry.

If God has set a covenant with His people, He did that in particular with the tribe of Levi. ‘The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘As to the tribe of Levi, do not count them among the children of Israel; but. ... *“They shall attend to the furnishing of the tabernacle of meeting, and*

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps. 105 (104).

<sup>2</sup> Homily II on Ps 78 (77).

<sup>3</sup> Homily 66 on Ps 89 (88).

<sup>4</sup> Homily 75 on St. Mark 1:1-12.

to the needs of the children of Israel.” And they shall live near the tabernacle’ (see Numbers 3:12); He also said to Moses: “Bring near to you your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, from among the Israelites, to serve Me as priests”(Exodus 28:1). And about him, it is also said: “Aaron, the holy one of the Lord” (Psalm 106:16).

God opens the gates of heaven to pour over the soul that reveres the Lord and fear Him; and grants it eternal life and inner peace.

**“My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace, which I gave him; this called for reverence, and he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.” (Malachi 2:5).**

A priest is entrusted over the divine covenant to become the messenger of the Lord of hosts, a messenger of the covenant of life and peace. When the prophet Moses blessed the tribes before his departure, he said to Levi: “Who says of his father and mother, ‘I have not seen them,’ nor did he acknowledge his brothers, or know his own children; for they have observed Your word and kept Your covenant” (Deuteronomy 33:9). It was fitting for the Levite, as a minister to the Holy One, to concentrate all his energies on the divine commandment and covenant; above all other relationships even to seem as though he does not see his own father and mother, does not acknowledge his brothers, and does not know his children.

What does he mean by saying: “My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace”?

If eternal death befell man because of sin, and he lost his inner peace, his peace with God and with his brethren, because he gave his back to God, the Grantor of peace; the goal of the divine covenant is the resurrection of the dead spiritually to enjoy Christ - ‘the Resurrection’ - to let man live and not die; and to consummate the reconciliation between him and God; to become filled with inner peace with himself, as well as with his brethren. This is the task of the priest, with which he should only be preoccupied.

- ❖ He saved mankind, the work of His hands, and not of others; namely, what He made for Himself, He saved for Himself. He created man who perished through his evil; and, by His right hand. The Lord Christ died to keep him<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ He is the Lord who says: “My heart is ready, O Lord, My heart is ready.” I am ready here, and I am ready in the coming life. I am a Savior on earth; and I am a Savior in heaven. I give the eternal life to both the angels and men<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

**“The Law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity” (Malachi 2:6).**

It is fitting for the priest to have knowledge of the heavenliness; to live them, and to testify to them before his flock; “to bring out of his treasure things new and old” (Matthew 13:52).

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<sup>1</sup> Homily 25 on Ps. 98 (97).

<sup>2</sup> Homily 34 on. Ps. 108 (107).

***“For the lips of the priest should keep knowledge; and people should seek the Law from his mouth. For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7).***

The wise Solomon, believing that the priest should be wise, and the words of knowledge should pour from his lips; by which he can draw many to the way of truth; says: *“Wisdom is found on the lips of him, who has understanding... The lips of the righteous feed many”* (Proverbs 10:13, 21).

The heart of the priest should only be preoccupied with the Law, or the divine commandment. And his lips should only utter what is in harmony with the Law. *“From his mouth they seek the Law.”* Everything he utters is referred to the One who sent him, *“For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts”* (7).

It is fitting for the priest to realize, concerning his position as the messenger of the Lord of hosts, that he has a true divine heavenly vision. And as the Lord says to the prophet Isaiah: *“Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he sees”* (Isaiah 21:6). It is fitting for the priest to cry out to God, saying, *“My Lord, I stand continually on the watchtower in the daytime. I have sat at my post every night”* (Isaiah 21:8). He should stand day and night with no rest for his body; but should always watch over his people as though with the eyes of the Lord, in the daytime in their joy, and care for them every night in their afflictions. He should care for their salvation when the darkness of the night befalls them, because of their diversion from the Sun of Righteousness.

It is also fitting for the believer, in his turn, to seek the counsel of the Lord of hosts, by resorting to prayer and supplication. Together with seeking the divine will from the *“messenger of the Lord of hosts,”* he should always seek knowledge.

❖ The task of the messenger is to proclaim what he was told. That is why the priest is called “a messenger,” because the words he utters are not his own, but those of the One who sent him<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

❖ We should be aware, lest we would be rebuked as *“dumb dogs that cannot bark”* (Isaiah 56:10). The barks of dogs and the rod of the shepherd drive the wolves away. The priests are not ordained to become agents over fields or farmers on plantations; but to be farmers of souls; which is meant by the words of the apostle, saying: *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase;”* and *“For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s fields”* (1 Corinthians 3:9). These facts should be taken with great apprehension by all priests who are aware of both the divine and the civil laws; according to the words of the apostle: *“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant”* (1 Corinthians 14:37, 38). They should fear indeed what the Lord says on the tongue of His prophet: *“My people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge”* (Isaiah 5:13); and, *“One who turns away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be an abomination”* (Proverbs 28:9); *“For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge”* (Malachi

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on Rom., Homily 2.*

2:7). It is so written that, on entering into the temple, golden bells sewed to the tails of the garments of priests used to make ringing noise; referring to that the priests would not stop crying out, preaching the things concerning the end of the world and the judgment to come; would always proclaim the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the evildoers; and would provoke the good to become better, and the evildoers to reconsider their wrong behavior, for fear of the coming judgment<sup>1</sup>.

**Caesarius of Arles**

- ❖ No holy thing was presented or practiced in the temple without the consent of the priest. Because, according to the prophet Malachi, “the lips of the priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the Law from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (2:7)<sup>2</sup>.

**Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**

- ❖ To the evildoers it is said: “Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions. They have not uncovered *your iniquity to bring back your captives*” (Lamentation 2:14). It is to be noticed that teachers were sometimes called ‘prophets’ in the Holy Bible, because they reveal the nature of the present and proclaim the future. It is as though God accuses them of deception, if they compliment the evildoers instead of judging their iniquity, for their fear of them.

If the shepherds avoid using the words of rebuke, they fail to reveal the faults of the sinners. The words of rebuke are indeed the key that reveals the sin that is often not felt by those who commit it. That is why the apostle Paul says: “Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). Malachi also says: “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the Law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of host” (Malachi 1:7). That is why the Lord warns on the tongue of the prophet Isaiah, saying: “Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet” (Isaiah 58:1). Whoever enters into priesthood and takes the position of a messenger, should cry out aloud, preceding the awesome coming of the just Judge<sup>3</sup>.

**Fr. Gregory (the Great)**

### **3. CORRUPTING THE COVENANT WITH GOD**

**“*But you have departed from the way. You have caused many to stumble at the Law*” (Malachi 2:8).**

They “*have departed from the way*” (8); either by their deadly literal interpretation of the Law, to turn it into a heavy burden on the soul; or by applying it according to what would suit

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<sup>1</sup> *Sermon 1:5.*

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, 2:4:28.*

<sup>3</sup> *Pastoral Care 1:4.*

their personal interest, in a flattery to the rich, and cruelty to the poor and the weak. Those turn even the gospel of Christ from being “*an aroma of life to life, into an aroma of death to death*” (see 2 Corinthians 2:16); And to them, the Lord Christ Himself becomes “*a rock of offense*” (Romans 9:33).

It is a stumbling stone to the people, when the priest departs from the way, and betrays the covenant set between God and Levi. What does the departure from the divine way means, but to get preoccupied with something else other than the salvation of himself and that of his people? This is the way of God, who wishes for all to be saved, and to return to the knowledge of God. By departing from the divine way, they corrupt the covenant with God the Philanthropic.

- ❖ The divine just Judge denies and disregards them; because those whom He relieves of temptations and suffering, are the ones rejected by Him.. To such people, even to those who perform miracles, the Lord of glory says: *I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity*” (Luke 13:27; Matthew 7; 23). The voice of the divine Truth rebukes the ignorance of such shepherds, saying: “*They are shepherds who cannot understand*” (Isaiah 56:11); and, “*Those who handled the Law did not know Me*” (Jeremiah 2:8). The divine Truth complains against such shepherds who do not know Him. Because no one knows the exaltation of the ministry of leadership, except those who know Him; whereas those who are ignorant of what is the Lord’s, are disregarded by the Lord; according to the words of the apostle Paul: “*If anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant*” (1 Corinthians 14:38).
- ❖ The unworthiness of the shepherd often goes hand in hand with the unworthiness of his flock. If the shepherd does not possess the light of knowledge, because of his personal sin, the flock accordingly would stumble as a result of his ignorance. For that, the Lord Christ says: “*If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch*” (Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39); and the Psalmist prophesies: “*Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually*” (Psalm 69:23). The leaders are indeed eyes, occupying the top of ranks, who are supposed to clarify the way; whereas those who follow them are bound to them. If the eyes of the former are darkened, and they lose the light of knowledge, those who follow would bow under the yoke of their sins<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Fr. Gregory (the Great)**

- ❖ The ministry of priesthood can turn into a kind of trade; about which the prophet says to the children of Israel: ‘It is as though the owners of your pubs have mixed their wine *with water*’ (See Isaiah 1:22 LXX). It is difficult to imagine that the blessed prophet would care for such a worldly issue. By the owners of pubs, he most probably means, the shepherds in the church, who are supposed to serve the Savior’s cup. He rebukes them for disregarding their divine duties, and getting preoccupied with human affairs; “*Everyone with his own house.*” When a priest is slothful in performing his priestly work, and is preoccupied with temporal pleasures,

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<sup>1</sup> Pastoral Care 1:1.

he is like the owner of a pub who mixes the wine with water<sup>1</sup>.

### **Fr. Maximus of Turin**

It is very serious, when shepherds lose the spirit of discernment; and the word of enlightenment for them, turns into an offense to their congregations. About them, the Lord Christ says: *“They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch”* (Matthew 15:14). And the prophet Isaiah says: *“They walk in blackness. They grope for the wall like the blind, and they grope as if they have no eyes. They stumble at noonday as at twilight. They are as dead men in desolate places”* (Isaiah 59:9-10).

- ❖ They read the Holy Bible; and do not see the truth in it. They are like the blind who walk groping the wall, and falling at noonday as at midnight. You can imagine how miserable they are! Although the Sun of Righteousness shines on the whole world, yet they stumble, and fall as though in the darkness and the death of the night. They thigh as dead men and spend their life in great grief, that their presence seems like death<sup>2</sup>.

### **Theodoret of Cyrus**

- ❖ They are blind leaders to blind people. Who are those blind leaders? Those are the Pharisees whose eyes God has blinded for they are non-believers in Jesus Christ. Thus, God has blinded them, to deny them the shining of the light of the gospel of the glory of God, in the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). We should separate ourselves from the leadership of such blind persons, and should listen carefully to those who preach the true teaching. Let us do this, lest we become blind like them; when we do not recognize the meaning of the Holy Scripture<sup>3</sup>.

### **Origen**

*“Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways, but have shown partiality in the Law”* (Malachi 2:9).

Because the people felt that their priests, instead of being the source of divine blessing, have become bearers of the curse (2); of whom the Lord says: *“I have made you contemptible and base before all the people”* (9).

Beside deviating from the divine way, and corrupting the covenant, they show partiality in the Law, choosing from it what suit them, and disregarding what contradict with their evil will; consummating the outer appearances, and not caring for the inner purity; not following the example of the psalmist who says: *“I would not be ashamed when I look into all Your commandments”* (Psalmist 119:6).

By saying: *“They have shown partiality in the Law”* (9), he probably means using the commandment in partiality, showing kindness to some persons, and cruelty to others, to realize personal benefits; disregarding that *“There is no partiality with God”* (Romans 2:11)/ As, according to ‘Elihu’: *“(God) is not partial to princes, nor does He regard the rich more than the*

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<sup>1</sup> Maximus of Turin: Sermon 28:2.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary on Isaiah 59:10.

<sup>3</sup> Commentary on Matthew 11:14.

poor; for they are all the work of His hands” (Job 34:11).

