

2024 English Family Convention



ST. MARY & ST. ATHANASIUS
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH



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Does Spirituality Have a Role in Treatment of Mental Illness?

Some youth come to me seeking “state of the art” psychiatric advice, regarding their feelings of despondency, despair, and low self-esteem. After listening to them for a while, they receive a spiritual answer, and I start seeing the disappointment on their faces!

We didn’t come to you for that ... They say ... Can you tell us some psych. Stuff ...

I say ...

We Humans are created in a unique way at the image and likeness of God by His own hands and through His breath of life we are living. ***“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7).*** In the image of God, we enjoy His faculties of rationality, free will and authority, and in His likeness, we enjoy all the fruit of His spirit with very positive emotional mental states of Love, joy and peace.

There is a clear relationship between psychological disturbances and distancing from God. That is clearly demonstrated by the change of the state of mind that our fore parents Adam and Eve encountered after they sinned. ***“And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:10)***

Not every negative feeling or personality trait we have is considered a mental disorder that needs a psychiatrist, a psychologist or a professional counselor. But sometimes we ask: what do we do to feel better, we don’t see God in this equation, and we feel lost! Some of us act like our fore parents, or like Jonah, we distant ourselves from God and just hide away from Him. Our souls immediately get disturbed, we feel distressed, anxious, irritable, angry, guilty, etc...

Some seek professional help hoping for a solution, a psychological technique, some sort of therapy or a medication. I find myself answering the Lord’s answer to the Pharisees: ***“No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise, the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old”.*** (Luke 5:36)

- The whole structure of the soul is disturbed because its connection with its source of life has a problem.
- Christ is the author of our life. It is with Him, through Him, and by Him that we survive. ***“For in Him we live and move and have our being”, (Acts 17:28)***
- He is the actual true visible image of the invisible God ***“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:” (Colossians 1:15)***
- God, out of His great mercy, came to be the second Adam. He came to restore in us that same likeness of God through the willful abiding in Him through the fellowship of His Holy Spirit.
- So, He took our iniquities upon Himself. ***“He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” (Matthew 8:17)***
- And gave us His life-giving Spirit. ***“And so, it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” (1 Corinthians 15:45)***

- Therefore, in Him we are able to survive our brokenness. *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)*
- Therefore, we, the repentant sinners carrying the sinful genes of illnesses such as fear, anxiety and depression, always have great hope in Him who came to carry our sins and give us life abundantly. *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)*
- So, in addition to mental health modalities that sometimes includes medications and psychotherapy, the spiritual approach of the life of repentance and fellowship with the Holy Spirit to abide in Christ is the best treatment for these conditions.
- Just look what He is announcing as His mission statement for us: *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;” (Luke 4:18)*
- That is why now in modern psychiatry they finally realized that there has to be a spiritual component in mental health added to the model of the 70’s that only included the triad (meaning ‘3 parts’) of treatment components that are bio-psycho- social elements as a standard of practice.
- The current psychiatric standard of care provides the tetrad of bio-psycho-socio-spiritual, adding the spiritual element that I, as a Christian psychiatrist, believe to be the ultimate solution of healing the broken spirit. *“The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?” (Prov.18:14)*
- The Spiritual process of healing is through returning to the glorious image of God that we were once created with. That is through a lifelong process of transformation from glory to glory through a fellowship relationship with the Holy Spirit bringing us back to that same image of God through abiding in Christ the True Image, and Word (Logos) of the invisible God. *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

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Feeling down? Feeling anxious? A Spiritual Therapeutic Counsel

Dear Son/Daughter in Christ,

I have a message for you today. If you are going through a tough time or feeling you are in a deep or dark place. God is calling you to recognize the hero He is willing to make of you.

Did you know that modern neuroscience has discovered that you can change your brain by changing your mind?

Yes. Please understand that it is now scientifically proven that you can change your brain by renewing your mind through a process known as “Neurogenesis.” Therefore, what the bible told us thousands of years ago in Rom (12:2): “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind,” is now scientifically proven by contemporary neuroscience!

Isn't that exciting?!

- ◇ Let me lay down specific steps for you to accomplish this through the power of the Holy Spirit working in you.
- ◇ Enter your private room, planning to spend a deep quiet time with the Lord. Have the intention to listen to His silent voice speaking right into your heart.
- ◇ Use the Coptic book of prayer, “the Agpeya” if you are familiar with it, or any other prayer book.
- ◇ Start praying with a faint, audible voice speaking directly to Him through the psalms.
- ◇ As you pray, listen to the words of psalms, and allow them to speak on your behalf to the Lord.
- ◇ Then sit on the ground humbly and open your bible and start reading.
- ◇ Incline your heart to listen to what the Lord says to you as a love letter.
- ◇ Search for the purpose that He has for your life and the meaning He gives for everything you do.
- ◇ Look for the Way, the manner of Life, that He is pointing at for you to walk in.
- ◇ Focus on experiencing His mighty power of Resurrection that He offers you to lift you out of the dark place.

- ◇ Decide to establish this encounter of quiet time as a daily routine that you enjoy every single day, making it the power engine of your life. 4
- ◇ Congratulate yourself that you have just found the true physician of your soul, body, and spirit and that you are determined to enjoy His power of healing through this encounter.

Please note that you need consistency for this process to be effective. We now know that for the brain to develop new trails of neurons harboring renewed thoughts, it needs to be trained daily for a long time. Neurons that fire together wire together, forming new ways of thinking. This remarkable discovery is called “Neuroplasticity.” Search it up and educate yourself more about it.

Please know that you may need a psychiatric evaluation if you suffer from clinical depressive or anxiety disorder. Also, please note that the method mentioned above does not replace any medications or medical advice you received from your doctor.

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Parenting Age Specific Course

Lecture I: Preschool to First Grade

By Dr. Sameh Ragheb



"Jesus and the Children" by Hugo Vogel

Parenting Young Children: Taking Care of God's Gift

+ Psalm 127

- “1 Unless the LORD builds the house,
 They labor in vain who build it;
 Unless the LORD guards the city,
 The watchman stays awake in vain.
- 2 *It is vain for you to rise up early,
 To sit up late,
 To eat the bread of sorrows;
 For so He gives His beloved sleep.*
- 3 Behold, children *are* a heritage from the LORD,
 The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.
- 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
 So *are* the children of one's youth.
- 5 Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them;
 They shall not be ashamed,
 But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.”

