

DEMONS AND MENTAL ILLNESS HOLINESS

October 20, 2024
6th Sunday of Luke
Revision E_half

Gospel: Luke 8:26-39 (Matthew 8:24-34; Mark 5:1-20)
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

Today’s Gospel lesson is a real hot potato that people today are hesitant to discuss for fear that someone might be offended. Although accounts of the same events are found in three of the four Gospels, none are used at all in the Western lectionary. On the other hand, this same lesson is used twice in the Orthodox lectionary: today and the 5th Sunday after Pentecost where it is read from Matthew 8. John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria had a great deal to say about this incident in dealing with Matthew and Luke’s account respectively. The theme for today is taken from the text, which relates mental illness in terms of demon possession. The theme for the 5th Sunday after Pentecost takes its theme from John Chrysostom in comparing demon possession to covetousness.

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Background: Survey of Jesus’ Healings

In Table 1 is an overview of the healings Jesus performed that are recorded in the New Testament. Probably not everything He did was recorded (John 21:25) but Table 1 gives a decent snapshot of a variety of illnesses, ailments and sufferings. All of these conditions occur today and are treated by modern medicine – except the last case, which is called demon possession in the Scriptures. On the other hand, a significant fraction of money spent on modern medicine goes to treat all types of “mental illness” using methods ranging from counseling with psychiatrists to sedatives and padded cells. In the Soviet Union, the tools of this field were sometimes used in fiendish ways to try to “re-educate” enemies of the state – such as Christians. Today’s Gospel lesson presents a much different diagnosis. But first, let us read other accounts in the Scripture that might be loosely classified as “mental illness” in today’s terminology.

Mental Illness in the Scripture

The Mute, Epileptic Child: A man’s only child had a severe case of what might be called epilepsy (threw himself down, foamed at the mouth, gnashed his teeth, became rigid). But

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there was a sinister, organized influence behind this. Epilepsy by itself wouldn't try to drown the child or throw him into the fire. The father knew what was going on and asked the Twelve to cast out the demon; but they couldn't do it. Jesus proceeded to explain "this kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:17-29). We infer¹ that the demon also caused the child to be deaf and dumb (Mark 9:25).

Table 1
Healings Done by Jesus

Disease	Who	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Fever (small pox, typhoid)	Nobleman's son				4:46
	Peter's mother-in-law	8:14	1:29	4:38	
Leprosy	One man	8:1	1:40	5:12	
	10 men			17:12	
Paralysis	Down thru roof	9:1	2:1	5:17	
	At pool of Bethesda				5:1
Withered hand	In synagogue	12:9	3:1	6:6	
Hemorrhage	Woman touched Jesus	9:18	5:21	8:40	
Blindness	2 men	9:27			
	1 man		8:22		
	Man born blind				9:1
	Bartimaeus		10:46	18:35	
Back injury	Crippled woman			13:10	
Dropsy	At Pharisee's dinner			14:1	
Severed ear	In Gethsemane			22:47	
General sickness	Multitudes	12:15	3:7	6:17	
	Centurion's servant	8:5		7:1	
	In Gennersaret	14:34	6:53		
	Lame, blind, mute, maimed	15:29	7:31		
Dead raised	Widow's son			7:11	
	Jairus' daughter	9:18	5:21	8:40	
	Lazarus				11:1
	Tombs opened	27:57			
Demoniacs	In synagogue		1:21	4:31	
	Blind & mute demon	12:22	3:7	6:17	
	Gadarene	8:28	5:1	8:26	
	Mute demon	9:32			
	Syro Phoenician	15:21	7:24		
	Epileptic demon	17:14	9:14	9:37	

The Demoniac in the Synagogue: A man with an unclean spirit began by rebuking Jesus in the Synagogue of Capernaum (Mark 1:23-27). Here is a man who (according to modern techniques) just needed some good counseling to help him relate better to others! How would modern medicine help this man relate better to the Son of God? There was a basic incompatibility that no amount of counseling will help.

¹ For more details see the Study for the 10th Sunday after Pentecost, which addresses this account.

The Blind, Mute Demoniac: A man, who was demon-possessed, blind and mute, was brought to Jesus. In today's world, he would be institutionalized with little hope of rehabilitation. Jesus' healing involved removing the demon; the implication is that the blindness and muteness was caused by the demon (Matthew 12:22-23).