#### 4. DEALING TREACHEROUSLY WITH ONE ANOTHER

*“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another, by profaning the covenant of the fathers?” (Malachi 2:10)*

In disregard for brotherhood, being the children of one heavenly Father, and the creation of one God, every one of them dealt treacherously with his brother. Not loving God, they also do not love their brethren. And in dealing treacherously with one another, they insult, according to the apostle Paul the *“One God and one Father of all”* (Ephesians 4:6); To whom the prophet Isaiah says: *“O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are the Potter, and we all are the work of Your hand”* (Isaiah 64:8).

- ❖ There (in heaven), No one will give more love to a relative, but everyone will love the other abundantly and equally. There, men will not be married to women, and will not give birth to children. There, will be no preference to a male over a female. But all will be children of one Father in heaven; according to the words of the prophet: *“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?”* (Malachi 2:10)<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ Concerning this; our Lord and His apostles teach us that: *“Those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God”* (See Luke 20:35-36). And the apostle says: *“There is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28)<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Aphrahat**

- ❖ Don’t you hear the prophet Moses say: *“You forsook God who made you”* (Deuteronomy 32:15 LXX)? Don’t you hear the prophet Malachi, rebuke you and say: *“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?”* (Malachi 2:10 LXX)<sup>3</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ This is God’s compassion toward humanity; He, who is the Creator, has later become, by grace, also a Father. Yet, this will happen when the people – His creation – accept Him in their hearts; according to the words of the apostle: *“The Spirit of His Son cries out: Abba, Father.”* Those, accepting the Word, will get from Him the authority to become children of God; although, by nature, they are His creation. That is why *“The Word became flesh”* to make humans qualified for deity. The same meaning could be acquired from the prophet Malachi who says: *“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?”* (Malachi 2:10). From the beginning we were creatures by nature. God created us by the Word. Then later on, God the Creator became our Father as well<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Demonstration 22:12 On Death and Later Times.*

<sup>2</sup> *Demonstrations, 22:13 On Death and Later Times.*

<sup>3</sup> *Homilies on Rom., Homily 14.*

<sup>4</sup> *Four Discourses Against Arians 2:21:59.*

### St. Athanasius the Apostolic

- ❖ The Holy Bible proclaims the truth, saying: ‘First of all, Let us believe that there is only one God who created and consummated everything, and brought everything to existence.’ He, who contains everything; and is not contained by anyone. Truly, the prophet Malachi says: *“Has not one God created us?”* The apostle says: *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Ephesians 4:6). And the Lord Himself says: *“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father”* (Matthew 11:27); obviously through Him, who created all things, as to Him nothing was delivered by another, but what belong to Him (the Father)<sup>1</sup>.

### St. Irenaeus

## 5. MARRIAGE TO PAGAN WIVES

*“Why do we deal treacherously with one another, by profaning the covenant of the fathers? Judah (the son of Jacob) has dealt treacherously. And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the Lord’s holy institution which He loves. He has married the daughter of a foreign god”* (Malachi 2:11).

The prophet repeats the expression *“dealing treacherously”* and its synonyms, five times in this piece (10-15). It is as though ‘dealing treacherously’ has become a common feature in the people’s life and behavior. The psalmist says: *“Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause”* (Psalm 25:3); and: *“Do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors”* (Psalm 59:5). And: *“I see the treacherous, and am disgusted, because they do not keep your word”* (Psalm 119:158). And Solomon says: *“The wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it”* (Proverbs 2:22). And *“The perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them”* (Proverbs 11:3). From all this, we can see how serious treachery and unfaithfulness are.

- ❖ So has the apostle Paul mourned the Jews for their treachery; the Lord mourned Jerusalem; and Jeremiah lamented the people for their unfaithfulness to the Law<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ I have enough ground for hope for those who believe in You, and who enjoy Your help; whereas You will reject those who are treacherous. It is now fitting to refer to the fact that it is not only the sinners, but also those who break the Law without cause (treacherously), who will be covered with disgrace. Not all sinners are the same:

Some sin because of certain circumstances, or because of a natural weakness; whereas others arrogantly boast their rebellion and slothfulness<sup>3</sup>.

### Theodoret of Cyrus

Treachery here means betraying the covenant; as whoever breaks the covenant with God

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<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Haer. 4:20:2.*

<sup>2</sup> *On Ps. 119:158.*

<sup>3</sup> *On Ps 25:3.*

is treacherous and unfaithful. This treachery reflects on his dealings even with those closest to him; namely a spouse, whom he got from God as a partner and a helper in life with all its aspects.

A sign of treachery and abomination is that they insulted their God by marrying pagan wives (11), and by divorcing their believing wives. God considered these two crimes as though they are treachery directed personally to Him. The first crime is the fellowship with non-believers; who would lead the believer to deny God. The second crime is loosening the holy bond of marriage made by God.

❖ If you wish to know more clearly how a believing Christian woman should never marry a non-believer; hear the words of the apostle saying: “*A wife is bound by Law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 8:39); namely, (only to a Christian). He who allows a second and a third marriage in the Lord, forbids a first marriage to a non-believer. That is why Abraham made his servant put his hand under his thigh); namely, to swear by Christ who is to come out of his seed, not to get a wife for his son, Isaac, from the Gentiles (Genesis 24:1-9). And Ezra, having discovered such kind of abomination toward God, made his people send away their gentile wives (Ezra 10:1-17). Here, Malachi says: “*Judah (the son of Jacob) has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the Lord’s holy institution, which He loves: he has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, and who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts*” (Malachi 2:11, 12)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

**“*May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, and who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts*” (Malachi 2:12).**

By such abominations, by which believers defile the sanctuary of the Lord, they cause themselves and those they have, to be cut off “*the commonwealth of Israel*” (Ephesians 2:12); They awake and aware, namely the teachers and the learned, the blind shepherds and those who follow them, will all fall into the ditch of vanity.

The believer who marries a pagan will be cut off “*from the tents of Jacob;*” namely from the people of God. The priest who “*brings an offering to the Lord of hosts,*” and commits that same abomination, will fall under the same punishment, and will be cut off from the ministry of the temple of the Lord and from priesthood.

Because the people of Israel committed harlotry with the women of Moab, they were invited by them to worship their gods, and bowed down to Baal of Peor. Consequently, the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel; and the prophet Moses ordered all the offending leaders of the people who committed that abomination to be killed (see Numbers 25:1-4). Phinehas, the high priest, with a jealousy for God, struck the priest who dared to attach himself to a Medianite

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<sup>1</sup> *Against Jovinianus 1:10.*

woman, together with her, with his spear. Nehemiah as well, drove away from God's congregation, a grandson of the high priest who married a pagan wife (Nehemiah 13).

The priest Phinehas with such a jealousy became a symbol of the Lord Christ, who delivering Himself to death on the cross turned away the divine anger from those who believed in Him.

❖ If Phinehas, by his jealousy in killing the evildoer, has turned away God's anger from the congregation, would Jesus, who did not kill anyone, but "*gave Himself a ransom for all*" (1 Timothy 2; 6), not turn away God's anger from all mankind?<sup>1</sup>

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem**

❖ If we are conformed according to His death, the sin in us will surely become completely dead, by the spear of Baptism; the same way the adulterer perished through the jealousy of Phinehas<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

*"And this you do as well: You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and groaning because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor at your hand"* (Malachi 2:13).

In order to be able to marry a pagan wife, believers used to divorce or to treat harshly their wives. That wives who could do nothing but to weep and groan, and to cover the altar with their bitter tears. Worship in the temple, especially in the days of feasts, thus turned into grief and tears, instead of the joy by the Lord.

Offerings and sacrifices are no longer a cause of pleasure to the Lord, because they were mixed with the tears of the distressed wives, whose cries silently joined those of Abel's blood from the ground.

Marriage to pagans probably corrupted the concepts of worship. Instead of being connected to praise and spiritual joy, the sacrifices were connected to screams of the worshippers who slashed their bodies with swords and spears, and to blood gushing out over the altar (1 Kings 18:28). And as the prophet Ezekiel says: "*Women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz*" (Ezekiel 8:14).

Instead of worshipping together with their believing wives with praise and joy, and with unhindered prayers and offerings by pure hands. Men resorted to worship together with pagan wives with the spirit of grief.

Tears and weeping here, are probably also because of the feeling of guilt by those treacherous worshippers, who shed tears, yet without forsaking their bonds with their pagan wives. They continued practicing the worship of the true God to calm down their consciences, and the idolatry worship to please their pagan wives. They mixed between light and darkness; to hear the voice of the prophet Elijah saying: "*How long will you falter between two opinions? If*

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<sup>1</sup> *Catech. Lectures 13:2.*

<sup>2</sup> *On the Baptism of Christ.*

*the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him*” (1 Kings 18:21). And that of the apostle Paul saying, *“What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?”* (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)

❖ *“What communion has light with darkness?”* Because of the contradiction between light and darkness, whoever partakes of both, will not have a portion in either. In his so mixed life, by his faith, he seeks the help of the lighted part; yet by his dark habits, he quenches the lamp of reason. And as it is impossible for light and darkness to be present together, he, who embraces both of them, is his own enemy; where he is divided interiorly, between virtue and evil. Setting in himself a battle between two controversial sides. And as in such case it is not possible for the two opponents to be both victorious, the victory of one will lead to the complete destruction and death of the other<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

## **6. DEALING TREACHEROUSLY WITH THE WIFE**

*“Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your own youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously. Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant”* (Malachi 2:14).

Men have, as well, dealt treacherously in their marriages, marrying pagan wives, or taking them as concubines, to share with their lawful wives their own rights in their husband’s hearts. This shameful behavior would never present peace or joy, but inner depression and misery.

God so cares for the family; that He counts Himself as a witness to the contract of marriage. Therefore, God Himself would, as though dissolving a contract witness whoever dissolves this bond. Whereas, whoever is committed to it in faithfulness of heart and fitting behavior, would be counted as faithful to what belongs to God.

He calls her: *“the wife of your youth.”* Having loved her in the days of his youth, he should not despise that love when he gets old! He calls her: *“Your companion;”* namely, a partner, who partakes of her husband’s joy and grief; supports him as his helper, and shares in all the responsibilities of the household. He also calls her: *“Your wife by covenant;”* namely, he is bound to her by a tight bond, and entered with her into a committing covenant, that they should both honor.

*“But, did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And, why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth”* (Malachi 2:15).

Here, He gives the reasons why the two of them should live together till the end of their life, in holy love, honor, and peace. God created one Eve for one Adam, to keep him faithful to

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<sup>1</sup> On Perfection.

her. And as it came in the book of Leviticus: “*Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive*” (Leviticus 18:18).

God could have created another Eve; Yet He intended for Adam and Eve to be preoccupied with “*seeking godly offspring*,” namely, to have holy children, who have the image of God. He intended for them, not to be preoccupied with getting satisfaction through carnal lusts; but with setting a holy household with mutual honor in the Lord, and faithfulness in love, not with the treachery of giving emotions to someone else. According to both the natural and the divine laws: “*Let each man has his own wife, and let each woman has her own husband*” (1 Corinthians 7:2), to live together in chastity and purity, in a holy family, to beget offspring who worship God (Psalm 22:30); by which “*The marriage is honorable, and the bed is undefiled*” (Hebrew 13:4).