I. Characteristics of 4-7 year old children:

1. Egocentric

- ❖ Understanding of their world revolves only around themselves
- ❖ Lacking empathy
- ❖ Attribute to themselves events around them

2. Concrete

- ❖ Do not understand abstract concepts
- ❖ Interpret things literally
- ❖ Understand more what they can see and feel rather than what they cannot see and feel

3. Establishing their independent identity

- ❖ Experiencing efficacy – balance between abilities and demands
- ❖ They seek to assert themselves
- ❖ They seek to test limits and boundaries

4. Highly suggestible

- ❖ Easily influenced
- ❖ Will believe what they are told

- ❖ Can even have their memories distorted

5. Learn a lot by modeling

- ❖ Copy behavior of others- especially parents but also other kids

6. Immature in many skills

- ❖ Lack good impulse control especially boys
- ❖ Lack emotional control

II. Important Needs

1. Time and attention from the parent

- ❖ Easy to ignore – TV and other distractions
- ❖ Attention from the parent is a basic need - Negative attention preferred by the child over no attention
- ❖ Easy to neglect positive attention

2. Relationship with God

- ❖ Based on parent – relation with them, with God,
- ❖ Based on characteristics of their age

3. Unconditional love and parental approval

- ❖ Separating the behavior from the child
- ❖ Not based on mood or circumstances
- ❖ Parents often love but may not like the child

4. Play – fulfills multiple needs and facilitates multiple areas of development

- ❖ Relationship with others

5. Safety and security

- ❖ Physical safety/security – consistent food, shelter, freedom from harm, attention to basic needs
- ❖ Emotional safety- consistency, structure, freedom from emotional harm and neglect

6. Opportunities to learn and develop

- ❖ Critical windows for development
- ❖ Early intervention when needed

The challenge of parenting is to balance love with discipline and to understand how parents can be simultaneously loving and disciplining with their child:

The Bible says:

“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.”
Prov 22:6

“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.”
Prov 13:24

The Bible also says:

“And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Eph 6:4

“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Col 3:21

III. Principles for Behavior change or discipline

1. What is the child capable of?

- ❖ Reasonable vs. unreasonable expectations
- ❖ Selfish vs. unselfish expectations
- ❖ Consistent vs. inconsistent expectations

2. Every Behavior is dependent on what happens before, during, and after the behavior

- ❖ Before- know the motivations of the child – Why may not be what is obvious but something less obvious
- ❖ During- attention given
- ❖ After – consequences of the behavior
- ❖ To change a behavior all 3 have to change so all 3 need to be understood first

3. Proactive is better than reactive

- ❖ More effective to stop a behavior before it starts than to stop it after it starts
- ❖ Less emotional problem for all involved

4. Effective use of rewards and consequences

- ❖ Rewards more effective
- ❖ Consequences- natural ones are best, consistency determines success, explained
- ❖ Chance to redeem self

5. Taking action is more effective than talking, repeating, yelling

- ❖ Children learn by experience more effectively than by words
- ❖ Words often contradict actual experience and become ineffective

IV. Common Problems

1. Lying

- ❖ If too young may not understand concept yet.
- ❖ Understand motivation for the lie.

- ❖ If fear is a motivation, need to work on source of fear
- ❖ Emphasize effect of the lie – for self, relation with others, relation with you, relation with God
- ❖ Give graded consequences for lying that are separate from what was lied about
- ❖ Reward honesty apart from consequence of what was lied about

2. Tantrums

- ❖ Coercive tantrums are different from reactive tantrums where the child has lost control.
- ❖ Coercive tantrums need to be ignored and never given into and also need consequence.
- ❖ Reactive tantrums need soothing and helping the child to learn to soothe self

3. Sibling rivalry

- ❖ It is natural and will occur in the best of families
- ❖ Encourage age appropriate roles for each sib toward the other such as older sib helping younger with something they have an advantage in and younger helping the older when help needed.
- ❖ Encourage problem solving between the kids among themselves and suggest solutions when they can't come up with one, such as taking turns, sharing.
- ❖ Intervene as limited as possible mainly to help them to problem solve or when there is a major unfairness.
- ❖ Avoiding favoritism is important.
- ❖ Being fair to each sib does not mean equal (differing needs)

4. Spanking

- ❖ It is often harmful not just physically but mentally especially when done in anger.
- ❖ It needs to be measure of last resort as has many potential harms.
- ❖ There are state laws against abuse- a parent can be reported.
- ❖ Don't use an object to spank.
- ❖ Don't use excessive force - for instance force that leaves a mark.
- ❖ Don't hit on the face or head.

5. Parental disagreements

- ❖ Unity is important for effectiveness.
- ❖ Unity is important for emotional health of each member of the family.
- ❖ Unity is usually more important than the actual issue causing disagreement

6. Common negative parenting styles

- ❖ Authoritarian – Expects a lot but gives little, controlling, relies on punishment.
- ❖ Kids tend to be withdrawn, lacking in initiative and social competence
- ❖ Permissive – Expects little and gives little, afraid to discipline, a form of neglect
- ❖ Kids tend to be dependent, irresponsible
- ❖ Authoritative- Expects a lot but gives a lot of support, understands the child's needs and respects them
- ❖ Kids tend to be confident , self-reliant and self controlled

V. Communication Principles

1. Listening – Take advantage of when your child has something to say

2. Reasoning – Helps respect, self esteem, compliance, understanding the child

3. Appealing to the positive- Conveying positive regard that expects the positive

“You’re too smart to be doing dangerous things like that” “This is not like you”

4. Always convey that you are on the child’s side

❖ Even in disciplining or correcting

5. Avoid overreacting and when you do, apologize for it

❖ Learn to forgive yourself and your child

❖ Mistakes are to be expected, taken responsibility for, learned from, and moved on from

❖ Mistakes do not define your child – separate the mistake from who your child is when talk



Parenting Age Specific Course

Lecture 2: Second to Sixth Grade

By Dr. Sameh Ragheb



Parenting the Elementary School Aged child- Taking Care of God's Gift

Reading:

1) Heb 12: 7-11

"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, 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? For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees"

2) Eph 6:4

" And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

3) Col 3:21

" Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. "

4) Deut 6:6-7

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up"

I.Characteristics of the School Aged Child:

1.Exposure to and influence by the world outside of the family

(school, peers, outside activities)

2.Has awareness of others not just self

- *Comparison, judgement of others, competitive

- *Socializing with others based on developing awareness of social norms and rules

- *Starts to judge self based on standing among peers

- *Seeks to establish self among peers

3.Relationship with adults

- *Seeks to please/impress

- *Regards them with some idealism esp boy to father and girl to mother

4.Behavior shaped according to learned rules

- *Needs and wants rules

- *Uses rules as guide for self and for understanding others

II.Needs of the school aged child

1.Spiritual Needs:

- * Truth : from you, from other sources,

- *Personal relationship

- *Developing an understanding: Salvation, Purpose ,

2.Parental Needs:

- *Time/attention – Emotional vs. material needs

- *Communication- Getting to really know your child as an individual

- *Unconditional Love

3. Familial Needs:

- *Parental unity
- *Sharing of roles
- *Familial identity – Godly family
- *Family unity - Reinforcing the family bonds

