

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

(According to the original book by H.H. Pope Shenouda, III)

The First Commandment

"I am the Lord Your God, ... you shall have no other gods before Me"

"I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:2, Deut. 5:6).

I Am The Lord Your God:

God reveals Himself to us and reminds us of His loving kindness by saying *"I am the Lord your God"*. God often appeared to people and revealed Himself to them. He appeared for instance to Moses the Prophet and said to him *"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"* (Ex. 3:6). Here also He reveals Himself to the people *"I am the Lord your God"*. But what did He reveal to them?

He did not say "I am the Lord God who made Heaven and earth, who created light, man, animals and plants". Nor did He say, "I am the Lord your God, the Boundless and unattainable...". He said rather, "I am the Lord your God who was benevolent to you. Have you forgotten soon? I brought you out of the house of slavery. Have you forgotten God's kindness, His help and support just recently?".

God reminds us of His loving-kindness, so that when we remember His love, kindness and compassion towards us, we may love Him in return and give Him love for love. God constantly whispers in our ears the same words: I am the Lord your God who healed you from such and such disease, and from such and such operation... I am the Lord your God who gave you success this year... I am the Lord your God who delivered you of this or that problem...who shed over you and covered you so that you were not exposed... I am the Lord your God who did so and so for you... Can you forget all this and forget me also?!

God reminds us of His loving-kindness, because we actually forget.

We usually remember God before He does what we want, when we ask Him for something... But after He had done it we forget Him. We remember Him in the beginning not in the end. Therefore He says to every one of us: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of slavery. Have you forgotten the times when you were humbled, enslaved and captivated? Have you forgotten all this?

Since God reminds us of these things, it is better to remember them by ourselves.

How beautiful indeed for one to kneel down before God and say, "O Lord God, You are My God who did so and so for me... I am indebted to You with every breath I breathe, with my life, my existence, my survival and with all Your countless benevolence to me".

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Yes, brethren, sit to yourself and remember, contemplate on God's loving-kindness to you and kneel down before Him, then carry out the Commandment. Say to Him: You did such and such things for me... I shall never forget Your benevolence; for if I do forget, my love will weaken... But when I remember, I shall be ashamed of my sins and negligence...

It is very well that God introduced the Commandments with these words. Wonderful indeed God is in His dealings with us. He reminds us of His loving-kindness before giving us the Commandments so that when they are given, we receive them as from a kind father to his beloved children not as orders from a master imposed on his servants. He does not require us to worship Him so that He might do good to us, but because He has already done good to us when we were yet in our sins.

So, What is the First Commandment? What do the Words "I am the Lord your God" imply?

These words imply worship, "*for it is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him*" (Mt. 4:10). And as Joshua said "*but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord*" (Josh. 24: 15). Such worshipping requires: praying and appearing regularly in the Lord's house, reading the Holy Scriptures and contemplating on them, fasting, prostration, etc.

Whoever neglects to perform these things and the like is faced with the words "I am the Lord your God". These words reprimand us because since God is the Lord, He has rights with you. Have you given Him His rights? Performing the duties of worship is not an obligation, which you do forcibly but it is for your interest. See how beautifully this is expressed in the Mass of St. Gregory: "You were not in need of my servitude, but it is I who am in need of Your Lordship". This gives us another point to contemplate on. What is it?

The words "I am the Lord Your God" imply also "love".

God does not call us servants but friends (Jn. 15:15). So, He let us call Him in our prayers "Father". We love Him, as God, because He first loved us (1Jn. 4:19). God required such love from the beginning as He said to Moses the Prophet, "*The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*" (Deut. 6:4,5).

God requires the heart, requires love, not just formal worship. Therefore he reprimanded the sinful Israel saying, "*This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me*" (Mt. 15:8, Isa. 29:13). He also defined the way we ought to worship Him when He said, "*My child, give Me your heart, and let your eyes observe My ways*" (Prov. 23:26).

Thus the words "I am the Lord your God" necessitate submission & obedience as well as faith and surrendering one's life to God. Time is lacking to contemplate on all the meanings implied in these words. But we have to go into the depth and perform what is required in them.

What else does the Lord say after that?

You Shall Have No Other Gods before Me.