- ❖ In the gospel of Matthew it came that: “*Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery*” (Matthew 5:32). Moses himself has set a statute that whoever marries a girl whom he raped by violence, is not permitted to divorce her all his days (Deuteronomy 22:28, 29). Now, if marriage after the use of violence is to stay intact, how should be the one that takes place legally, honorably, and through mutual consent?! That is why the prophet here says: “*Let no one deal treacherously with the wife of his youth*” (Malachi 2:15). Here we also see the Lord Christ, following the Creator’s way; protects marriage, and bans divorce except for sexual immorality<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ I draw your attention to the law of the one wife, that was since the beginning of the human race (Genesis 1:27); that was obviously set by God as a model for the future generations. He, after creating Adam, and finding out the necessity of giving him a helper, He took one of his ribs and made it into a woman (Genesis 2:21-22). He set for man to have only one woman<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ Where can we find a language that is more fitting to express the happiness of a marriage set by the church, made fast by the blessing of its sacrament, celebrated by the angels, and approved by God the Father?! Young men and women all over the world are not to get married without the consent of their parents! What a blessing for a couple of believers to partake of one hope, one wish, one ordainment, and one service?! They get to enjoy a relationship in spirit and body; to become partners with no controversy; for “*the two to become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19; 5; Ephesians 5:31). When they become one flesh, they will also become one Spirit; will pray together, fast together, supplicate together, and raise their hands to God together. In the church of God they occupy an equal status (Romans 12:15; 15:6; Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 12:12). They stand equally at the table of God, in trouble, in confronting persecutions, and in rejoice. There is no secret between the two of them; no one will hide anything from the other, No one will disregard the other, and no

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<sup>1</sup> *Against Marcion 4:34.*

<sup>2</sup> *Exhortation to Chastity, 5.*

one will cause any trouble for the other<sup>1</sup>.

### **Tertullian**

- ❖ Do not forsake her without legal cause; Take heed to your spirit: *“The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously. Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did He not make them one?”* (See Malachi 2:15) The Lord says: *“What God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matthew 19:6)<sup>2</sup>.

### **The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**

***“For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,” says the Lord of hosts; Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously” (Malachi 2:16)***

What is indeed more serious is to try to conceal your evil behavior, and the treachery and betrayal you harbor in your heart, by pretending before others that you love your wife. You are covering up your evil and oppression as though by your garment.

God allowed the Jews to divorce their wives because of the hardness of their hearts (Matthew 19:8). Yet He hates divorce; especially that they used to consider it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason (Matthew 19:3)

The prophet confirms that, divorcing a wife just for any reason, and marrying another, while the other is still alive, is not only treachery against the first wife, but is actually a treachery against God Himself, who set the holy law of matrimony.

The Lord Christ came to raise the believers up to a level of spiritual maturity and serious responsibility, by not allowing man to divorce his wife except for sexual immorality.

**St. Augustine**, commenting on the words of the Lord concerning that, says: [The Mosaic statute did not allow divorce. But it commanded him who intends to divorce his wife to give her a certificate of divorce. As in doing that, the intensity of his anger may have the chance to get down, and he may reconsider his intention! That is why, when the Lord was asked about this issue, He said: *“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives”* (Matthew 19:8). As however great is the cruelty of heart of him who intends to divorce his wife, When he knows that by giving her a certificate of divorce, she will have the right to marry another man, his anger may slow down, and he may reconsider his position.

To confirm this principle; namely, not to take the issue of divorce lightly, the Lord of glory made the only exception for it - sexual immorality. By that He is commanding man to forbear with patience any other troubles, for the sake of his love for his wife, and for that of chastity. And to confirm that same principle, the Lord of glory, said that whoever marries a divorced wife commits adultery (Matthew 19:9)<sup>3</sup>.]

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<sup>1</sup> *To His Wife 2:8.*

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, 1:3:14.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ser. on Mount 1:39.*

## 7. ABUSING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

*“You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we wearied Him?’ In that you say. ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,’ or ‘Where is the God of justice?’” (Malachi 2:17)*

He says: *“You have wearied the Lord with your words”* They introduced causes and justifications, as though they are unaware of the seriousness of their erroneous behavior. The Holy God, who wishes for His people to be holy, grieves for their lack of reason and discernment; in counting evil as good; in assuming that whatever they do, they would still be good in the sight of the Lord; and if He is offended by their actions, which they think are good, they refer to God oppression and injustice.

How amazing?! Man gives himself the right to judge, not only his fellow man, but to judge God Himself, saying: *“Where is the God of Justice?”*

### ***IN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MALACHI (Chapter 2)***

#### **SET OUT OF THE BELIEVER A HOLY LEADER**

- ❖ You created everything for the sake of man.  
You set him a head and a king with authority.  
You wish for every man to be a holy leader.
- ❖ For the sake of man, you did much.  
And when he fell You cursed the land.  
To produce thorns and thistles.  
You wish for every believer to be a blessing for many  
Because of Joseph, You blessed the house of Photifar his master.  
And for the sake of David Your servant, You blessed Solomon.  
And because of Jonah the deserter, nature became violent.  
The seamen lost their provisions and peace.  
And almost lost their life itself.  
Sanctify me and draw me to You, O Holy One.  
To draw, by Your Holy Spirit, many to You.
- ❖ Grant me not to deal treacherously with Your covenant;  
But make it for me the secret of life and peace.  
By Your New Covenant, grant me the resurrection from the dead.  
And grant me peace on a heavenly level.
- ❖ Let Your commandment become the law of my life  
And let Your word perpetually be on my lips

- Let me enjoy Your knowledge  
And let me testify to it with the power of the Spirit.
- ❖ Grant me not to deal treacherously with my brethren.  
But to be faithful to You in my relationship with my brethren and my family.  
Dwell in Your church, which is in my heart;  
And transfigure in the church of my house.
  - ❖ Take away from me every treachery to the covenant  
And purify me from every defilement.  
Set Your kingdom in me, to become wholly for You.  
To live as fitting for a son of Yours.  
And to be committed to respond to Your Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 3

# A PROMISE OF THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

In the first chapter he reveals the wounds of the people as a whole, leaders and commons, having despised God's name, through offering blemished sacrifices and literal worship from defiled hearts. And in the second chapter, he rebukes them for breaking the divine commandment and covenant that their blessings turned into curses. They dealt treacherously with the Lord their God, and men dealt treacherously with their wives. And in chapters three and four, the prophet Malachi speaks to us about the first and the second coming of the incarnate Word of God: In His first coming to dwell among humanity, being His temple; and in the second, to judge and burns up evil. The Lord Himself in His love for humanity will descend to sanctify her.

Now in this chapter, he presents the promise of the coming of the Messiah, and of the messenger who prepares the way before Him; Who alone will purify His people as though with fire; Then they will present their offerings with righteousness. His coming does not imply their negativity. As they are committed to return to Him, in order for them to experience His return to them. He requests from them to return to Him with practical steps, in true spiritual worship, trusting that God will be compassionate to them as His children, to enjoy the Spirit of wisdom and discernment.

<b>1- Preparing for the coming of the Messiah</b>	<b>1.</b>
<b>2- A divine purifying fire</b>	<b>2-3.</b>
<b>3- He will change them, but with no change of Himself</b>	<b>4-6.</b>
<b>4- Returning to the Lord of hosts</b>	<b>7-12.</b>
<b>5- Their corrupted concepts</b>	<b>13-15.</b>
<b>6- God dealing with them as His children</b>	<b>16-18.</b>

### 1. PREPARING FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

Mockingly, the wicked were asking: "*where is the God of justice?*" (Malachi 2:17). The answer came quickly, that He would come at the fullness of time, which has become at hand.

***"Behold, I send My messenger. And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.*** (Malachi 3:1).

Here the Lord refers to St. John the Baptist, whom He sends to prepare the way before Him by proclaiming repentance, by offering the baptism of repentance, and by testifying to the Lord as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

He calls St. John "*His angel.*" Here, many of the Church Fathers stand in awe before such exalted love of God for man. He wishes to call every man His own angel. In His love, He wishes to lift every man up to the highest heavenly level.

He prepared humanity for His coming since the fall of Adam and Eve, when He promised them, saying: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3; 15). Then, came the Patriarchs to present symbols and prophecies about His coming; and finally, St. John the Baptist, called by God "*His angel*" (1) came to prepare the way before the promised Messiah. He is coming to proclaim the divine message, which he received from heaven, and not from human. The Old testament ended by that promise; Then came the beginning of the gospel of the apostle St. Mark, being the first of the gospels, to testify to the realization of that promise (Mark 1:12).

St. John the Baptist came to prepare the way before the Lord Christ, by proclaiming repentance, and by offering the Baptism of repentance. He came to proclaim to the people that their salvation does not lie in being carnally referred to Abraham the Patriarch, but by the coming of Him, whom Abraham hoped to come.

This prophecy came very clear; and was realized in the person of St. John the Baptist, who testified to the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is "*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). The Jews tried to present various interpretations of this text. Some claimed that Malachi speaks about himself as the angel of the Lord; and some others claimed that he refers to the angel of death who casts the wicked into Hades.

The prophet confirms that the Lord will suddenly come to His temple; He, whom the pious who fear the Lord seek since the days of Adam and Eve. They wait for Him with great joy; and according to the evangelist: "*They anticipated the comfort of Israel;*" "*A redemption in Israel;*" and "*The desire of all nations*" (Haggai 2:7); in whom, all will find the pleasure of their heart.

"*Will suddenly come*" (1); His coming is at hand. We are not, like the Patriarchs and the prophets, who had to wait for Him to come in the distant future, because His coming drew near. By saying "*suddenly,*" He probably means that His coming will be at a time not expected by many, despite the clarity of the prophecies, and even the reference to the time of His coming, as it came in the book of Daniel. Although the priests, at the time He was born, confirmed that this would take place in Bethlehem Ephratah, yet His coming for them was sudden; because they were not prepared, despite their mental awareness of it

"*To His temple*": At the age of twelve, He stood in the temple among the teachers, drawing their hearts by His authority; doing "*His fathers business*" (Luke 2:49). And several times, He came to the temple of Jerusalem, and drove away from it the sellers of pigeons and the moneylenders. He did that with authority, being His own temple and His own house. And when He came to Jerusalem in the last week, He headed directly to the temple (Matthew 21:12). There many blind and lame came to Him to seek healing (Matthew 21:14). And there, He preached and performed miracles and wonders.

Although He came to set a new temple in the hearts of His believers; yet He honored the temple in Jerusalem; commanding us to honor the house of the Lord.

“Behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.” The Speaker is faithful in His promises; is capable of realizing them; He came with no delay.

- ❖ “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John” (John 1:6); called “a messenger” (Malachi 3:1); in reference to that a messenger is not speaking on his own<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ The Lord Jesus talked about John’s attire, imprisonment, and role in prophecy; revealing that he is greater than a prophet; being so near and so close to the Messiah who is to come. He says: “Behold, I send My messenger before Me.” Those who ride close to the king are greater than any other<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ St. John the Baptist is considered greater than other prophets for the following reason: While the other prophets prophesied about the coming of the Messiah, St. John pointed with his finger, saying: “This is the Lamb of God who carries away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). By baptizing His Lord, his status was further enhanced; realizing the prophecy of Malachi that he is an angel. Being so called was not according to his nature, but because of the importance of his message; being the messenger who proclaims the coming of the Lord<sup>3</sup>.

#### **St. Jerome**

- ❖ The word “angel” means the messenger of God, like Moses, Joshua the son of Nun, and the other prophets, till St. John the Baptist<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Fr. Ambrosiaster**

- ❖ In this text he tells us about the two comings of Christ – the first and the second. Concerning the first, he says: “Will suddenly come to His temple” (Malachi 3:1), referring to Christ’s body, about which He Himself says: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). And about His second coming, he prophesied by the words: “Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?” (Malachi 3:2)<sup>5</sup>.
- ❖ Humans could be called angels; as what the apostle says about himself: “You received me as an angel of God” (Galatians 4:14). And according to what is said about St. John the Baptist: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You” (Matthew 11:10). And at His coming, with all His angels (Matthew 25; 31), He will have with Him His saints as well<sup>6</sup>.

#### **St. Augustine**

## **2. A DIVINE PURIFYING FIRE**

The Holy Lord will come to set out of His saints, His holy temple. With His amazing

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<sup>1</sup> Homilies on St. John, Homily 6:1..

<sup>2</sup> The Gospel of Matthew, homily 37:2.

<sup>3</sup> Comm. on Matthew 2: 11:9.

<sup>4</sup> Epistle to the Galatians 3:19:1.

<sup>5</sup> City of God 18:35.