4. Peer Needs:

- *Opportunities for success
- *Opportunities for friendship
- *Opportunities for cooperation

5. Individual Needs:

- *Own interests and activities or hobbies
- *Own choices and decisions
- *Own property and privacy

6. Environmental Needs:

- *Structure – organized, predictable, schedule
- *Routines- consistency, predictable
- *Rules – consistent , predictable, logical, enforced

III. Parenting Principles

1. Reasonable expectations

*Academically (Learning Disabilities) , athletically

*Effort not outcome

2. Empathy for the child

*Understanding the child's perspective

*What is for the child's benefit as opposed to what is for the parent's benefit

3. Discipline based on understanding what determines behavior

*Initial motivations

*Rewards- especially attention

*Consequences- actual as opposed to desired

*Redeeming self

IV. Common Problems:

1. Low Self-Esteem- healthy vs. unhealthy and consequences

*View of self based on view of others – parents, peers

*View of self based on efficacy and success

*View of self based on God's view – unconditional, God's creation in His image

*View of self objectively

2. Low frustration tolerance/Anger problems/Oppositional

*temperament- direct vs indirect, passive vs active

*conditioning:1) Teaching frustration tolerance or frustration intolerance

2)Needs vs wants, earned vs owed

3)modeling – problem solving, conflict resolution

*disorders: 1) ADHD

2) Depression

3) Anxiety – separation anxiety, social anxiety, generalized anxiety

3. Bullying

*Everyone has a different perspective: the child, the parent, the other child, the other parent, the school

*Before: friends, avoiding being a target (reactive vs. passive vs. assertive) , avoiding situations

During: assertive, self defense, humor, involving others

After: developing a plan, involving others, ensuring safety

4. Academic problems

*Motivation – many factors

*Abilities- individualized, LD, ADHD

*Opportunity- To learn ,to develop

5. Family Problems

*imbalance in roles – between parents, parentified child

*triangulation, scapegoating

*parental disagreement and disunity

6. Over-exposure to screen activities

(TV, computer, videogames,)

*Supervision of content and education

*Potential harms – takes time away from all beneficial activities so hurts all the other activities

(family, social, physical, academic, spiritual)

7. Boy-Girl Relationships

- *Wasn't a natural part of this stage, however this has changed with societal changes
- *It is easier to discuss the subject at this age than later on when it can be more awkward
- *Preparation and understanding can help a child greatly with this aspect
- *Make sure you have a good spiritual understanding of the relation between man and woman that you can use as basis for teaching your child.
- *Teaching is done whenever opportunities present themselves.
- *Some basic principles to emphasize: 1)one man-one woman bonded for life
 - 2)Sex was created by God for a wonderful purpose when it is part of a greater whole relationship in marriage. Anything else is destructive.



Parenting Age Specific Course

Lecture 3: Middle and High School

By Dr. Sameh Ragheb



I. Characteristics of the Teenager:

1. Wants to be independent

- ❖ Pulls away from the family
- ❖ Finds faults with the family and especially parents
- ❖ Does not like anything that's equated with childishness
- ❖ Likes to live a separate life
- ❖ Wants to prove that he/she can be independent
- ❖ Doesn't accept advice unless it's given with respect and valuing of independence

2. Wants to exercise individuality

- ❖ Wants to have own opinions
- ❖ Wants to be different from the family in some ways
- ❖ Wants to do things his/her way
- ❖ Questions accepted norms
- ❖ Tendency to be argumentative

3. Going through many rapid changes

- ❖ Physical changes of puberty and growth
- ❖ Emotional roller coaster
- ❖ Many internal conflicts –
 - Independence vs. need for family
 - Individuality vs. lack of confidence
 - How he is vs. how the world wants him to be (peers, family, society, church)

4. Has his/her own world

- ❖ Privacy and need for personal space
- ❖ Generation and culture gap
- ❖ Separate life from the family

5. Very self conscious

- ❖ Very sensitive about physical appearance
- ❖ Very sensitive about social appearance
- ❖ Easily embarrassed
- ❖ Very sensitive to criticism especially from peers
- ❖ Very mindful of peers especially opposite sex

6. Dealing with sexual development

- ❖ Lots of new and uncomfortable feelings
- ❖ Lots of social challenges in dealing with the opposite sex- an area of insecurity at the same time that it is an area that needs to be negotiated.
- ❖ Lots of societal and peer pressure regarding expected relations with opposite sex
- ❖ Lots of mixed messages regarding sexuality

II. Needs of the Teenager:

1. Areas of independent/autonomous functioning
 - ❖ Some room to exercise decision making even when it does not please the parent
 - ❖ Giving choices whenever possible and holding them accountable
 - ❖ Treating them as soon to be adults
2. Areas of individuality
 - ❖ Room to be different
 - ❖ Acceptance of questioning and showing respect for difference of opinion without need to agree
 - ❖ Understanding this is a different person from who you want them to be and not expecting total conformity.
 - ❖ Seeking their opinions and thoughts on different matters
3. Being able to fit in
 - ❖ wanting to fit in with peers, with society
 - ❖ wanting to have sense of belonging and acceptance
4. Being able to accept self
 - ❖ Having an identity
 - ❖ Being comfortable with who they are
 - ❖ Being comfortable with where they come from (family, culture, church)
5. Having healthy ways to deal with opposite sex
 - ❖ Opportunities for interaction within a group
 - ❖ becoming comfortable with their sexuality
 - ❖ becoming comfortable with what kind of relationships they will have with the opposite sex
 - ❖ Knowing how to form relationships with the opposite sex

6. Being able to ready self for adulthood
 - ❖ Seeing self as capable
 - ❖ Giving them responsibilities
 - ❖ Having respect of the parent even if not approving of everything
 - ❖ treating them as adults whenever possible
 - ❖ Having a healthy world view

III. Principles for Parenting the Teenager:

1. Communicate:
 - ❖ Has to be both ways
 - ❖ Who talks more?
 - ❖ Understand before intervening
 - ❖ Influence not change
 - ❖ Look for teachable moments not lectures
2. Negotiate
 - ❖ If you always win, you've lost
 - ❖ Negotiation facilitates compliance
 - ❖ Negotiation respects and builds up the teen
 - ❖ Think of the 3 baskets – You need some in every basket
3. Allow freedoms when responsibility for it can be handled and is accepted
 - ❖ Limits have to be based on teen's abilities not parents' fears
 - ❖ Better to say when something will be allowed based on demonstrating responsibility than just saying "no".
 - ❖ Learning experiences are better earlier when harms are smaller than later when harms are bigger
 - ❖ Mistakes are part of learning
4. Protect without smothering
 - ❖ There will always be risk – teen has to learn to gradually handle bigger responsibilities
 - ❖ Overprotection leads to either rebellion or dependence
 - ❖ Smothering is usually about the parent dealing with their own anxiety than about helping the teen. Teens can usually tell the difference and will protest more.