One may say, when reading this Commandment, "what is my business? These words ought to be addressed to heathens, atheists or existentialists. They certainly concern those who deviate due to knowledge or a philosophy or some thought. As for me, I fast twice a week, give the tithes, pray the hours, learn the hymns by heart and attend the church regularly. Sure this Commandment is not for me". No, brother, this Commandment concerns you in particular as well as me and not others. Every one of us is addressed by the words "*you shall*

have no other gods before Me".

But do not think that the other gods meant by this verse are the statues made by man for worship or the sun, sea or fire. No! There are many other gods worshipped! Some worship power, others worship authority, others positions, money, beauty or lusts. Everyone has an idol, a god and the strange thing is that each of them cries loudly *"Truly we believe in One God..."*. We do not know whether they deceive themselves or deceive others.

When we look back on people of the olden times, we find that they worshipped strange gods either out of fear, due to lust or seeking a benefit. So, they had gods for good and gods for evil. They sought benefit from the good gods and feared the power of the evil gods. To both they gave worship and loyalty and showed enthusiasm or zeal.

Worship of Power and Fear:

People began to worship those whom they feared. They worshipped spirits because they feared such spirits and worshipped kings out of fear also. They worshipped Pharaoh and knelt before him. And in the times of the judges, the Israelites worshipped and served Cushan King of Aram and Eglon King of Moab (Jud. 3:8,14).

Some people worshipped fire, and the Egyptians worshipped the Nile; either seeking its water and goods or fearing its flood. And they sought to please it with offerings. Worship of fear led people to hypocrisy and flattery to please the gods. An example of such flattery is the song people used to sing in the ears of Pharaoh while they carried him with a sedan: "The sedan with Pharaoh on, is lighter than when alone".

They wanted to say that their happiness with carrying Pharaoh made them feel the sedan lighter than before. Their flattery showed in worship of power demonstrates mean spirits and can be considered a kind of polytheism because it deifies human beings in a way that cannot please even God Himself, for He does not like to be flattered by His worshippers.

He who worships power contradicts his conscience, his heart and God's Commandments and utters words which he knows well they are wrong and just a kind of flattery and sycophancy to please and gratify people. Such a person in fact worships people not God and is faced by the commandment *"you shall have no other gods before Me"*.

Worship of Love and Benefit:

Often love changes to worship, and lust also changes to worship as people used to say "these two love each other to the extent of worship" or "adore each other". Moreover, it happens sometimes that a young man forsakes his religion or faith for a young woman he loves! Can he say then that he believes in one God? He would be a liar. Love worship branches many ways: worship of money, beauty, friends, well doing, worship of the world, of lusts and self, etc.

Amidst all this, God cries aloud, *"I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no god... There is no other god besides Me"* (Isa. 45:5,21). However, we answer Him: no, Lord, there are many besides You!

Worship of Money:

Money is an idol worshipped by people and competes with God. Therefore the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, *"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to*

the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Mt. 6:24). Whoever says then that he believes in one God and at the same time loves money, deceives himself. We do not mean here by love of money collecting and spending it on one's desires and lusts; for money then will be a means not a goal and god in this case is the lust on which money is spent. But who collects money and treasures it without spending is in fact a money-worshipper.

Such a person feels very happy with money and rejoices when he puts one cent besides the other and one dollar on another and a thousand over a thousand... treasuring and treasuring. He feels delighted when looking to money without using it anyhow, or spending any part of it! When he gets one cent out of his pocket, he feels as if his flesh is being cut with a knife! All his concern and joy lies in collecting, and he is happy with what he collects without any goal. Even if he mentions some goals it would be merely to conceal his feelings.

Perhaps, you would ask: Why then does he collect money? You will find no answer for the question. It is just a disease, or deviation, a kind of love between him and money. It becomes a friend to him or rather an idol worshipped by him. So, the Lord Christ said, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth" (Mt. 6:19).*

Don't let, my brother, the love of money enter your heart and master over you. Whenever money increases with you, seek a good project or business to spend it. Listen to the beautiful words of a holy father to one of the monks advising him: "If you have money, spend it all, and if you have not, do not collect any".