<sup>6</sup> On Ps. 50 (49).

love for men, He counts them as heavenly pure gold or silver, whom He desires to clothe with His divine righteousness; to make their heart a holy temple, where every worship or offering, He will smell a fragrance that pleases Him.

***“And who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like the fuller’s soap.” (Malachi 3:2)***

Although He came incarnate in humility, Yet He encounters all ranks, even the despised slaves then. *“Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?”* Although He came, not to judge the world, but to save the world; yet He was with such authority that terrified the Jewish leaderships.

That was about His first coming to save; so what about His second coming to Judge? The believers will see Him with eyes like those of a dove; whereas the wicked will see His eyes flaring with fire!

The Lord Christ came like a refiner’s fire, and like the fuller’s soap, which cleanses the textile of impurities. *“He came to send fire on the earth”* (Luke 12:49).

❖ The same Christ who did that, will, later on, stand before us as our Judge. That did not escape the attention of prophets, who prophesied it. The prophet Daniel was living among the Barbarians and the Babylonians when he saw Christ coming on the clouds. Let us hear his words: *“I was watching in the night visions; And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days. And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him”* (See Daniel 7:13-14). The same prophet referred to God’s judgment by saying: *“I watched till thrones were put in place. And the Ancient of Days was seated... A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened”* (Daniel 7:9-10). Not just that, but Daniel also revealed the honor given to the righteous, saying: *“...Until the Ancient of days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High; and a time came for the saints to possess the kingdom”* (Daniel 7:22). This judgment will come through fire; According to Malachi: *“Like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap.”* Then, the righteous will enjoy great honor. And talking about the resurrection, Daniel says: *“(They) shall rest, and will rise to their inheritance at the end of the days”* (Daniel 12:13)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

❖ When we fell, “A horn of salvation (was) raised up for us” (Luke 2:69); A main “Corner Stone” of foundation (Isaiah 28:16), who binds us to Him, and to one another; was raised up in the right time; And a fire (Malachi 3:2-3) was set to purify our lowly and evil things (I Corinthians 3:13-15)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Demonstration Against the Pagans 11:1-3.*

<sup>2</sup> *On the Great Athanasius, 7.*

## St. Gregory of Nazianzus

According to one of the Fathers of the Church, [St. John the Baptist was not daringly called an angel, while being human, because of his power or worthiness; although he is more glorious than if he is actually an angel by name or by nature. An angel is so called because of his nature as an angel, more than because he is qualified to be as such; while it is miraculous for a man, with his human nature, to be raised up to the angelic holiness, and to gain such grace of God, which is not by nature<sup>1</sup>.]

***“He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:3).***

*“He will sit as a refiner”* purifying humanity by His gospel, to set of it a holy Church without blemish. He will take away impurities from it, to become pure gold purified by fire. The apostle Paul says: *“Just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Ephesians 5:25-27); And, *“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good work”* (Titus 2:14).

*“He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver”* (3). It is as though the Lord Christ purifies those who intend to dedicate their life to Him, to praise, and to minister to Him, and to offer their hearts as living sacrifices, to become the spiritual sons of Levi of the New Testament.

If the Lord Christ has chosen His disciples and apostles, and granted the gift of the priesthood to them and successively to their successors; yet there is a general priesthood which the common believer receives in the sacrament of Baptism; through which he offers his prayers, fasts, and his ministry, as spiritual offerings accepted by God. The evangelist St. John says: *“He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father”* (Revelation 1:6).

The Lord Christ purifies His believers by fiery Holy Spirit “... by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

By the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, *“that the offerings of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 15:16); to realize the words of the Psalmist, saying: *“Offer the sacrifices of righteousness”* (Psalm 4:5); and the words of the apostle Paul, saying: *“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”* (Romans 12:1).

❖ Take away the defilement of their blasphemy that came you, and purify by the breath of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Incomplete work on Matthew, homily 27. PG 56:774.*

holy sanctification, the souls buried in the distasteful mire, to turn back the dens of thieves into houses of prayers<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ If they, with no knowledge about mysteries and visions, based their judgment just upon their present personal interests, their foolishness in understanding the prophecies, would be apparent. We are committed to take away such foolishness and envy from our minds, and it is fitting for us to become more flaring than fire, to be able to confront such kind of people. That is why the Lord Christ says: *“I came to send fire on the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!”* (Luke 12:49). And that is why the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of fire<sup>2</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”* (Matthew 3:11). The blessed John the Baptist added to the word *“Spirit,”* the expression bearing the meaning of work *“and fire.”* That does not mean that, by Christ we are baptized with fire; but through the reference to fire, we are granted the life-giving energy of the Spirit<sup>3</sup>.

**St. Cyril the Great**

### **3. HE WILL CHANGE THEM, WITH NO CHANGE OF HIMSELF**

*“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years”* (Malachi 3:4).

In the first chapter, He talked about their defiled sacrifices on His altar (1:7). Here, talking about the coming of the Messiah and the enjoyment by the believers of His righteousness, he says: *“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord”* (4).

Here He talks about the new offering through the cross, and the sacrifice of the Eucharist, the subject of the Father’s pleasure, and not displeasure to Him.

*“As in the days of old; as in former years.”* Here He brings their memory back to the offering of ‘Abel’ which was accepted by God; That of ‘Noah,’ after the great flood, whose pleasing odor was smelled by God; That of ‘Aaron,’ on which God sent fire from heaven; And that of ‘Elijah,’ etc. Likewise, through the cross, the Lord makes us accepted in Him, and beloved (Ephesians 1:6); and He will be pleased by us, and by what we offer Him of what He has given us. The apostle says about his ministry among the Gentiles of the gospel of salvation: *“That the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 15:16). The apostle asks us as well, to offer a sacrifice, acceptable to God, through our attachment to the sacrifice of the cross: *“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”* (Romans 12:1).

- ❖ How can you, conforming to this age; and not transformed to the renewal of your mind, but,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Books on Incarnation of the Lord, Against Nestorius, 7:1*

<sup>2</sup> *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 6:4.*

<sup>3</sup> *Fragment 27*

instead, is still living according to the ancient man... How can you heed the words of the apostle, who commands you to offer your bodies a living holy sacrifice, acceptable by God? How can you, as a priest of God, and anointed for this particular goal, present to God an offering, which is not totally foreign from you, or deceitful, formed of something outside you? He seeks from you a true offering constituting what is inside you, your inner man, who helps you to be perfect, as a lamb without blemish (Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 1:27)? How can you present those offerings before God, if you do not listen to the Law, which bans anyone, who is not holy, from becoming a priest?<sup>1</sup>

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

- ❖ The Gentiles have presented to God an acceptable sacrifice, when they believed in the Lord Christ, and became sanctified by the gospel<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

*“And I will come near you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows, and the fatherless, and against those who turn away an alien – Because they do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:5).*

God who is compassionate on humanity, as his children; who accepts them as an object of his pleasure; and who smells their gifts, of what he gave them, a sweet fragrance of pleasure through the cross, comes to judge those who refuse to respond to His love, and who challenge the divine justice.

a- **Testifying by His cross against the sorcerers:** By His cross He becomes a witness against the sorcerers who do not accept the divine love; but trust the ability of their father the devil. At the end of the Holy Bible, the Lord Himself warns against sorcery; including the sorcerers among the categories that *“shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”* (Revelation 21:8).

b- **Testifying by His cross against the adulterers:** who are submerged in the mire of lusts. In Isaiah, the Lord rebukes the diverted people, saying: *“But come here, you sons of the sorceress, you offspring of the adulterer and the harlot”* (Isaiah 57:3). And in Hosea, saying: *“Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she is not My wife, nor am I her husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts”* (Hosea 2:2). And, *“They are all adulterers, like an oven heated by a baker”* (Hosea 7:4).

- ❖ Isaiah started his prophecy by calling the city a *“harlot,”* saying: *“How the faithful city has become a harlot?”* (Isaiah 1:21). He accuses them of harlotry; not only for breaking the sanctity of marriage, but also for breaking the divine commandments. Pretending that they are close to God, in secret, they were slaves of the devil; which is actually a kind of harlotry<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> On Virginity, 23

<sup>2</sup> On Romans, 83.

<sup>3</sup> Commentary on Isaiah 57:3.

## Theodoret of Cyrus

- ❖ She is not faithful to Me; but has actually betrayed My covenant; treacherously dealt with the purity of our bond; and has no intention of having the fruits of My will<sup>1</sup>.

## St. Cyril the Great

**c- Testifying by His cross against the perjurers:** Those who make wrongful use of the name of God. He says on the tongue of the prophet Zechariah: “‘I will send out the curse,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by my name. It shall remain in the midst of the house, and consumes it, with its timber and stones.’” (Zechariah 5:4)

d- Testifying against those who exploit their brethren: Those who exploit wage earners, the widows and the fatherless; and against those who turn away the alien, or deprive him of his rights, for he is ignorant of the laws of the land. God counts any of these actions as lack of fear of Him. The Psalmist says about the wicked: “*There is no fear of God before his eyes*” (Psalm 36:1). God often warns us against practicing oppression, counting it as though directed against Him personally, and against His commandment: “*Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor*” (Zechariah 7:10). “*You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to Me, I will surely heed their cry, My wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword*” (Exodus 22:22-23). “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*” (James 1:27).

- ❖ Those without protection are more prone to oppression; and the more the victim is humble, the more the oppressor is counted as acting against God<sup>2</sup>.

## St. Jerome

**St. Jerome** sees in the widow, the soul that lost God as her heavenly Groom; in the orphan, the soul that is deprived of the fatherhood of God; in the alien, the soul that has no place to settle down<sup>3</sup>; namely in the divine bosoms; and in the wage-earner, he, who is preoccupied with material things rather than with eternities. It is fitting for us to care for those souls, and not to neglect their salvation, to make them enjoy a fellowship with God, the sweetness of salvation, and the fellowship of the eternal glory.

**“For I am the Lord, I do not change. Therefore, you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob” (Malachi 3:6).**

God shows His longsuffering upon them. Their fathers rebelled against Him, and against His ministers, since their early days as a nation in Egypt, when the Jews said to Moses: “*Who made you a ruler and judge over us?*” (Exodus 2:14) And after the exodus, when the people often murmured against Moses and Aaron, and when they worshipped the golden calf; And even

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary on Hosea 2:11.

<sup>2</sup> Homily 22 on Ps 94 (93).

<sup>3</sup> Homily 22 on Ps. 94 (93).

after entering the Promised Land, when they demanded a king over them like the other nations (1 Samuel 8:5); and the Lord said to the prophet Samuel: “*They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*” (1 Samuel 8:7).

They often rebelled against the commandment, worshipped idols, and committed abominations. He says: “*From the days of your fathers, you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them*” (Malachi 3:7); And reveals to them that, instead of returning to Him, they consummated the cup of evil of their fathers; and as said by Ezra: “*Since the days of our fathers to this day, we have been very guilty*” (Ezra 9:7).

He did not let them stay confused, but provided them with the cure through returning to Him; being alone the secret of their healing of their incurable ailments. Repentance is not merely to forsake the sin, but it should imply a positive action; namely the return to God, and getting perpetually preoccupied with Him.

Not being capable of realizing the truth of their depths, they asked: “*In what way shall we return?*” In their wickedness and treachery to God, and to their weak brethren, they assumed that they are with God, and that He dwells among them, merely for their assumed care of Jerusalem and the presence of the temple in it.

By asking, “*In what way shall we return,*” they proclaim the resentment they feel in their hearts toward the true prophets; whom they count as just being fond of rebuking, and of demanding in things without any right; by which they trouble their conscience with no warranted reason. Haughtily, they ask, “*In what way shall we return?*” namely, ‘What are your charges against us?’