5. Supervise without micromanaging
 - ❖ Accept that the teen has to do things according to their abilities not according to the parent's abilities.
 - ❖ Micromanaging leads to rebellion or dependence whereas supervision leads to learning and growth.
 - ❖ Micromanaging is telling the teen that they can't do it which is counter to all their needs.

6. Monitor without prying
 - ❖ Prying destroys the teen's individuality whereas monitoring is to guide.
 - ❖ Prying is a form of controlling leading to counter measures by the teen whereas monitoring is part of guidance and influencing not intruding and controlling.

7. Build trust not mistrust
 - ❖ Your teen needs to know that you have some trust in their abilities.
 - ❖ Your teen needs to know that you trust what they say.
 - ❖ Your teen needs to be able to trust you.
 - ❖ They need to trust that you will be truthful with them and that you will not invade their privacy.
 - ❖ Trust breeds trust and mistrust breeds mistrust.

8. Respect the person and the differences
 - ❖ Your teen needs your respect otherwise they will lose respect for you even if they fear you.

9. Influence not control

10. Parental unity

IV. Common Problems:

1. Boy/Girl relationship

- ❖ The more you push in one direction, the more the teen wants to go to the other
- ❖ Do not try to control choices directly but indirectly- set expectations based on responsible behavior not their choices.
- ❖ Understand what they are looking for and try to provide it to them in acceptable ways. For example acceptable opportunities to socialize.
- ❖ Education regarding the nature of relationships and how one intention can end with a different outcome.
- ❖ Seek more to teach and prepare than to restrict and protect
- ❖ Set expectations for your teen recognizing that they will have opportunities that you cannot control

2. Good/Bad friendships

- ❖ Same as boy/girl relationships

3. Freedoms/Restrictions

4. Power Struggles

- ❖ Oppositional behavior
- ❖ Control conflicts

5. Internet Dangers

- ❖ Interacting with anyone without knowing who they are
- ❖ Pornography
- ❖ Videogame addictions

6. Separation and individuation Problems

- ❖ Dependency – directly or indirectly
- ❖ Rebellion

O Lord Jesus, the true physician, who came to heal our human nature from diseases and all types of pain, I beseech you Lord to heal all the deep psychological wounds that trigger anguish in my heart.

I ask You Lord to enter my life and to heal the emotional traumas that scarred me in my childhood and from all the pain it caused me for the entirety of my life. O Lord Jesus you know my problems, I place them all into your heart, the heart of the Good Shepherd. I beseech you lord through that great sacred open wound that is in your heart to heal all the wounds that scar my heart. Rid my memory of these pains, so that they may no longer keep me shackled in the past, with heaviness and anxieties. Heal me O lord my God from all the wounds which constitute the rooting of sins in my life.

Lord, help me to forgive everyone who offended or hurt me; remove those deep inner wounds that rendered me incapable of forgiving. Lord, I also beg you especially to heal those who cause me to sin.

O You who came to heal glum hearts, now also heal my heart through your mercy. Heal my imponderable wounds that cause physical ailments.

Lord, I grant you my heart, accept it, purify it and confer upon it the sentiments of your divine heart that I may become gentle and humble.

Grant me, Lord, healing from the pain that grieved me from the loss of loved ones dear to my heart. I plead with you Lord with every bit of trust I have that You are the resurrection and life, make me able to attain a new peace and new joy.

Make me a real witness to your resurrection, to your conquering of sin and death, and Your living presence in every moment and every emotion in my life.
Amen.

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ST BASIL THE GREAT

On the
Human Condition

Translations and
Introduction by

NONNA VERNA HARRISON

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For my students.

Homily on the Words “Be Attentive to Yourself”

¹ God who has created us has given us the use of language, that we may reveal the plans of our heart to each other and through our shared nature we may each give a share to our neighbor, as if from some treasury, showing forth our intentions from what lies hidden in our heart. For if we spent our lives with naked soul, we would immediately communicate with each other through our thoughts; but since our soul is concealed under veils of flesh as it produces thoughts, words and names are necessary to make public the things lying in the depth. Accordingly, since when our thought takes meaningful voice, as if carried in a ferry by our discourse, crossing the air it passes from the speaker to the hearer; and if it finds the sea calm and quiet, the discourse comes to anchor in the ears of the students as if in tranquil harbors untroubled by storms; but if as a kind of rough upsurge the clamor of the hearers blows adversely, it will be dissolved as it is shipwrecked in the air. Therefore make it calm for the discourse through silence. For perhaps something may appear useful, having things you can take with you. The word of truth is hard to catch and is easily able to escape those who do not examine it attentively, so the Spirit directs that it be brief and modest, to sig-

nify much in a few words, and through conciseness be easy to retain in the memory. For indeed the excellence proper to discourse is neither to hide the things signified in obscurity, nor to be redundant and empty, turning in all directions while overflowing randomly.

So what we have just read from the books of Moses is truly of this kind, which all of you who are diligent have remembered, unless possibly through brevity it has escaped your notice. The reading is as follows: “Be attentive to yourself, lest an unlawful word come to be hidden in your heart” [Deut 15:9]. We human beings are easily led toward sins of the mind. Therefore he who has formed our hearts individually, knowing that the greatest part of sin is accomplished in impulse through what is in our intention, has prescribed purity in our directive faculty as primary for us. For that by which we most readily sin was worthy of the most guarding and care. For as the physicians with greater foresight safeguard the weaker parts of bodies by precautionary advice ahead of time, so the universal protector and true physician of souls, who knows most of all where we are more liable to slide toward sin, has anticipated this with stronger guarding. For actions done through the body need time and opportunity and labors and co-workers and other requirements. But the movements of the mind operate timelessly, are completed without weariness, are constructed effortlessly,

and are convenient on every occasion. Perhaps someone haughty who looks down on propriety, though clothed in the outward appearance of sobriety and sitting among many who call him blessed for his virtue, has run away in his mind to the place of sin in a hidden movement of his heart. He sees in imagination the things he seeks, he again imprints there some indecent liaison, and entirely within the secret workshop of the heart he paints a clear picture of the pleasure for himself. He has accomplished the sin inwardly and is without witness, unknown to all, until there comes the revelation of the hidden things of darkness and the disclosure of the intentions of hearts. Therefore be on guard lest at any time there come a lawless hidden word in your heart [Deut 15:9]. For one who looks at a woman with desire has already committed adultery in his heart [Mt 5:28]. Hence the actions of the body are impeded by many things, but those who sin by an intention brought about by the swiftness of thoughts still have the sin. Therefore, where the sharp point of transgression is, a safeguard has swiftly been given to us. For Scripture has testified, “lest at any time there come a lawless hidden word in your heart.” However, let us return to the starting point of our discourse.