An old person once told me about someone who died leaving behind him much money he collected throughout his life and treasured it no one knows where. That person fell ill and stayed in bed. During his illness, they observed that he held the pillow tight and when he was dying he held it violently as if fearing it would be taken from him. They wondered, and after his death they opened the pillow to find within it a bundle of money. That was the god of that wretched person, which he worshipped unto death. Even at the point of death he did not forsake his love for money. So he died with his god in his bosom! He did not hide it far from him lest anyone should steal it while being in bed. He put it in a pillow under his head and at hand all the time.

Worship Of Those Who Do Good To Us:

Many are those who worship the person who does them favor as the poet says, "Do good to people and you will own their hearts" for often a person is a slave to a well doing. And as the saying goes "Feed the mouth, the eye will be ashamed". If someone showed kindness towards you or supported or helped you in any way, you will worship him, and if anyone speaks against him you will defend him though you know that what is said against him is true and right. You justify his faults and pass them without examining. If such a person says to you one day, "I am sorry for such a thing", you will answer "O no, you did nothing, you are not wrong, such a person like you never does wrong". Thus you fall in flattery and hypocrisy.

This is confusion between gratitude and hypocrisy. Gratitude is one thing, while worshipping people is another different thing. It is not right to let one virtue waste another. Be grateful as far as you can towards who does you favor but do not turn to hypocrisy and flattery and lose your mobility, offering it as a sacrifice to please him who does good to you even though he offends God and people! Another similar kind of worship is:

Worship of Courtesy:

Someone defends a friend deservedly and undeservedly. That friend commits a very serious mistake-that might be against the church, the society or the state - and you warn the person who has this friend but because he is courteous and worships his friend he replies, "It is alright nothing has happened"! You argue with him logically but he refuses logic. All his concern is to defend his friend and justify his views, no matter how clear

and serious the error may be! He wants only to show his friend innocent and let all principles and rules stumble anyway. It does not matter to him! The poet says the same meaning: A friendly eye is closed to every defect while an unfriendly eye reveals every offence. He means that a friend is unable to see any faults, as the saying goes "who loves you swallows pebbles for you". Nowadays many people used to do so! It is good to find an excuse for people sometimes. But it is unacceptable that one does injustice in order to defend others and to make of the wrong right and of the right wrong. All of that for some purpose in mind, to support someone in such a way as if he is worshipping people or other gods because of some friendship or courtesy at the expense of truth. See what the scriptures say in this regard,

"One who justifies the wicked, and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 17:15).

It is not proper to love someone more than God or be courteous at the expense of the truth; for Truth is God as our Lord Jesus Christ said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6)*. When you are courteous to someone at the expense of God, you are worshipping such a person instead of God! Likewise if you obey someone more than you obey God, you are worshipping such a person instead of God. We want to give worship to God without our conscience remorseing us. We do not worship people and cannot please people if this contradicts God's Commandments. St. Paul says the same, *"Am I now seeking human approval or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10)*.

Suppose someone does something wrong and asks your opinion about such doing! If you say to him "You are wrong", he will feel offended and angry. But would you say to him "Oh, no. You are right. I admire your action in this regard"! Such flattery destroys your conscience as well as that person himself. Besides, you are like one who worships people not God. One ought to act with a pure upright conscience, flattering no one, seeking no one's love at the expense of God's love, nor disobeying his conscience to be courteous to anyone...

Where can you escape, brother, from the Commandment *"you shall have no other gods before Me"*?

Give worship to God, God alone, and seek no profit from anyone; for cursed is the person who depends on a human arm. Do not be afraid from anyone as the psalm says, *"With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me?" (Ps. 118:6)*. Such a person whom you flatter and worship rather than God is, according to you, either a fearful god or a good god. So either you are afraid of him and such fear makes you ignore God's rights, or you seek some benefit from him and for that purpose you trod God's rights. In both cases you are in fact worshipping a person rather than God.

Another worship that resembles the preceding one as regards its result though different in form, for it takes the appearance of righteousness, is:

Worship of guides and fathers:

They Holy Bible commands us: *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls" (Heb. 13:17)*. Notice here, the apostle did not say "worship your leaders", for we are faced here with a serious question that has to do with our spiritual life, it is: What if the guide or leader deviates? Should we submit to him?

A guide or spiritual father might deviate with regard to faith as Arius did though he was a priest, and as many Arian and Nestorian bishops did, or as Eutyches who was an abbot. Certainly all of them had spiritual sons

before their deviation. Were those sons committed to obey them in spite of their deviation?! Certainly not. At this point we find an important verse that puts an end to the whole matter:

"We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29).