Threatening those who, having no fear of the Lord, abuse their brethren, especially the weak, the poor, and the aliens, He confirms to them that his threat is irreversible, except by moving toward His mercy, through forsaking what they do, and by resuming their connection to God Himself. By saying: “*For I am the Lord, I do not change*” (Malachi 3:6),

He confirms to them, that not one of His words will ever fall; that He will never make peace with sin; and will never have any fellowship with darkness. If, with His longsuffering, He has kept His people from being consumed. That is because He is anticipating their return to Him through repentance. He is faithful in His love and His divine promises. “*God is not a man, that He should lie*” (Numbers 23:19).

And as the prophet Jeremiah says: “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not” (Lamentations 3:23).

In a response by **Origen** ‘*Against Celsus*,’ who attacked Christianity as well as Judaism, and claimed that the doctrine of incarnation, makes God vulnerable to change from goodness to evil; from virtue to wickedness; from happiness to misery; and from what is best to what is worse; ... he says that together with His consistence on not changing His essence, He came down to human affairs through the ordainment of His care. While our Holy Bible proclaims that God is not prone to change, by saying: “*You are the same*” (Psalm 102:27), and “*I do not*

*change*” (Malachi 3:6), the gods ‘Epicures,’ being formed of atoms, and through their ability to cast away the atoms that contain factors of destruction, they are prone to dissolution. Even the Epicurean god being material, its essence was once formed of a main leading factor; that is when the world burns up and in another time, when matters are rearranged, it becomes partially material; Even the Epicureans were unable to realize and understand the idea that the true God is distinguished as naturally and perfectly uncorrupt; simple, and indivisible<sup>1</sup>.

❖ Listen to God saying: “*I am the Lord, I do not change;*” namely, He will always stay steadfastly unchangeable in His being. And those who have changed [are reformed through the Gospel] by His commandment will, as far as they could, not change or divert by time from what they have become. That is why the apostle Paul warns the people, saying, “*Do not conform with this world, but change by the renewal of your minds, that you may be able to discern the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God*”<sup>2</sup>.”

#### **St. Severus of Antioch**

❖ How could He be prone to change and to transformation, He who says: “*I am in the Father, and the Father in Me*” (John 14:10). And, “*I and My Father are one*” (John 10:30). And through His prophet, he says: “*I am the Lord, I do not change*” (Malachi 3:6)? ... Even when He became Man, He did not change. But, according to the apostle, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hebrew 13:8)<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Pope Alexander of Alexandria**

❖ God will always stay unchanged; and will never need to progress; He will forever stay as He is, by Himself and to Himself<sup>4</sup>.

#### **St. Hilary of Poitiers**

❖ The created would change according to the will of His Creator, because he is changeable by nature. Whereas the Creator has a steadily unchangeable nature. That is why the prophet says about the Creator, that, being the Maker of everything, He can also change them (See Amos 5). Whereas, concerning the divine Word, the great David says: “*You are the same, and Your years have no end*” (Psalm 102:27). And God says about Himself: “*I am the Lord, I will not change* (Malachi 3:6)<sup>5</sup>.”

❖ If by nature, He is above change or transformation, He will not change from being immortal to mortal; nor from being not prone to feeling pain to being prone to it, because, if this is possible, He would not be in need to take our nature<sup>6</sup>.

#### **Theodoret of Cyrus**

❖ We are in need to hear what the apostle says: “*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind*”

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<sup>1</sup> *Against Celsus 14:11.*

<sup>2</sup> *Catena (James 1:17).*

<sup>3</sup> *Epistles on the Arian Heresy, 2:3.*

<sup>4</sup> *On the Trinity 11:47.*

<sup>5</sup> *Dialogues, 1.*

<sup>6</sup> *Letter 144, to the Soldiers.*

(Ephesians 4:23), and for the spiritual progress in “*forgetting those things which are behind*” (Philippians 3:13). If man disregards this, the inevitable result would be going backward from bad to worse.

It is not possible for the mind to stay as it is. If someone rows with his arms strongly against a powerful storm, he would manage to proceed forward; whereas if he becomes slothful, his boat would spin around by the action of the storm. Our failure would be apparent, if we do not gain something more, because otherwise, we shall go backward, and would never go forward.

As I said, the human mind cannot stay as it is. No saint can reach the summit of all virtues, as long as he is still in the body, if he stays without change. He has either to add something or to lose something. To God, who is alone the unchangeable, the blessed prophet prays, saying, “*You are the same; and Your years will not fail*” (Hebrew 1:12). And God says about Himself: “*I am the Lord; I do not change*” (Malachi 3:6). He, alone, is, by nature, perpetually good. Nothing could be added or taken from Him.

That is why we should carefully submit to the requirements of virtue, and preoccupy ourselves with its work; as, like we said, the mind cannot stay the same, without some good qualities added to it, or taken away from it. Failure to acquire new qualities means loss. With no longing for progress, there will be the danger of going backwards<sup>1</sup>.

**Abbot Theodore**

- ❖ The Savior Himself says: “*Behold, I am the same; I do not change*” (Malachi 3:6). And Paul says: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hebrew 13:8). Yet in flesh, He was circumcised, ate, drank, was disturbed, crucified, and suffered, although He is the Word of God who is above any material passion<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ If the ‘Arians’ wrongly refer the change to the Word; let them learn the extent of danger embraced in their thought; as “*A tree is known by its fruit*” (Matthew 12:33). Therefore also “*Who has seen the Son, has seen the Father*” (John 14:9). Consequently the knowledge of the Son is that of the Father. Thus the unchangeable image of God should be constant and unchangeable. For “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hebrew 13:8); And, according to the Psalmist David: “*O my God,... Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure. Yes, All of them will grow old like a garment; like a cloak, You will change them; and they will be changed; But You are the same*”(Psalm 102:24-27; Hebrew 10:12); And God says about Himself on the tongue of His prophet: “*Now see that I, even I, am He*” (Deuteronomy 32:39); and, “*I do not change*” (Malachi 3:6).

Somebody would probably say, that it is God the Father who is meant by all this. But it is logic that this should also refer to the Son. To those who claim that, once He took over a

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Cassian: Conferences, 6:14.*

<sup>2</sup> *Letter 59 Ad Epicetum, 5.*

body, He has changed and became someone else; we say: When He became Man, He demonstrated no change in His person. All creatures are changeable and transformable by nature; But the Holy Bible says about the Son: “*You are the same, and Your years will not fail*” (Hebrew 1:12). The Son is unchangeable and un-transformable; which is indeed natural. Whereas created things have originated from nothing; and have not existed before they were created; they have a changeable nature. But, because the Son exists from the Father, and is of the same essence; it is thus not just to say that, out of the Father’s unchangeable essence, a changeable Word would be born; and a changeable wisdom would come forth<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ Aaron had successors; and generally, priests, according to the Law, would replace other priests, either through old age or death. Whereas the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ is “*An unchangeable priesthood*” (Hebrew 7:24). He became a forever faithful High Priest; Faithful, according to the promise, in order to respond to those who approach Him “*Let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator*” (1 Peter 4:19); because He is faithful, unchangeable, forever abiding, and Grantor of all the things that He promised<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Athanasius the Apostolic**

#### **4. RETURNING TO THE LORD OF HOSTS**

**“*Yet from the days of your fathers, you have gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,’ says the lord of hosts. But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’”*** (Malachi 3:7)

Because the Jews were preoccupied with the offerings, the sacrifices, and their abundance, disregarding the purity of heart, and the practice of brotherly love, especially toward the needy; He proclaims to them that returning to Him by the practical and living faith, has to be realized through their love of His poor brethren “the brothers of the Lord.” As, according to the beloved St. John, “*He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*” (1 John 4:20)

- ❖ While the wicked offends God by his many and continuous transgressions, God, however, is longsuffering; and is waiting for the day of judgment; to give everyone the chance to repent... So He prefers to bear him mercifully, and to postpone his punishment... anticipating his return to Him, according to His very words: “*For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord God, ‘Therefore turn and live’*” (Ezekiel 18:32). And, “*Return to Me,’ says the Lord of hosts*” (Malachi 3:7)<sup>3</sup>.

**St. Cyprian**

- ❖ Seek the Lord, O sinners; “*Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore*” (Psalm

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<sup>1</sup> *Four Discourses Against the Arians, 1:35-36.*

<sup>2</sup> *Four Discourses Against the Arians, 2:9.*

<sup>3</sup> *St. Cyprian: Treatise 9 on the Advantage of Patience, 4.*

105:4) (by *repentance*). Be sanctified by the holiness of His presence; be cleansed of your iniquities (See Ezekiel 36:25). Hasten to the Lord, O sinners; He takes iniquities and sins away; As He has sworn an oath, saying: “*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*” (Ezekiel 33:11). And, “*I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people*” (See Isaiah 65:2); “*Why should you die, O house of Jacob?*” “*Return to Me; And I will return to You*” (Malachi 3:7)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Isaac the Syrian**

- ❖ “You have had a harlot’s forehead. You refuse to be ashamed” (Jeremiah 3:3). Return, O miserable sinner, to the Lord; that He will return to you (Malachi 3:7). Repent, that He would spare you of the punishment you deserve<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

**“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed you?’ In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8)**

That is a new charge addressed by the Lord Himself to the people on the tongue of His prophet, to be included in the following list of charges:

The priests despise the name of the Lord (Malachi 1:6).

They offer defiled bread on the altar of the Lord (1:7).

They cause offense to many; by corrupting the covenant of the Lord (3:8).

They dealt treacherously in Israel and in Jerusalem (3:11)

They have wearied the Lord by their talk (3:17).

Since the days of their fathers, they did not keep, and have gone away from the Lord’s ordinances (3:7).

They have robbed the Lord (3:8).

They uttered harsh words against the Lord (3:13).

Here He presents the seventh charge; namely, that they have robbed the Lord of his rights over them. How can the weak creature, rob the Mighty God who knows everything? Does he imagine that He is not aware of what he does, or incapable of confronting him? It is an utter foolishness to do such a thing!

“*You said, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’*” They dared to justify themselves, and to seek from the Lord a proof that they have indeed committed this crime!

They robbed Him of the tithes of what He gave them for free; and of the offerings designated by the Law. By that, on one aspect, they have actually committed a crime against the whole nation; depriving the poor and the needy of their portion in the house of the Lord. And on another aspect, having been so mean with the house of God, they caused the curse to come upon the earth; the nation has lost many divine gifts; beside the famines, the pestilences, and the many catastrophes of nature that came upon man.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ascetical Homilies 5:76-77.*

<sup>2</sup> *Letter 147:8.*

God has previously so chastened them, when they preoccupied themselves with building their own houses, disregarding building the house of the Lord (Haggai 1:11). Now He chastens them again for not providing the necessary needs of the Lord's temple.

***“You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation” (Malachi 3:9)***

***“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, And prove Me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you such blessing, that there will not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).***

He presents to them a good advice, to practically realize that giving abundantly would open before them the windows of heaven. He refers all the divine gifts to heaven, gifts that man does not expect to get.

God, with His love and abundant giving, will not stop at reconciling with man who returns to Him; but will pour on him more than he would ever imagine.

***“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground. Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,’ says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:11)***

God would lift up from them the punishment of locusts and other harmful pests; that they would no more find any destroyed vine in their fields.

***“And all nations will call you blessed; for you will be a delightful land,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:12).***

Beside the material gifts, they will be honored and respected by all nations who, seeing how much the Lord is pleased with them, will call them blessed. And, instead of mocking at them because of their sins, that caused their land to become desolate, they will call their land “a delightful land,” about which the Lord says, “*This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it*” (Psalm 132:14).

❖ The Lord God is never in need; He does not seek a reward, but to be honored; He does not seek a pay back of what you have; but only the tithes and firstfruits. Do you object?! When it did happen, and your harvest became lean because of the draught, and the hail and frost destroyed your vines. That was because of your greedy accounts that made Him take away from you nine tenths of what you have, instead of just one tenth (the tithes)... You will have to give the evil captivator what you refrained to give to the priest... God is always ready to give in abundance; Yet man's evil comes in the way. Man wants to take everything from the Lord God, and refrains from giving Him from the things, he wrongly assumes to be his own.