2 “Be attentive to yourself,” it says. Each of the animals by nature has from the

God who has constructed all things the resources to guard its own structure. And you would find, if you observed carefully, that most of the nonrational animals have without training an aversion to what is harmful, and again by a certain natural attraction they hasten toward the enjoyment of beneficial things. Therefore also God who is educating us has given us this great precept, that as this comes to them by nature, it comes to us by the help of reason, and as they are set right without reflection, we may accomplish this through the attentive and continuous care of thoughts. And guarding strictly the resources given us by God, let us flee sin as the non-rational animals flee harmful foods but pursue justice as they pursue nourishing grass. So be attentive to yourself, that you may be able to distinguish what is harmful from what is healthful. But attentiveness is of two kinds: on the one hand we can gaze intently with the bodily eyes at visible things, and on the other hand by its noetic faculty the soul can apply itself to the contemplation of incorporeal things. If we say that the precept refers to the activity of the eyes, immediately we would find it to be impossible. For how could one grasp the whole of oneself with one’s eye? For neither can the eye be used to see itself, nor to reach the head, nor to see the back, nor the face, nor the arrangement of the internal organs deep within. Now it is impious to say that the precepts of the

Spirit are impossible. It remains therefore to hear what is prescribed as applying to the activity of the mind. Be attentive to yourself, that is, observe yourself carefully from every side. Let the eye of your soul be sleepless to guard yourself. You walk in the midst of snares [Sir 9:13]. Hidden traps have been set by the enemy in many places. Therefore observe everything, “that you may be saved like a gazelle from traps and like a bird from snares” [Prov 6:5]. For because of keenness of sight the gazelle is not taken by the traps, whence also it gives its name to its own sharp-sightedness [an untranslatable play on words]; and the bird by lightness of wing ascends higher than the plots of the hunters, when it is alert. Therefore, see that you do not show yourself as worse than the non-rational animals in guarding yourself, lest when caught in the snares you become prey to the devil, taken captive by him into his will [2 Tim 2:26].

3 Be attentive, then, to yourself, that is, neither to what is yours nor to what is around you, but be attentive only to yourself. For we ourselves are one thing, and what is ours is another, and the things around us are another. Thus we are the soul and the mind, through which we have come into being according to the image of the Creator, but the body is ours and the sense perceptions through it, while around us are possessions, skills,

and the other equipment of life. What then does the Word say? Do not be attentive to the flesh, nor pursue its good in every manner, health and beauty and enjoyment of pleasures and long life, nor admire wealth and reputation and power. As for those things that are of service to you in this temporary life, do not regard them as great. Through concern about these things do not neglect the life that comes first for you, but be attentive to yourself, that is, to your soul. Adorn it and take care of it, so that all the filth befalling it from wickedness may be removed through attention, and all the shame due to evil may be cleansed away, but adorn and brighten it with all the beauty that comes from virtue. Examine what sort of being you are. Know your own nature, that your body is mortal but your soul is immortal , and that our life is twofold in kind. One kind is proper to the flesh, quickly passing by, while the other is akin to the soul, not admitting of circumscription. Therefore be attentive to yourself, neither remaining in mortal things as if they were eternal, nor despising eternal things as if they were passing . Look down on the flesh, for it is passing away; take care of the soul, for it is something immortal. Understand yourself with all exactness, that you may know what gift to apportion to each—for the flesh nourishment and coverings, and for the soul doctrines of piety, education

in courtesy, training in virtue, correction of passions. Do not fatten the body excessively and do not seek a lot of flesh. For since “the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh” [Gal 5:17], and these are opposite to each other, see that you do not add to the flesh and grant great power to what is inferior. For as in the turning of scales, if you weigh down one side you truly make the opposite side lighter, so also with body and soul, the increase of one necessarily produces a decrease in the other. For when the body enjoys well-being and becomes heavy through much fleshiness, the mind is necessarily inactive and slack in its proper activity; but when the soul is in good condition and through care of its own goods is raised up toward its proper greatness, following this the state of the body withers.

4 The same precept is both useful to the sick and very appropriate to the healthy. In regard to the sick, physicians recommend to the ill to be attentive to themselves and to disregard none of the things heard to bring healing. Likewise also the Word, a physician for our souls, thoroughly cures the soul afflicted by sin through this small aid. Be attentive, then, to yourself, that you may also receive the aid of healing proportionate to your offense. If the sin is great and severe, you need many confessions, bitter tears, earnestness in vigils, continual fasting. If

the transgression is light and tolerable, let the repentance be equal to it. Only be attentive to yourself, that you may recognize the strength and illness of your soul. For many through lack of attention get great and incurable illnesses, and they do not themselves know that they are ill. Great is the usefulness of this precept also for strength in deeds; thus the same thing both heals the sick and makes perfect the healthy.

For each of us who are disciples of the Word is a servant in one particular activity appointed to us among those in accord with the Gospel. For in the great house of the church there are not only vessels of every kind, gold and silver and wood and earthenware [2 Tim 2:20], but also skills of all kinds. For the house of God, which is the church of the living God [1 Tim 3:15] has hunters, travelers, architects, builders, farmers, shepherds, athletes, soldiers. This brief word is appropriate to all of them, producing in each both exactitude of action and eagerness of will. You are a hunter sent by the Lord, who said, “Behold, I am sending many hunters, and they will hunt them atop every mountain” [Jer 16:16]. Be carefully attentive to yourself, lest perhaps the prey flee from you, that being caught by the word of truth those made savage by evil may be led to the Savior. You are a traveler like the one who prayed, “Make straight my steps” [Ps 119:133]. Be attentive to yourself, lest you turn aside from the road,

lest you turn away to the right or left [cf. [Deut 17:20](#)]; go on the royal road. Let the architect firmly lay the foundation of faith, which is Christ Jesus. Let the builder watch what he builds on it, not wood, not hay, not straw, but gold, silver, precious stones [[1 Cor 3:10](#)]. Shepherd, be attentive lest any of your duties as a shepherd escape your notice. And what are these? Lead back the stray, bind up the broken, heal the sick. Farmer, dig around the unfruitful fig tree and place there what will help its fruitfulness. Soldier, share in sufferings for the Gospel, fight the good fight against the spirits of evil, against the passions of the flesh, take up all the full armor of the Spirit. Do not be entangled in the business of life, that you may please the one who has made you a soldier [[2 Tim 2:4](#)]. Athlete, be attentive to yourself, lest perhaps you transgress any of the athletic rules. For nobody is crowned if he does not strive lawfully [[2 Tim 2:5](#)]. Imitate Paul, and run, and wrestle, and box; and like a good boxer, keep the gaze of your soul undistracted. Shield your vital organs by putting your hands in front of them; let your eye look intently toward your opponent. In the race, stretch forward to what lies ahead. Run so that you may obtain. In wrestling, struggle against the invisible opponents. Such a one the Word wishes you to be throughout your life, not frightened, nor lying idle, but soberly and vigilantly watching over yourself.