A person then should obey his guide or spiritual father, but not more than God! For every spiritual obedience comes within the scope of God's obedience. Thus obedience to God must not be replaced by obedience to a human, whoever that human might be. The Holy Bible sets a very clear condition in the verse: *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Eph. 6:1)*. Spiritual as well as natural fathers ought to lead their sons to God. If the fathers deviate, no obedience is due to them, and the commandments and stories relating to obedience will not apply to them. If a spiritual father ties you to himself not to God, he is not in this case a true father and you do not have to obey him. Also if your obedience to the spiritual father takes you away from God's obedience, you should not obey. And if you do, this will be a sin.

Be obedient then to your father "in the Lord" only. You ought also to put before you, in every guidance you receive from him, the divine commandment, putting in mind the words of the apostle John the Beloved; *"Test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1Jn. 4:1)*. Obedience then is not blind obedience but with understanding and discerning; for if obedience is a virtue it ought be correlated with the virtue of wisdom.

The disciples of St. Arsanius blamed and reprimanded their great spiritual father, but he accepted this meekly and humbly. St. Tadros also often did the same directly or indirectly with his spiritual father and guided St. Pachomius, and the Saint accepted it lovingly and with consideration to his spiritual son. God Himself accepted the words of Abraham: *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Gen. 18:25)*. God accepted also from Moses his words, *"Turn from Your fierce wrath; change Your mind and do not bring disaster on Your people... And the Lord changed His mind..." (Ex. 32:12-14)*.

On the other hand, if your spiritual father asks you to obey him blindly without thinking or understanding, and does not comfort your conscience regarding his guidance - or commands - he has then deified himself, scorning at the same time your humanity. Such a relation would be a worship not "obedience in the Lord" especially if a person presses on his conscience to obey and silences it by time! If God Himself does not treat man like that though He is God, how dare a guide claim such obedience being merely human, required - the same as his son - to obey God and his own spiritual father as well as those who are elder than him. Obedience that destroys the inner self and makes a son in conflict with his own mind and conscience is not the kind of obedience God requires from us; for He created man in His image and after His likeness. Hence, a spiritual father should not destroy his son with inner conflict like that. It is not fatherly.

So, again I stress: Just obey your fathers, do not deify them, do not worship them nor obey them rather than God. The commandment is express and clear and the contradiction is also express and clear. Fatherhood - in the spiritual concept - is a helper for solving the children's problem and ought not turn into a problem facing them itself! Or they would stand perplexed before it asking: whom should we obey; our fathers, or our conscience?

The same applies to all fathers whether natural or spiritual, as well as to all leaders or superiors. Another point concerning the First Commandment is:

The World and its Desires:

The world is another god, whoever gets attached to it will forsake God's love and service and even the whole

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faith. This is expressed by James the Apostle in his epistle, "*friendship with the world is enmity with God*" (Jas. 4:4). St. John the Beloved also expounded this point in his first epistle, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world - the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches - comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away*" (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Either we worship God, or worship the world and its desires. If we truly believe in God, we shall then overcome the world, and its desires will not dominate over us. St. John says in this regard, "*And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith*" (1 Jn. 5:4). But in case the desire of the world conquers us, it will exterminate faith within us. St. Paul passed by this serious experience and told us of it in his second epistle to St. Timothy, "*Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me*" (2 Tim. 4:10).

The flesh, material and their lusts are all gods worshipped by people, and I wonder if those who walk in the lusts of the flesh do worship God! Certainly not...

Some people worship bodily beauty and speak of it bluntly unashamed. As when a person loves a girl and says he loves her to the extent of adoration! He may send her a letter addressing her as "my adored"! Adored! what a shame!. Is the matter so serious? what can such a person do regarding the Commandment "*you shall have no other gods before Me*"? How can he respond to God's words "*You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath*". Dare he say: No, Lord, I did not make it, but You made it! Well I made it, God would say, but you worshipped it. You should have not worshipped anything but God alone and should have given your heart to God not to any human.