Now, Just imagine that the Lord says to you: “O man, You are Mine, because I have created you. The land you cultivate, and the seeds you plant are Mine... The beasts that serve you are Mine... The rain, the wind, and the heat of the sun, are all Mine... Now, as long as all the factors of life is Mine;and you have got them through My permission; you deserve

only the one-tenth. yet the Mighty, yet compassionate God, gives man, for his little labor, nine-tenth of everything, and seeks for Himself only the one-tenth (the tithes)<sup>1</sup>.

Fr. Caesarius of Arles

## 5. THEIR CORRUPTED CONCEPTS

***“Your words have been harsh against Me,’ says the Lord; ‘Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’” (Malachi 3:12)***

Having been preoccupied with the material riches. They looked around and saw how the wicked have become rich, and how the haughty were raised to the positions of leadership. Then, they counted the sacrifices they offered in their worship, as valueless, and even a loss. They were overcome with grief, when they assumed that they have lost what they offered to the temple, and got nothing in return

Here, He presents the eighth charge; which is speaking harsh words against the Lord. Daringly and disrespectfully, they spoke about the Lord; and counted worshipping Him as a waste of time and fortune; and an entrance into a state of grief and bitterness.

Yet they denied what they said, publicly by their mouths, or secretly by their minds and thoughts. *“What have we spoken against You?”* They sought from the prophet the proof of the charge put against them. Or they probably counted it as something not worthy of so much fuss. It is as though they are saying to the prophet: What we say is nothing serious, compared to what the pagan nations say against the Lord; And our wickedness is nothing compared to what they do. So what is the big deal?

They did not bear to hear the words of rebuke; And instead of looking into their depths, to ask the Lord to purify and sanctify them, by comparing themselves with the nations, they counted themselves righteous and good. That is why the apostle Paul asks us to *“compare spiritual things with spiritual”* (1 Corinthians 2:13).

***“You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts?’” (Malachi 3:14)***

***“So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; yes, those who tempt God go free” (Malachi 3:15).***

Comparing themselves with the pagan nations, they counted it vain to worship God; It brought grief upon them; while the haughty who reject faith in the living God, and the evildoers lead an extremely happy and prosperous life; building and growing, and in need of nothing. They call the wicked blessed, and regret their past attachment to, and their worship of the Lord, as though it was the source of their grief and depression!

They did not realize that their grief and misery were caused, not by their worship to God, but because “they teach as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). “They draw near to God with their mouth, and honor Him with their lips, but their heart is far from Him”

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon 33:2.

(Matthew 15:8). Being bound to earthly gifts and temporal comfort; And as the apostle Paul says: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19); Whereas he, who worship the Lord by Spirit and heavenly wisdom, will realize that “the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:17).

❖ That is what the prophet proclaims about the day of ultimate judgment, when the wicked look very unhappy, even in appearance, and obviously very miserable. Whereas the good do not suffer any affliction or misery, but enjoy perfect eternal happiness.

Quoting the words of the former category, saying: “*Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them*” (Malachi 2:17). He says that, understanding of the Law of Moses in a carnal way, thus they rebelled against God<sup>1</sup>.

❖ The spiritually immature, place their hopes on temporal promises, and serve God, looking forward to such worldly rewards. Actually, the more the wicked flourish, the more they are disturbed. That is why the prophet Malachi – for the sake of their enlightenment – compares the eternal blessings of the New Testament, only got by the good, with the mere temporal blessings of the Old Testament, that are even mostly denied to the wicked; saying: “*Your words have been harsh against Me,’ says the Lord, Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; Yes, those who tempt God go free’*” (Malachi 3:13-15)<sup>2</sup>.

❖ “*We call the proud blessed; For those who do wickedness are raised up;*” And, those who do evil assume that they are good in the sight of God, and that they give God pleasure. Such attitude led the prophet Malachi to ask God to hasten with the ultimate judgment; in which the misery of the wicked would be too obvious to pretend happiness; Whereas the good, no more disturbed by temporal sadness, would obviously enjoy unlimited blessings. The point I wish to demonstrate here, is that such murmurs against God, are the fruits of the spiritually misinterpretation of the Law<sup>3</sup>.

#### **St. Augustine**

❖ I beg you to contemplate and compare between the virtue of the righteous (Malachi), and the arrogance of the Jews. He, who is blameless, utters a very harsh verdict against himself, saying: “We have sinned; we walked as rebels against the Law; we did evil.” Whereas those with tens of thousands of transgressions, on the contrary say: “We kept His ordinance” (Malachi 3:14-15 LXX). The righteous usually walks meekly; whereas the wicked generally glorify themselves... I say this, to provoke you to avoid the wicked, and to follow the lead of

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<sup>1</sup> *City of God, 20:28.*

<sup>2</sup> *City of God 28:35.*

<sup>3</sup> *City of God 20:28.*

the righteous<sup>1</sup>.

St. John Chrysostom

## 6. GOD DEALING WITH THEM AS HIS CHILDREN

A return to God does not stop at giving the brothers of the Lord, or at the spiritual realization of the concept of worship. But it is fitting for believers to realize that God, as a Father, is compassionate toward them as His children. Then they would enjoy the spirit of discernment, to distinguish between the righteous who practices the life of sonhood to God, and the wicked who rebels against the heavenly Father.

***“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them. So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord, and who meditate on His name” (Malachi 3:16).***

Having presented the view of those who worship the Lord in a literal way, together with the corruption of their behavior; who count their worship to God as a source of grief. Now, he presents the view of those who fear the Lord, obey Him, and meditate on His name. Here, he connects between piety; namely, the fear of God, and the continuous preoccupation with Him.

Those who fear the possibility of hurting their relationship with the Lord, as His loving children, will have all their thoughts, feelings, senses, and emotions concentrated on the Lord; and will treasure His sweet name in their inner mouths.

Those who have this sweet spiritual experience will always testify to the name and the salvation work of the Lord. Everyone would talk about it to his neighbor, *“For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks”* (Matthew 12:34). And, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things”* (Matthew 12; 35).

A spiritual man speaks, not only by his lips and tongue, but also with his behavior, thoughts, and features, testifying to the kingdom of God dwelling in him.

How amazing are his words: *“The Lord listened and heard them, so a book of remembrance was written before Him”* (Malachi 3:16). The Lord, longing for the talk of those who piously love Him, listen to them, hears the words of their hearts, and lovingly records, as though in a book of remembrance, every word they utter. The heavenly Groom says to the human soul, holy in Him: *“You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; You have ravished My heart with one look of your eyes”* (Songs 4:9). *“Let Me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely”* (Songs 2:14).

*“A book of remembrance was written before Him,”* is a human expression, which reveals to us, in our language, how God treasures the words, holy thoughts, tears, and sighs of heart, of His children. And as the Psalmist says: *“Put my tears into your bottles; Are they not in your book?”* (Psalm 56:8).

❖ Saying: *“The Lord listened and heard... A book of remembrance was written”* (Malachi

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<sup>1</sup> *Against Judaizing Christians, Discourse 5: 8.*

3:16); and also, “*The books were opened*” (Daniel 7:10); does not mean, as though there is a book of remembrance up there, and someone writing in it; but it refers to the precious and the precise knowledge<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

**“*They shall be Mine,*’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘*On the day that I make them My Jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him*” (Malachi 3:17).**

God does not only treasure the words, thoughts, and feelings of those who fear Him, but He also treasures their persons; and refers to them as His own children: “*They will be Mine,*’ says the Lord of hosts.” Considering them as His own treasure. He calls Himself “*The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.*” He is God of everyone who counts God as his own; to be God’s own. Whoever treasures and glorifies God; God will treasure him, and pours the splendor of His glory into his depths.

And as the Lord Himself says: “I will be the glory in her midst” (Zechariah 2:5); “And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride. So shall your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5). And, “You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God” (Isaiah 62:3).

**“*Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked; between one who serves God, and one who does not serve Him.*” (Malachi 3:18)**

Accepting the least services from those who fear Him, and treasuring them because they are coming from those He considers as His own beloved children, The Lord grants the most beautiful gift; namely, the knowledge coming forth from Him; he grants them the spirit of discernment, to be able to discern between the righteous and the wicked. Between one who serves God, and one who does not, something, which belongs only to God, who knows the hidden secrets of the hearts.

❖ Now, “*the proud are called blessed; Yes, Those who tempt God go free*” (Malachi 3:15). But God threatens them, that on the Day of Judgment, there will be discernment between the righteous and the wicked; and says to them: “Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked. Between one who serves God, and one who does not serve God” (Malachi 3:18)<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

## **AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MALACHI (Chapter 3)**

### **PURIFY, AND DWELL IN MY DEPTHS, O HOLY ONE**

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 147:2.

- ❖ You have sent St. John the Baptist, as Your angel;  
To prepare the way before You, by calling for repentance.  
By Your Holy Spirit, You granted me sonhood;  
In the water of Baptism, You lifted me up to the bosom of your Father.  
And presented me as a son who bears Your amazing righteousness!  
How can I pay You back this exalted love?
- ❖ Dwell in my depts, O Lord, 'the Consuming Fire'  
That consumes all the thistles that strangle my soul;  
Makes out of me a fiery being;  
that all the water of the world cannot quench.  
Sanctify me; Purify me; To become an icon of You; O the Only Holy One!
- ❖ I see You descending to my weakness.  
I intend to return to You, O the true Love!  
You come to me through the suffering, the sick, and the needy!  
For You are the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widows;  
You are the Shepherd of the lost souls;  
who bring them back to Your exalted pastures.
- ❖ Grant me to worship You according to Your will;  
To worship You by spirit and truth;  
In order to go above the letter; and to enjoy the Spirit.  
Provide me with the two wings of the Spirit, to fly to You;  
To get above all the earthly things,  
And to refrain from seeking any temporal thing.
- ❖ Finally, grant me the spirit of discernment;  
to know that You are my Father;  
To see, even in Your chastisements, fatherhood, compassion, and heavenly care.  
To discern between righteousness and wickedness;  
To get in touch with Your righteous saints;  
And to keep away from the deceitful evildoers.

## CHAPTER 4

# SHINING OF THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the last three chapters, He mixed the eight charges directed against His people, especially against the priests, with the hope of the coming of the Messiah, to purify, to sanctify, and to make His believers His own possession. Now, He proclaims the day of the coming of the Messiah, as a shining of the Sun of Righteousness to scatter the darkness that prevailed on the nations, and corrupted the whole earth.

In the last chapter, the Lord demonstrated His personal care for humanity; sending His angel to prepare the way for Him; then coming by Himself to set, out of humanity, His holy temple; comes as a fire to consume evil and corruption, to purify, and to purge. He desires to return the hearts of mankind to Him, that of His little brethren, with an enjoyment of sound concepts of worship, and walking with the spirit of discernment. Now He ends the book, and the entire old Testament, with a revelation of the coming of the Savior Messiah for salvation, to shine the light of His righteousness on those sitting in the darkness, and to grant healing to His believers, through keeping the Law with a deep spiritual concept, and with the Spirit of love, and peace, as a one holy family.

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|---|-------------|
| <b>1- A day of fire</b>                                     | <b>1.</b>   |
| <b>2- Shining of the Sun of Righteousness</b>               | <b>2.</b>   |
| <b>3- The Sun of Righteousness, the Grantor of conquest</b> | <b>3.</b>   |
| <b>4- A new concept of the Law</b>                          | <b>4.</b>   |
| <b>5- The coming of the prophet Elijah</b>                  | <b>5–6.</b> |

### 1. A DAY OF FIRE

In the last chapter He talked about the spirit of discernment by which we are able to realize that God is our Father, who is so compassionate on us as His own children, that He sent His Word incarnate, to bring us to Him through our return by the work of His grace. But, it is also fitting for us to realize that He is the Holy One who would never compromise with sin, but would burn it as though in an oven. He came stretching His hands with love to humanity; so if man still persists on the haughtiness of his heart and on doing evil, he would cast himself under eternal judgment to perish.