5 I lack the time to describe in full the pursuits of those who work together in the Gospel of Christ, and the power of this commandment, how it is well suited to all. Be attentive to yourself; be sober, able to deliberate, protective of present things, cautious toward things to come. Do not through laziness give up what is already present, and do not take for granted the enjoyment of things that do not exist, or things that perhaps will not exist, as if they were in your hands. Does not this infirmity naturally exist in the young, who having frivolously expansive minds regard things hoped for as already present? For when they have time during the day, or in the quiet of night, they invent for themselves insubstantial fantasies and are carried along by them through the agility of the mind, imagining an illustrious life, a brilliant marriage, happiness in their children, a long old age, honor from all. Though the things they hope for can nowhere be actualized, they become unduly inflated toward the greatest of human attainments. Acquiring large and beautiful houses filled with all kinds of treasures, they encompass land, as much as the vanity of their thoughts can appropriate from the whole creation. Thereupon they enclose wealth in storehouses of vanity. To these things they add cattle, a crowd of household slaves surpassing number, civic authority, sovereignty over nations, military commands, wars, triumphs,

kingship itself. As all these things happen through the empty invention of the mind, through much folly they seem to enjoy the things they hope for as already present and lying at their feet. This weakness belongs to a lazy and indifferent soul, to see dream visions while the body is awake. Therefore the Word compresses this frivolous expansion of the mind and inflammation of the thoughts, and like a kind of bridle halting the unstable mind, it mandates this great and wise precept. To yourself be attentive, it says, not taking nonexistent things for granted, but manage present things advantageously with a view to what takes place.

Yet I believe that the Legislator also uses this exhortation to remove a habitual passion. Since it is easy for each of us to meddle in things belonging to others rather than examining things belonging to ourselves, that we may not suffer from this it says, stop busying yourself with these dangerous evils. Do not spend time through thoughts scrutinizing the weakness that belongs to another , but be attentive to yourself, that is, turn the eye of your soul to inquire about things that belong to you. For many, according to the word of the Lord, who observe well the twig in the eye of their brother, do not look at the beam in their own eye [Mt 7:3]. Therefore do not cease examining yourself closely, to see whether life proceeds for you according to the commandments; but do not look around at

things outside yourself in case perhaps you can find some fault, like that stern and boastful Pharisee, who having set himself up as just also greatly despised the publican [cf. Lk 18:11]. Do not cease examining yourself as to whether you have sinned somehow in thought, whether somehow your tongue has slipped, running ahead of your mind, whether in the works of your hands you have done something inadvisable. And if you find in your own life many sins (and you will surely find some, being human), say the words of the publican, “O God, be gracious to me, the sinner” [Lk 18:13].

Be attentive to yourself. This word is for you also when you are brilliantly successful, and all of your life is flowing like a stream. It is useful in protecting you as a kind of good adviser bringing a reminder of things human. And of course also when hard pressed by circumstances, on occasion you can sing it in your heart, so that you are not lifted up by conceit to excessive pretension, nor do you give in to ignoble thoughts, falling into despair. Are you proud of wealth? And do you have grand thoughts about your ancestors? And do you exult in your homeland and bodily beauty and the honors given you by all? Be attentive to yourself, mindful that you are mortal, that “you are earth, and to earth you will return” [Gen 3:19]. Look around, examining those of like eminence before you. Where are those who possessed civil authority?

Where are the unconquerable orators? Where are the leaders of public assemblies, the brilliant horse breeders, the generals, the governors, the despots? Are they not all dust? Are they not all legend? Are not the memorials of their lives a few bones? Stoop and look into the tombs to see if you can distinguish which is the slave and which is the master, which is the poor one and which is the rich. Distinguish, if such power is yours, the captive from the king, the strong from the weak, the attractive from the misshapen. So having remembered your nature you will not then be conceited. And you will remember yourself if you are attentive to yourself.

6 Again, are you someone low born and obscure, a poor person born of the poor, without home or country, sick, in need every day, trembling at those in power, cowering before all because of your lowly life? “For one who is poor,” Scripture says, “is not subjected to threats” [Prov 13:8]. Therefore do not despair of yourself because nothing enviable belongs to you in your present circumstances, do not renounce the hope of all good; but lift up your soul toward the good things made present to you already by God, and toward the things laid up in store through his promise for later. First, then, you are a human being, the only one of the animals formed by God [cf. Gen 2:7]. Is this not enough to be reasonable grounds for the

most exalted joy, that you have been entirely formed by the very hands of God who has made all things? That since you have come into being according to the image of the Creator you can ascend quickly toward equality of honor with the angels through good conduct? You have been given an intellectual soul, through which you comprehend God, you perceive by thought the nature of beings, you pluck the sweetest fruit of wisdom. All the land animals, domesticated and wild, and all those living in water, and all those that fly through the air, belong to you as slaves and are subject to you. Further, have you not invented arts, and built cities, and devised all the things pertaining to necessity and luxury? Are not the oceans passable for you through reason? Do not earth and sea serve your life? Do not air and sky and dancing stars disclose to you their pattern? Why then are you downcast because your horse does not have a silver-mounted bridle? Yet you have the sun carrying its torch for you in a swift race through the whole day. You do not have the luster of silver and gold, but you have the moon with its limitless light shining around you. You have not mounted a chariot inlaid with gold, but you have feet as a vehicle proper and adapted by nature to yourself. Therefore, why do you call happy one who has a fat purse but needs the feet of others to move around? You do not lie on a bed of ivory [cf. Am 6:4], but you have the earth which

is more valuable than great amounts of ivory, and your rest upon it is sweet, sleep comes quickly and is free from anxiety. You do not lie beneath a gilded roof, but you have the sky glittering all around with the inexpressible beauty of the stars. Now these are human things, but those of which we will now speak are still greater. These things are for your sake: God present among human beings, the distribution of the Holy Spirit, the destruction of death, the hope of resurrection, divine ordinances perfecting your life, the journey toward God through the commandments; the kingdom of heaven is ready and crowns of righteousness are prepared for one who has not fled from labors on behalf of virtue.

