



Excerpt from *Christ Our Pascha*

4. The Freedom and Responsibility of Humankind

The Lord called humankind to holiness in freedom and responsibility: “If you choose, you can keep the commandments; and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice” (*Sir 15:15*). God settled humanity in Paradise. He gave them freedom and the commandment to actualize it, symbolized in the prohibition to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (*Gn 2:16-17*). Saint Gregory the Theologian interprets this commandment in the following way:

(God) gave him a Law as material for his free will to act upon. This Law was a commandment as to what plants he might partake of, and which one he might not touch. This latter was the tree of knowledge; not, however, because it was evil from the beginning when planted; nor was it forbidden because God grudged it to humankind...But it would have been good if partaken of at the proper time; for the tree was, according to my theory, Contemplation, which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter upon; but which is not good for those who are still somewhat simple and greedy. (#135)