*“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ says the Lord of host, ‘That shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Malachi 4:1).*

The prophet Malachi prophesies about the coming of the incarnate Word to realize salvation. Although He stretches His arms to all mankind; Yet He also comes to cast fire. Whoever believes in Him will enjoy eternal life. Whereas who haughtily rejects Him will burn like stubble in fire. That is what the Psalmist prophesied about the Messiah, saying: *“You shall*

*make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; The Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath; and the fire shall devour them”* (Psalm 21:9).

God who, alone, knows the hearts can separate the stubble from the gold; the haughty from the humble. The former, counted as evildoers, would be consumed by fire, to be left neither root nor branch; whereas the latter would grow in splendor and purity.

Some have called the haughty as blessed, because they are apparently happy in this world (3:15). But now the fact is revealed that they, like stubble, will burn in the oven to become ashes.

By the ‘haughty’ here, He probably means those like the Pharisees who, having been boasting of their knowledge and their literal righteousness, they opposed the Lord Christ; and in doing so, they became like stubble in the fire. While by the ‘wicked,’ He means the rest of the Jews who rejected the Savior.

The Lord left them neither root nor branch, when He allowed ‘Titus’ the Roman leader, later on, to utterly destroy Jerusalem and the temple. This will be realized more perfectly, on the day of the ultimate coming of the Lord Christ, to judge the wicked and reward the true believers, who fear the Lord.

❖ But, When will be the day of the divine revenge for the innocent blood? This is what the Holy Spirit proclaims through the prophet Malachi: “*Behold, the day is coming burning like an oven.*” (Malachi 4:1)<sup>1</sup>

**St. Cyprian**

❖ The whole earth will become like lead melting in fire; when the deeds of men, the apparent and the hidden are revealed<sup>2</sup>.

**The so-called Clement of Rome**

❖ The two comings of the Lord Christ are both truly His: One in which He has become man submitted to scourges... And the second in which He will come on the clouds (Daniel 7:13); when “*He burns up (the proud) like fire*” (Malachi 4:1); when He “*strikes the earth with the rod of his mouth*” (Isaiah 11:4), and kills the wicked with the breath of His lips. And when “*His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*” (Matthew 3; 12; Luke 4:17)<sup>3</sup>.

**St. Ireneaus**

❖ The Lord warns the wicked that they will be burned up and perish; as they are foreigners to the divine race; defilers of the sanctuaries, and have not been spiritually born anew, to become the children of God. Those who were born anew, and were sealed with the mark of Christ, can alone escape. God says in another place, that He will command His angels whom He will send to destroy the world, and to put an end to the human race, on the last day; saying: “*Go*

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<sup>1</sup> St. Cyprian: *Treatise 9 on the Advantage of Patience*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Clement 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Adv. Haer. 4:33:1*.

*after them through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark” (Ezekiel 9:5).*

Now, What is this mark? And where will it be on the body of man?... This was indicated by God in another place, saying to His angel: *“Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it (Ezekiel 9; 4).* Being a mark concerning the passion and blood of the Lord Christ; And that everyone with this mark would be kept secure against any harm; are confirmed by the testimony of God, saying: *“The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13).* What previously happened in the symbol of the slain lamb has been later on realized in Christ, the Truth. When Egypt was stricken, it was not possible for the Jews to be spared, except by the blood of the lamb and by its mark. Likewise, when the world starts to be destroyed and stricken. He, alone, who on him he has the blood of Christ and His mark, will be spared (Ezekiel 9:4; Revelation 7; 3; 9:4)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Cyprian**

## **2. SHINING OF THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

To spare anyone from falling into despair because of his sins, the Lord proclaims His coming as the Sun of Righteousness, to shine over the souls to scatter their darkness. Yet, this would not be by force against their will. He is the heavenly divine Physician who descends to His patients to cure them if they accept His work in them.

***“But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves” (Malachi 4:2).***

The way the Lord Christ came to cast fire, to purge those who believe in Him, and to burn up those who persist on denying Him until their last breath. So He will be light for everyone who accept and fear Him. On His first coming, He has shone, as though by two wings, to heal every sick soul. And in His second coming, He will shine with His splendor, to grant those who fear Him fellowship of eternal glory. This day will be a day of darkness on those who reject Him; and a day of joy, and an incessant light on those who believe in Him, to enjoy the new life in Him.

***“You shall go out”***: Enjoying the Sun of Righteousness, the sick, who are healed will go out as though to their work. Instead of the long stay in bed, unable to work on account of the kingdom of heaven, they will go out to testify, and to edify the souls in the Savior Lord.

***“Grow fat”***: Getting well again, they will progressively move in grace, knowledge, and divine wisdom, to reach to the stature of the fullness of Christ; to that of ***“a perfect man”***

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<sup>1</sup> *The Treatises of Cyprian, 5:22.*

(Ephesians 4:13).

Here he likens them to “*Stall-fed calves;*” that would soon grow to become of benefit to their owners. Some believe that he, who enjoys the light of the Sun of Righteousness, will set forth as though to the field like a stall-fed calf, joyfully jumping in the air.

**St. Hippolytus** believes that the Lord Christ, the Sun of Righteousness will not forsake His Church on the days of the great tribulation; at the time of the antichrist; But will shine upon her with His light... [He, who stretches His hands on the holy cross, will stretch His wings, the right and the left, to call to Himself all those who believe in Him, and to cover them like a hen covering her chickens. He says on the tongue of His prophet Malachi: “*To you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings*” (Malachi 4:2)<sup>1</sup>.]

❖ Behold, Your Savior has come to save you; Christ, the Sun of Righteousness has come to give you light<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Acts of Philip**

❖ The ‘moon’ is a symbol of the Church; which is not a source of light on its own, but gets her light from God’s Only-begotten Son, Who, in several locations in the Holy Bible, is symbolized as the Sun (Malachi 4; 2; etc.)<sup>3</sup>.

❖ When will the horn of His people be glorified? When the Lord comes, and our Sun shines; Not the sun seen by the eye; which shines on both the good and the wicked (Matthew 5:45); but that about which it is said: “*To you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings*” (Malachi 4:2); That, about which the proud and the wicked, later will say: “*The light of righteousness did not shine on us; and the sun did not rise on us*” (Wisdom 5:6)<sup>4</sup>.

#### **St. Augustine**

❖ St. Mary, the Mother of God is the gate of the sanctuary, spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel, which “*faces toward the east, ... that shall be shut and shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel (the Sun of Righteousness) has entered by it*” (Ezekiel 44:1-2), He who is called by God as “*The High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek*” (Hebrew 5:10)<sup>5</sup>.

#### **St. Jerome**

❖ Like a blind man unable to see the material sun, the sinner is deprived of the enjoyment of the true light<sup>6</sup>.

#### **St. Basil, the Great**

❖ He grants His ministers fellowship in His name. Being the Light, He says to His saints: “*You*

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Hippolytus: Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 61.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Acts of Philip.*

<sup>3</sup> *On Psalm 51 (50).*

<sup>4</sup> *On Psalm 148.*

<sup>5</sup> *Letter 48: 21.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Hexameron, homily 6:1.*

*are the light of the world*” (Matthew 5; 14); and, being ‘The Sun of Righteousness’ (Malachi 4:2), He says about His ministers, “*The righteous will shine forth as the sun*” (Matthew 13:43)<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Theodoret of Cyrus**

- ❖ Our ship is not built of wooden boards, but is constructed and hastily put together by the Holy Bible. We are not led on our journey by the stars of heaven, but the Sun of Righteousness guides us. Sitting by the Rudder, we do not need the power of the wind on our sails, but we anticipate the gentle breeze of the Spirit<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ Do not put your trust unconditionally in the material sun. It is truly the eye of the world, the joy of the day, the beauty of heaven, the splendor of nature, and the majesty of creation. Yet, as you look at it, meditate on its Creator; ... when you admire it, glorify its Maker. If the material sun, as a companion and a partner of nature were so rejoicing; how much more would be the goodness in the Sun of Righteousness? ... If the material sun, by its cycle, is such a wonder; how much more would be the One who fills everything, everywhere, and forever?<sup>3</sup>

#### **St. Ambrose**

- ❖ From the east, Redemption has come to you. From there, someone, called ‘The Sun Rise’ has come; and has become an Intercessor between God and mankind. Hence you are called to look always toward the east, from where the Sun of Righteousness will always shine upon you; where light is born for your sake; to spare you of walking in darkness, of being held by darkness in the last day; of having the fog of ignorance fall upon you, but to let you always be in the light of knowledge, have the day of faith, and keep the light of love and peace<sup>4</sup>.
- ❖ As He transfigures, His face shines like the sun; to be proclaimed to those who cast off the works of darkness; and wear the armor of the sons of light (John 12:36; Romans 13, 12, 13); to those who are no more the sons of darkness, nor the sons of night, but of daylight, to those who faithfully walk as in the day (Romans 13:13; Thessalonians 5:5). Proclaiming Himself, He shines on them, not like the material sun, but being Himself the Sun of Righteousness<sup>5</sup>.
- ❖ There was no night in Peter when he confessed, saying: “*You are Christ the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16), when the Heavenly Father declared it to him. But he had it at the moment of his denial (Matthew 26:70-74). Once Judas received the piece of bread, he immediately went out (John 13:30), because He, who is called “The Sun Rise,” was not present with him, he left back the Sun of Righteousness when he went out. Judas who was filled with darkness chased Jesus, but the darkness he acquired did not catch up with the

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<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues, 1.*

<sup>2</sup> *Against the Anomoeans, homily 7:5:6.*

<sup>3</sup> *Six Days of Creation 4:1:2.*

<sup>4</sup> *Homilies on Leviticus 9:10:2.*

<sup>5</sup> *Commentary on Matthew 12: 37.*

chased light. That is why when he uttered a word of justification, saying: “*I have sinned by betraying innocent blood*” (Matthew 27:4), “*He went and hanged himself*” (Matthew 27:5). The devil in him led him to evil and strangled him for the devil touched his soul at that time. As the Lord couldn’t intervene on his part, to say to the devil what he said on behalf of Job, “*Do not lay a hand against his person*” (Job 1:12; 2:6)<sup>1</sup>. [For Judas had already sold his soul to Satan.]

### **Origen**

- ❖ When man broke the commandment, the devil cast a dark veil on his soul. And with the coming of grace, that veil is removed, to turn the soul pure; to receive back her unblemished original nature; and to anticipate – with her pure eye – the glory of the true light, the true Sun of Righteousness, shining with its rays inside the heart itself<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ It had not been, just until the day on which the second Adam came, but even until this very day; those on whom Christ, the “Sun of Righteousness,” did not arise; whose soul eyes were not opened, and were not enlightened by the true Light; are still under the darkness of sin, under the same influence of lusts, and under the same punishment; as they still do not have the eyes to behold the Father<sup>3</sup>.

### **St. Macari the Great**

- ❖ He is the Sun of Righteousness; proclaimed from heaven; surrounded by His visible nature; and will return to Himself<sup>4</sup>.

### **St. Gregory of Nazianzus**

- ❖ By recognizing that Christ is the true Light (John 1:9); to whom vanity cannot approach; we learn the importance of having our life enlightened by the true Light. But virtues are the rays of the Sun of Righteousness for our enlightenment, through which “*we cast off the works of darkness*” (Roman 13:12), “*to walk properly as in the day*” (Romans 13:13), “*to renounce the hidden things of shame*” (2 Corinthians 4:2). When we do everything in the light, we become the light itself, to shine on others (Matthew 5:15-16); that light with its special character<sup>5</sup>.

### **St. Gregory of Nyssa**

- ❖ When the Only-begotten Son of God called us to this sonhood; He called us to carry His image; saying that He shines His sun on both the good and the wicked; and pours His rain on both the righteous and the oppressors. But, What is this sun? It could be a sun unseen by the physical eye, namely, the wisdom, which is said to be “*a reflection of eternal light*” (Wisdom 7:26); And “*To you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise*” (Malachi 4:2).