7 If you are attentive to yourself, you will discover these things about yourself and still more, and you will enjoy the things present and will not be downcast about what you lack. This precept will be a great help if you are mindful of it on all occasions. For instance, has anger gained mastery over your thoughts, and have you been carried away by temper toward inappropriate words and savage, beast-like actions? If you were attentive to yourself, you would curb your temper like some disobedient and refractory colt, striking it with a blow of reason as if by a lash. You would also control your tongue, and you would not lay hands on the one provoking you. Again, evil desires mad-

den the soul, casting you into incontinent and licentious impulses. If you were attentive to yourself and remembered that for you this present enjoyment will result in a bitter end, and this tickling, which through pleasure has now come about in your body, will bring forth the venomous worm punishing us forever in hell, and the burning of the flesh will become mother of eternal fire, immediately the pleasures will be gone and banished. A certain wondrous inner calm and quiet in the soul will also come into being, as when the noise of undisciplined servant girls becomes silent through the entrance of a discreet lady. Therefore be attentive to yourself, and know that the rational part of the soul is also intelligent, but the passionate part is also irrational. And the one exists by nature to rule, while the other exists to obey reason and be persuaded by it. So do not ever allow your mind, reduced to utter slavery, to become a slave of the passions; moreover, do not yield to the passions struggling against reason and let them transfer to themselves the rule of the soul.

The exact comprehension of yourself also provides entirely sufficient guidance toward the concept of God. For if you are attentive to yourself, you will not need to trace your understanding of the Fashioner from the structure of the universe, but in yourself, as if in a kind of small ordered world, you will see the great

wisdom of the Creator. Understand that God is incorporeal from the incorporeal soul existing in you, not circumscribed by place; since neither as a matter of principle does your mind spend its life in a place, but through its conjunction with the body it comes to be in a place. You believe God to be invisible in understanding your own soul, since it also is ungraspable with bodily eyes, for it is colorless, it is without shape, and it has not been encompassed by any bodily characteristic, but it is recognized only from its energies. So nor should you investigate God by understanding through the eyes, but supporting faith by reason, have spiritual understanding about him. Marvel at the Creator's work, how the power of your soul has been bound together with the body, so that penetrating to its extremities it leads the many separate limbs and organs to one convergence and sharing of life. Examine what power from the soul is given to the flesh, what sympathy is given back to the soul by the flesh; how the body receives life from the soul, and the soul receives pain from the body. Examine where you have stored away the things you have learned; why the addition of things that have come later does not overshadow the knowledge of things retained, but without confusion you keep your memories distinct, inscribed on the directive faculty of the soul as if on a bronze slab, guarded closely. Examine how as the soul slips gradually toward the

passions of the flesh its own beauty is destroyed; and how again cleansed from the shame of evil, through virtue it ascends quickly toward the likeness of the Creator.

8 If you like, after your contemplation of the soul be attentive also to the structure of the body and marvel at how appropriate a dwelling for the rational soul the sovereign Fashioner has created. He has made the human being alone of the animals upright, that from your very form you may see that your life is akin to that on high; for all the quadrupeds are bent down toward their stomachs, while the human being is prepared to look up toward heaven, so as not to be devoted to the stomach or to the passions below the stomach but to direct his whole desire toward the journey on high. Then God placed the head at the top, locating in it the most valuable of the senses. There sight, and hearing, and taste, and smell have been established, all near each other. And although confined in a small space, none of them impedes the activity of its neighbor. The eyes have laid hold of the highest lookout point so that nothing blocks their view of the body's parts, but placed under the small projection of the eyebrows, they reach out from the prominence above in a direct line. Again, the hearing is not directed straight, but by a spiral-shaped pathway it takes hold of the noises in the air. This indeed exhibits the

highest wisdom, enabling sound to pass though unhindered, or rather be led in, bending around the twists, while nothing from outside that accidentally falls in can be a hindrance to the auditory perception. Examine closely the nature of the tongue, how it is tender and nimble and is sufficient by its varied movement for every need of speech. Teeth, also organs of speech, provide strong resistance to the tongue and at the same time also take care of food, some cutting it and others grinding it. And so when you have traversed all things with suitable reflection on each, and have observed carefully how air is drawn in through breath, how warmth is kept around the heart, and the organs of digestion, and the channels of blood, from all these you will perceive the unsearchable wisdom of the Creator [Rom 11:33]. So you will also say to him with the prophet, “Your knowledge from myself has become wonderful” [Ps 138:6]. Therefore be attentive to yourself, that you may be attentive to God, to whom be glory and dominion unto the ages. Amen.

Fifty Spiritual
Homilies
OF
St. Macarius the
Egyptian

BY
A. J. MASON, D.D.

WISH THE NAME OF
VINCENT HENRY STANTON
REGIUS PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY AT CAMBRIDGE
WHOM FOR FIFTY YEARS I HAVE HAD THE
PRIVILEGE
OF COUNTING MY CLOSEST FRIEND
IN A LIFE RICH IN FRIENDSHIPS

LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C.
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1921

I SHOULD WISH TO CONNECT THIS VOLUME
CONTAINING THOUGHTS BETTER THAN MY
OWN

A. J. Mason, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian*, Translations of Christian Literature: Series I: Greek Texts (London; New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; The Macmillan Company, 1921).

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HOMILY XLIV

What change and renewal is wrought in a Christian man by Christ, who has healed the afflictions and diseases of the soul.

1. HE who comes to God, and desires to be in truth a partner of Christ's throne, ought to come with a view to this end, that he may be changed and altered from his former condition and conduct, and be made a good and new man, who brings nothing of the old man with him. *If any man be in Christ, it says, he is a new creature.*¹ This was the very purpose of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, to change and alter and renew nature, and to create afresh this soul that was overturned by passions through the transgression, mingling it with His own Spirit, the Spirit of Godhead. New mind, and new soul, and new eyes, new ears, a new spiritual tongue, and in short new men altogether—this was what He came to make of those who believe Him, or let us say new bottles, anointing them with His own light of knowledge, that He might change their wine into new wine, which is His Spirit; for *new wine, He says, must be put into new bottles.*²

2. As the enemy, when he had got man into subjection, made him new for him-

self, enveloping him in lusts of wickedness, and anointing him with the spirit of sin poured into him the wine of all iniquity and evil doctrine; so the Lord, having delivered him from the enemy, made him new, anointing him with His own Spirit, and poured into him the wine of life, the new doctrine of the Spirit. He who changed the nature of the five loaves into the nature of a multitude, and gave a voice to the irrational nature of an ass, and converted the harlot to chastity, and prepared the nature of burning fire to bedew those who were in the furnace, and tamed for Daniel the nature of savage lions; He is able also to change the soul, which was waste and had become savage, from sin into His own goodness and loving-kindness and peace, by the holy and good *Spirit of promise.*¹

3. As a shepherd knows how to cure the scabby sheep, and to protect it from wolves, so Christ, the true shepherd, when He came, was alone able to cure and to convert man, the lost and scabby sheep, from the scab and leprosy of sin. The priests and Levites and teachers before were unable to cure the soul by the oblations of gifts and sacrifices, and by their sprinklings of blood, wherewith indeed they were unable even to cure themselves. For *it is not possible, it says, that the blood of bulls and of goats should*

¹ 2 Cor. 5:17.