There are others whose whole concern is to eat and drink. Do not be amazed; for the apostle Paul said of those, "*their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things*" (Philipp. 3:19). He even speaks of them "*as enemies of the Cross of Christ*" and remembers them with tears. Sure there are people whose god is a full glass of wine, or who make clamor for food and drink! Did not The Israelites weep and complain for meat, cucumbers, melons, leeks and garlic (Num. 11:4,5)? Did not Esau sell his birthright with all its blessing for lentil stew (Gen. 25:29-34)? Did not Adam and Eve bring corruption and destruction to all mankind by eating from the tree when Eve saw that it was good for food and a delight to the eyes (Gen. 3:6)?

It was good therefore that the first Commandment given by God to man related to fasting that man would practice control over his belly and not worship food.

All desires dominating over man are other gods. Whatever desire masters you, brethren, is an idol which you adore. Come now and destroy your idols. Get into the sanctuary; that of the Holy Spirit that is you and cleanse it from all your idols. Search for any idols that might be within you, which you adore and love with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. There might be a certain desire within your heart that destroys the commandment "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart*" (Deut. 6:5). Such desire is your god and master because you are subject to it. The holy fathers preferred martyrdom to raising incense before idols. But you raise incense everyday to your idols, which are your desires.

A desire which one adores might be a position, a title, certain authority or property. And for the sake of such desire one would sell God and conscience and turn into an arriviste who seeks to fulfil his desire whatever the price might be, forgetting the words of the Lord, "*You shall have no other gods before Me*".

Self-worship:

The most dangerous indeed of all idols is one's self. Man always desires to glorify and aggrandize himself. He does not only worship himself but wants other also to worship him (or his self). He wants this self to be adored by all, respected and awed by all. He wants people to see everything beautiful in it and praise and admire it! But what brought ruin to King Herod? Why did the angel of the Lord strike him so he was eaten by worms and died? Was not the reason that he accepted to be glorified as god and did not object? (*Acts 12:21-23*). Such a person, like Herod, might be able to forsake all other forms of worship mentioned before, and overcome the worship of power, money, beauty, authority, courtesy, etc., but cannot forsake his self-worship. Such a person sees himself as the only god and no one could be brighter, more intelligent, better, wiser, or nicer than him. No one can ever be. His self, in his own eyes, is the ideal form. He seems as if he is saying: all might be wrong except me. All might not understand but I alone do. If he conflicts with someone else, sure the other is wrong and he is right for it is impossible that he makes mistake. Certainly people misunderstand him. And if you ask him: then when will they understand you properly? He would answer: it is not important that they understand me. What matters is that my behavior is proper even though people do not understand it.

Self-worship is indeed the most dangerous idol, a curved portrait, and few escaped it. All disputes arising in the world are mostly due to self-worship. Thus, the Lord Christ, being aware of the danger behind this worship said expressly, *"If any want to become My followers let them deny themselves"* (*Mk. 8:34*). What does it mean to "deny themselves"? It means that one ought to destroy this idol; the self, and turn it into dust and ashes. But what makes the self conflict with God and compete with Him? One of two things: either the wish to be great and puffed up, or the wish to fulfil some desires which are against God's will.

What caused the fall of the devil? "The self" made him fall; for it wanted to be great and higher than it ought to be. So, he said, *"I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God... I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High"* (*Isa. 14:13-14*). He wanted to rise up high, to be like God! When the devil made Adam and Eve fall, he tempted them with the same temptation, *"you will be like God, knowing good and evil"* (*Gen. 3:5*).

Therefore if anyone is able to destroy the self in him and deny himself, he will have destroyed the first idol that competes with God in the worship due to Him. So the Lord said *"Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life"* (*Jn. 12:25*). Who is meant by, "who love their life lose it"? Here is meant the person who lets the self within him compete with God in love, or in other words, who loves his self more than he loves God and cares for it more than he cares for God.

Do you feel such love to yourself? Examine yourself and search within you. If you seek rest and sleep during night and do not stand for prayer, would you thus be loving to your self or to God? When you take the tithes for yourself and do not give them to God. When you use the Sabbath for your affairs and not offer it to God. In all this, is it the self that you are concerned with or God? When your self desires things against God's commandments and you fulfil for it these desires, breaking the Commandment, are you then giving worship to God or to the desires of this self, and so on.