Likewise, the rain could be the teachings of the truth that water our souls; As the Lord Christ has come for both the good and the wicked; and was preached for both the righteous

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Gospel of John 32:315-317.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sermons, 17:3.*

<sup>3</sup> *Sermons 28:4.*

<sup>4</sup> *The Second Oration on Easter, 13.*

<sup>5</sup> *On Perfection.*

and the oppressors.

Or they could be the sun seen by all creatures, and the actual rain, on which the plants that feed the body grow. I believe this to be a more probable interpretation; because the spiritual sun shines only on the good and the saints; as we see in the Wisdom of Solomon, how the wicked weep saying: *“The light of righteousness did not shine on us”* (Wisdom 5:6). The spiritual rain, as well, does not pour on the ungodly, described as the vineyard on which God commanded the cloud to rain no rain (Isaiah 5:6)<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ *“Do not let the sun go down on your wrath”* (Ephesians 4:26), in spite of that how many times did the Sun go down on your work... We celebrate now the days of the great Sun; about whom the Holy Bible says: *“To you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings”* (Malachi 4:2) What does He mean by *“In His wings?”* He means (under His protection); according to the words of the Psalms, *“Hide me under the shadow of your wings”* (Psalm 17:8).

As to those who vainly mourn and sigh because of the suffering of their souls on the Day of Judgment, when it will be already too late; they would say: *“What has our arrogance profited us, and what good has our boasted wealth brought us. All those things have vanished like a shadow, and like a rumor that passes by... We who strayed from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness did not shine on us”* (Wisdom 5:8, 9, 6).

That sun only shines on the righteous; while the sun we daily see, God shines on both the good and the wicked (Matthew 5:45). The righteousness' seek to see that sun, which actually dwells with faith in their hearts. So *“Do not let the sun go down on your wrath;”* lest the Sun of Righteousness would set on you, and you would stay in darkness<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. Augustine**

- ❖ This applies, both to the first and to the second coming of our Savior. In His first coming, He shone as a kind of sun on us, sitting in the darkness and shadows, to set us free of sin, to grant us a fellowship in righteousness, and to cover us with spiritual gifts as wings. And in His second coming, He appears to those who labored in the present life, either according to what conforms to their will, or to what is against it. As a just Judge, He grants the good things He promised. And like the material sun, when it shines, it wakes up those who have fallen under the spell of sleep, to set forth to work; He, in His second coming, He will wake up those who have fallen under the spell of the long sleep of death.

#### **Theodoret of Cyrus**

- ❖ As the Lord Christ is called in the Holy Bibles, *“A spiritual light* (1 John 1:5); *“The Sun of Righteousness”* (Malachi 4:2); and *“The Sunrise or Dawn;”* He should be worshipped as such<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sermon on the Mount, 1:79.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sermons on N. T. Lessons, 8:7.*

<sup>3</sup> *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 12.*

### 3. THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE GRANTOR OF CONQUEST

*“You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soul of your feet, on the day that I do this,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 4; 3).*

The source of their joy and rejoice is their enjoyment of conquest over the devil and his evil angels, who shall be ashes under the souls of their feet. They join the procession of victory under the leadership of Christ, the Head who says: *“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). In them the promise is realized, saying: *“Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings”* (Joshua 10:24).

- ❖ We trust Him, He who said: *“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33); because we gain the conquest over the devil, our enemy, by His help and under His protection<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ Why does He say to us *“Be of good cheer,”* but because He fought on our behalf, and conquered for our sake? He fought on our behalf, taking our nature on Himself... He conquered for our sake, we to whom He revealed His resurrection... Man, Get connected to God, He who created you; Connect strongly to Him; Put your trust in Him; Call Him to become your strength; Say to Him: ‘In You, O Lord, is my strength.’ Then, when people threaten you, you may praise God with His own words and say: *“In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”* (Psalm 56:11)<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

- ❖ We, likewise, are allowed to conquer, looking up to the Leader of our faith, and walking along the same way He has taken for our sake... We are not dead because of our struggle with death, but we are eternal because of our conquest over it... Does death corrupt our bodies? No way! They will not stay corrupted, but will turn to the better... Therefore, let us conquer the world... Let us run toward eternity... Let us follow our King; Let us set a memorial monument for our conquest; ... Let us despise the lusts of the world. We shall have no problem to do all that, when we turn our souls to heaven; once we stop coveting the world, we will conquer it. Once we mock it, it will be under the soles of your feet. In this world we are foreigners and nomads; then, let us not grieve on anything related to it!<sup>3</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

### 4. A NEW CONCEPT OF THE LAW

The Jews considered themselves the keepers of the Mosaic Law, by their several and particular offering, burnt offerings, and sacrifices. Now, He asks them to keep the Law on a spiritual level; by becoming, themselves, without blemish, in order, for their offerings to be

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<sup>1</sup> Letters, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 67:4.

<sup>3</sup> Homilies on St. John, 78:3.

accepted by God.

**“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4)**

The verses to follow (4-6), constitute, not only the end of the book of Malachi, but that of the whole Old Testament. This end came to prepare the people to anticipate the coming of the Lord Christ, by studying the prophecies and the Law that testifies and leads to Him. And as the apostle St. Peter says: *“We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation; for prophecy never came by the will of man, but by holy men of God, spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21).*

❖ The goal of the prophet is to let his readers give a spiritual interpretation to the Law; to find in it, Christ the Judge, who discerns between the good and the wicked. It is not without cause that Christ said to the Jews: *“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; For he wrote about Me” (John 5:46).* The fact is that, because of their literal interpretation alone of the Law, and their inability to realize that its temporary promises, are nothing but symbols of the eternal rewards; they fell in disappointment, that led to rebellion; saying: *“it is vain to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?” (Malachi 3:14-15)<sup>1</sup>.*

**St. Augustine**

❖ That Law is so very sacred and useful; that our Savior, when He healed a leper, and then healed nine more, He said to the first one: *‘Go... Show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them’” (John 8:4; Mark 1:44).* He never at any time annulled the Law<sup>2</sup>.

**The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**

❖ The first sign of obedience you gain, is to accept the coming of Christ the Lord, who came for the salvation of the whole people. He came to bring the Law to its goal, and to clarify His way to perfection. That is why, you will do well to believe in Him when He comes, and know that He is the One about whom Moses and the prophets have prophesied, that He will consummate the goal of the Law, and will proclaim the salvation of all<sup>3</sup>.

**Theodore of Mopsuestia**

## **5. THE COMING OF THE PROPHET ELIJAH**

The Lord sent His angel; namely, St. John the Baptist, before His first coming to give salvation. St. John the Baptist came with the fiery Spirit of Elijah. And He will send Elijah and Enoch in the days of the antichrist, to prepare the way for His ultimate coming.

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<sup>1</sup> *City of God 20:28.*

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, 6:4:14.*

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on Malachi 4:1:2.*

***“Behold, I will send to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5).***

He called them to return to the Law and to look into the statutes, that indicate that there will be no more prophets until the coming of him who has the Spirit and zeal of Elijah, to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:17).

As far as the interpretation of this phrase, the Jewish interpreters were divided into two groups: One group assumed that Elijah in person will come to the world to prepare the way for the Messiah; and another group assumed that some man will come with the Spirit of Elijah.

### **Has Elijah already come?**

When St. John the Baptist was asked, if he was Elijah, he said “No” (John 1:22); whereas the Lord Christ said: “Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands” (Matthew 17:12). To clarify that apparent contradiction,

**St. Augustine** says, that Elijah should have come before the first coming of Christ; and he should also come before His second coming.. The first time, Elijah did not come with his person, but, because St. John the Baptist bore his thought and mode of life; the Lord Christ said about him that it is Elijah who came (Matthew 11:14). But as he was actually not Elijah in person, St. John the Baptist said that he is not Elijah. But before the second and the ultimate coming of the Lord Christ, Elijah will come in person, will testify against the antichrist, and will become a martyr<sup>1</sup>.

❖ As the Savior was the beginning of the resurrection of the whole people; it was fitting that the Lord, alone, would raise from the dead; by whom also, the judgment would enter to the whole world. He, alone, consummated the way, was received in heaven, sat on the right hand of the Father, and will be proclaimed as the Judge at the end of the world. He is assigned for a certain role. And the one who precedes Him is committed to come first, as said by Malachi: *“Behold, I will send to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; And he will return the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse”* (Malachi 4:5-6).

Therefore, that will happen to proclaim the appearance of Christ from heaven; and signs and wonders will happen, to put the people to shame, and to Make them repent their great evil<sup>2</sup>.

### **St. Hippolytus of Rome**

❖ What is the basis of your conviction that the coming Elijah will baptize? He has not baptized the wood on the altar in the days of Ahab, when he needed a flood of water to get burnt when the Lord appeared in the fire (1 Kings 18:21-38). He, instead, instructed the priests to do that,

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<sup>1</sup> *On the Gospel of St. John, tr. 4:5.*

<sup>2</sup> *On the Antichrist 46.*

not once, but said: “*Do it a second time,*” and then said, “*Do it a third time*” (1 Kings 18:34). Then, how can he, who has not baptized then, but has let the others, do that; how will he baptize when he comes at the end of time, as said by Malachi?<sup>1</sup>

### **Origen**

- ❖ “And I saw another angel coming from the east with the seal of the living God.” Here, he is talking about Elijah the prophet, who is to come in the days of the antichrist, to reform and to hold fast the churches, to help them confront the extensive and great persecution. We read how those things have been prophesied in both the Old and the New Testaments; Being said by Malachi: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, to bring the Jews back to the faith of the people before them*.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Victorinus of Bitophium**

- ❖ With the approach of the final days, a great prophet will be sent to bring mankind back to the knowledge of God; and he will be given the power to perform miracles. And when the people do not listen to him, he will shut off the rain from heaven, will turn their water into blood, and will torture them by hunger and thirst. And if someone intends to do him harm, fire would come out of his mouth and burn him<sup>3</sup>.

### **Lactantius**

- ❖ It is imperative that His two predecessors, should come first as said by Malachi, and the angel of God who came to give Zechariah the priest the good news of the birth of John the Baptist...

These are (Elijah and Enoch), who will come to proclaim the coming of Christ from heaven; will perform signs; and will bring those who were overcome by evil and wickedness, back to repentance<sup>4</sup>.

### **St. Hippolytus**

“*And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse*” (Malachi 4; 6).

**Fr. Victorinus** believes that this refers to that a great number of Jews will eventually receive faith in the Lord Christ through the testimony of the prophet Elijah in the last days, when the antichrist comes<sup>5</sup>.

## ***AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MALACHI*** ***(Chapter 4)***

### **SHINE WITH YOUR LIGHT IN MY DEPTHS**

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Gospel of John 6:125.*

<sup>2</sup> *Victorinus of Petovium: Commentary on Apocalypse 11.*

<sup>3</sup> *Lactantius: The Divine Institutes, 17.*

<sup>4</sup> *St. Hippolytus: Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 43.*

<sup>5</sup> *Victorinus: Commentary on the Apocalypse, From the Seven Chapter 2.*

- ❖ You came to our world to scatter every darkness.  
To shine in every soul to make out of it, a shining star.  
To turn our darkness into light; and our shame into glory.
- ❖ Whoever rejects Your light, will lose his insight.  
And the darkness of ignorance will cover his mind.  
And the day of Your second coming will be a terror for him,
- ❖ Come, O the Sun of Righteousness, to my depths.  
To set Your Kingdom in me, to make me gold, purified with fire.  
And no impurities will be in me.
- ❖ You, O heavenly Physician, will take away my ailment  
And will grant me an eternal cure  
To transform my life into an incessant rejoice.  
To make me jump with joy among the heavenly creatures.
- ❖ Let me enjoy Your conquest and victory.  
So that the devil would have no place in me.  
But, by Your grace, he would be under the soles of my feet.  
With no more authority over me.
- ❖ I am waiting for you, O Grantor of Glory.  
Send Elijah and Enoch to destroy the power of the antichrist.  
And to prepare the whole world to enjoy Your salvation.  
My depths cry out for You.  
Yes, O Lord Jesus, Come!

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