² Matt. 9:17.

¹ Eph. 1:13.

take away sin.² But the Lord said, showing the impotence of the physicians of the time, *Ye will surely say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself;*³ as much as to say, “I am not like them, who cannot so much as heal themselves. I am the true physician, and the good shepherd, who *lay down My life for the sheep,*⁴ who am able to *heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease* of the soul.⁵ I am the sheep without spot, that was offered once, and that am able to cure those that come to Me.” The true healing of the soul is from the Lord only. *Behold*, it says, *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,*⁶ that is to say, of the soul that has believed Him, and that loves Him with a whole heart.

4. The good Shepherd, then, heals the scabby sheep. Sheep cannot heal sheep. And except man, the reasonable sheep, be healed, there is no entrance for him into the heavenly church of the Lord. It is thus said even in the law through shadow and image. Concerning the leper, and him who has a blemish, the Spirit speaks figuratively, with this meaning; A leper, or *one that hath a blemish, shall not enter* into the assembly of the Lord;¹ but it charged

²Heb. 10:4.

³Luke 4:23.

⁴John 10:15.

⁵Matt. 4:23.

⁶John 1:29.

¹Lev. 21:17 ff.; cp. Num. 5:2.

the leper to go to the priest, and with much entreaty to take him to the house of his tabernacle, and [ask him] to lay his hands upon the leprosy, indicating the spot where the leprosy had attacked him, and to heal it. After the same manner, Christ, the true *high priest of good things to come,*² bending over souls that are afflicted with the leprosy of sin, enters into the tabernacle of their body, and heals and cures their disorders. Thus the soul will be enabled to enter into the heavenly church of the saints of the true Israel. For any soul that bears the leprosy of the sin of the passions, and has not come to the true high priest, and been healed now in the camp of the saints, cannot enter into the heavenly church. For [that church] being without blemish, and pure, seeks souls that are without blemish and pure. *Blessed*, says the scripture, *are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*³

5. The soul which really believes Christ must be changed and altered from its present evil condition to a new condition which is good, and from its present lowly nature into another nature which is divine, and be itself made new by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus can it be fit for the heavenly kingdom. These things can be obtained by us if we believe

²Heb. 9:11.

³Matt. 5:8.

and love Him in truth, and live by all His holy commandments. If in the time of Eliseus the casting of light wood upon the waters brought up the heavy iron, how much more in this case will the Lord send forth His light, buoyant, good, and heavenly Spirit, and by means of Him bring up the soul that is sunk in the waters of wickedness, and make it light, and wing it to the heights of heaven, and alter and change it out of its own nature.

6. In the visible world, no one can pass and get across the sea of himself, without having the light and buoyant ship, built of wood, which alone is able to walk over the waters—for if a man treads upon the sea, he is drowned and perishes. In the same way no soul can of itself cross and pass over and get beyond the bitter sea of sin, and the dangerous deep of the wicked powers of the darkness of the passions, unless he shall receive the buoyant, heavenly, winged Spirit of Christ, which walks over all wickedness and passes on, whereby he shall be enabled to arrive by a straight, right course at the heavenly haven of rest, at the city of the kingdom. And as those who are in the ship do not draw, or drink of the sea, nor have their clothing or their food from it, but bring these things with them from abroad in the ship, so the souls of Christians do not take from this world, but from above, out of heaven, heavenly sustenance, and spiritual clothing; and living thereby,

embarked in the ship of the good, life-giving Spirit, pass beyond the adverse evil powers of principalities and dominions. And as all ships are built of one substance of wood, that by means of them men may get over the bitter sea, so from one Godhead's heavenly light of the divers gifts of the one Spirit, all Christian souls receive power and fly high over all wickedness.

7. But since the ship needs also a pilot, and a sweet, well-tempered wind to make a good passage, the Lord Himself becomes all these in the faithful soul, carrying it over the terrible storms and the wild waves of wickedness, and the blasts of the violent winds of sin, mightily and skilfully and expertly, as He knows how, dispersing their tempest. Without Christ, the heavenly pilot, it is impossible for any to pass the wicked sea of the powers of darkness, and the gusts of bitter temptations. *They go up, it says, to the heavens, and down again to the deep.*¹ But Christ possesses all a pilot's knowledge, both of wars and temptations, treading over the wild waves. *For in that He Himself, it says, was tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.*²

8. So our souls must be altered and changed from their present condition to another condition, and a divine nature, and be made new instead of old—that is,

¹Ps. 107:26.

²Heb. 2:18.

good and kind and faithful, instead of bitter and faithless, and being thus made fit, be restored to the heavenly kingdom. The blessed Paul writes thus of his own change, and of the apprehension where-with he was apprehended of the Lord: *I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ.*³ How then is he apprehended of God? Like as if some usurper were to seize and carry off a captivity, and it were then apprehended or caught by its true sovereign, so when Paul was under the influence of the usurping spirit of sin, he persecuted the church and made havoc of it. But since he acted through zeal for God according to ignorance, supposing himself to be contending for truth, he was not disregarded, but the Lord apprehended him, shining about him unspeakably, the heavenly King and true, vouchsafing His own voice to the man, and striking him like a slave,⁴ set him free. Behold the Master's goodness and power of changing, how He is able to change souls that were enveloped in sin and had relapsed into wildness, and in a moment of time to convert them to His own goodness and peace!

9. All things are possible with God; as it proved in the case of the robber. In a

³ Phil. 3:12.

⁴ This is perhaps a reference to the custom by which the lictor touched the head of a slave with a rod in the presence of the magistrate, as an act of emancipation.

moment of time he was changed through faith, and restored to paradise. This was the purpose of the Lord's coming, to alter and create our souls anew, and make them, as it is written, *partakers of the divine nature*,¹ and to give into our soul a heavenly soul, that is the Spirit of God-head leading us to all virtue, that we might be enabled to live eternal life. May it be that with all our hearts we should believe His inexpressible promises, because *He is true that promised.*² We must love the Lord, and be diligent every way in all virtues, and ask persistently and continually, so as to receive the promise of His Spirit completely and to perfection, that our souls may be brought to life while we are still in flesh. For if the soul shall not receive in this world the hallowing of the Spirit through much faith and prayer, and be *made partaker of the divine nature*, being mingled with grace whereby it shall be able to fulfil every commandment unblameably and purely, it is not made for the kingdom of heaven. What good thing a man has gained here, the same in that day will be his life, through the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for ever. Amen.

¹ 2 Pet. 1:4.

² Heb. 10:23.