But when your self desires something against the Commandment and you refuse to fulfil for it its desire saying *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (*Jn. 3:30*), in this case you seem as if you hate your life. But in fact you do love your life and your self, the true love void of coddling, and this love "will keep it for eternal life".

Atheism:

Atheism contradicts the first Commandment because an atheist denies God's existence as the Psalmist said. *"Fools say in their hearts, There is no God"*. However a person may not say there is no God, but he may be like an atheist! He may cry out *"Truly we believe in One God"* but his behavior shows that he even does not feel God's existence nor feel that He is present and He sees, hears and keeps record till the day of judgement when He will reward everyone according to his work. The faith of such a person is mere words or intellectual faith that has nothing to do with his practical life.

On the other hand, a true believer is a person who keeps the Lord always before him. He feels God's presence, tastes it and finds pleasure in it. In all his actions and his words he sees God before him, watching him, encouraging or reprimanding, rewarding or punishing him. Only such a believer differs from atheists.

Worship of Devils:

Paganism is a kind of devils' worship as the Psalmist says, *"For all the gods of the peoples are idols"* (Ps. 96:5). However, kneeling down before idols is not the only form of giving worship to the devil; for trusting devil, collaborating with him in work and recourse to him to solve problems or to know the unknown are forms of worship. Some people submit to devils in return for certain services rendered them by the devils. Some of those make a covenant with Satan or send a devil to make an errand for him, perhaps to bring him something or influence someone. St. Cyprian was a magician before his conversion and he used to seek the service of devils to achieve his purposes.

Those who deal with the devils no doubt break the first Commandment. Among those are the magicians who dazzle others with marvelous deeds such as Simon who practiced magic and the slave girl in Philippi who had a spirit of divination (Acts 8:9, 16:16), or the beast and dragon mentioned in the revelation.

Thus, we see that many signs and wonders can be perfected by the power of the devil. But God permits this to happen as a test for the believers and of course they differ from the signs and wonders done by saints through God's power. A believer ought then to have discernment to distinguish between the two.

Some people do amazing things by collaborating with the devil. It is even said that so and so has a "servant" who fulfils whatever he wants. But the devil does not work freely but in return for something paid to him by the person seeking his service, which is often at the expense of his faith in God.

Those who deal with the devil are two types:

One type knows that he is dealing with the devil, but accepts this for the sake of the benefit he gains from it. He may repent for this and try to set himself free but cannot. The other type is deceived by the devils because *"Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light"* (2 Cor. 11:14). He might appear in the form and name of one of the saints and might give false dreams and visions. He often led saints and anchorites astray with his deceit and they followed him and fulfilled his will in their lives giving worship to him and falling under his dominion and so perished.

Some people seek devils or the supporters of devils to know the future which God alone know. Recourse to the devil to know the unknown implies giving him one of God's attributes; a matter, which contradicts the first

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Commandment. The devil can know the past as many humans can know, but to know the future is a thing that lies within God's power alone unless this comes through by way of physiognomy, inference, far-sightedness or expectations. So, mistaken are those who try to know the future by asking people who practice geomancy, palmistry or any other way of prediction such as reading cups of coffee, whispering to shells, horoscopy, asking the spirits of the deceased, hypnotism or telling fortune through playing cards, etc., all of which suggests that there is some power other than God which knows the future and the unknown. Even those who do not seek such means but believe in them break the First Commandment because God's attributes should not be given to others.

Thus the divine inspiration warns us, *"you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. No one shall be found among you... who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles, from the dead. For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord" (Deut. 18:9-12)*. This applies also to whoever uses mysterious powers to fulfill his (or others') purposes by amulets or phylacteries including mysterious words which no one - even he himself - knows their meaning.

The Scriptures tell us that a person who depends on a human arm (power) is accursed, how rather more proper is this for the person who uses such mysterious powers, which if not considered quackery to deceive the simple, involve resorting to the devils. And it is known, devils do not work for free. No one should ever believe in any power-managing universe and people other than God.

There is also what is called "charm" by which people employ the power of the devils or magic to attain some purpose. A person who actually employs the devil in such purposes transgresses the First Commandment. He also who misleads the simple to gain some benefit for himself is also transgressing by offending or frightening or robbing them.

As for us, we must be sure that the devil has no authority over God's children, for the Universe is managed by the Almighty for Him is the glory now and forever, Amen.