King Nebuchadnezzar During the Time of Daniel: King Nebuchadnezzar had conquered most of the world, including Israel, and had brought a number of the prophets of Israel to Babylon. He also had several dreams that only Daniel could interpret. [King Nebuchadnezzar was no dummy! In order to know for sure that the interpretation of the dream was real he had the interpreter first tell him what he had dreamed!] The dream in Daniel 2 is prophecy concerning the end of the age that the Lord revealed to King Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the three young men (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego) in the blazing furnace accompanied by One who looked like the Son of God. But in spite of this, King Nebuchadnezzar did not humble himself before the Lord or change his ways.

Therefore, King Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, (which Daniel also interpreted), that prophesied that King Nebuchadnezzar would go insane for seven years, living like an animal and eating grass like a cow. For seven years King Nebuchadnezzar lived very much like the poor soul in our Gospel lesson; his hair looked like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws (Daniel 4:24-37).

After seven years, King Nebuchadnezzar repented and his reason returned to him. Not only was his kingdom restored greater than it was, but King Nebuchadnezzar actually wrote the last part of Daniel 4 himself. Note the change in tense from the third person in verse 33 to the first person in verse 34.

The first question that we might ask ourselves is whether mental illness is really some kind of demon oppression or uncleanness. But more than this; we tend to think of people who are demon possessed as poor lost souls. But we usually don't think of what kind of struggles they are going through, especially those that seem to have lost their mind. However, everything is in the hand of God. Some of the Church Fathers pointed out in the following that the care and provision of God was present for the Gadarene demoniacs even while they were being tormented by the demons.

Description of the Demoniacs

The Gospel lesson took place in the winter of 28 AD. (Jesus was crucified in the spring of 30 AD). Jesus and His disciples had just finished rowing across the Sea of Galilee to the Eastern shore, probably in one of the fishing boats. On the way a storm arose and Jesus calmed the storm. The Twelve commented: "Who can this be, that even the winds and the water obey Him?" When they got back to Nazareth after this trip, Jesus sent the Twelve out two by two to heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons all by themselves. The Gospel lesson then is a hands-on-lesson in preparation for the sending out of the Twelve. Jesus knew He was going to do this and he picked a real bearcat as a demonstration. John Chrysostom stated² that since "no man dared to bring these men to Him, Christ Himself went to them."

² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVIII, 2.

As soon as Jesus and the Twelve stepped out of the boat in the country of the Gadarenes³, demon-possessed men met them. Some details about these men:

- There were actually two of them (Matthew 8:28)
- They were naked and lived in the tombs (Luke 8:27)
- They had been like this for a long time (Luke 8:27)
- These men had been locked up, bound with chains and shackles, but they broke the chains (Luke 8:27)
- They were exceedingly fierce, no one could pass that way (Matthew 8:28)
- Night and day these men would cry out and cut themselves with stones (Mark 5:5)

In today's terminology, they would be classified as a danger to themselves and others (that is, seriously mentally ill). Treatment programs today involve major tranquilizers to sedate them followed by more tranquilizers to "stabilize" them.

Cyril of Alexandria described⁴ the demoniacs as in a worse state than someone who was already dead. This indicates the utter cruelty of the demons; in addition, the demons had deprived the men of any reasoning ability.

"Jesus, in company with the holy disciples, had landed in the country of the Gergesenes; and immediately a man met them, in whom dwelt many unclean spirits. He was void of mind and understanding, and in no respect different from those already dead and laid in the earth; or rather, perhaps, even in a more miserable state. For the dead, carefully wrapped in their grave-clothes, are laid in the earth, like one on his mother's bosom. But he, in great misery and nakedness, wandering among the graves of the dead, was in utter wretchedness, leading a disgraceful and ignominious life. This was a proof of the cruelty of the demons, and a plain demonstration of their impurity. Besides this, it is a charge and accusation against them of hatred to mankind; for they would have no man whatever on earth sober, but wish them to be like one crazy and intoxicated, to know nothing to their profit, and to be left in ignorance of Him Who is the Maker of all. For of whomever they have possession, and have subjected to their power, him they make an example of great misery, deprived of every blessing, destitute of all sobriety, and entirely devoid of reason itself."

We might also ask why the demoniacs lived in the tombs. John Chrysostom stated that the sorcerers of his day took young children and killed them "in order to have their soul assist them later". Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-23) also did this until the Apostle Peter exposed⁵ him in his falsehood. The sorcerers used the dead children to "cry out" that they are the soul of such a person using ventriloquism. The demoniacs in the tombs perpetuated this heretical notion as if to imply that the dead become demons after they die. Chrysostom stated⁶ that all this is devoid of reason:

³ Matthew refers to the people there as Gergesenes (Matthew 8:28); Gadara and Gergesa were not too far apart and people that lived there could be referred to as either.

⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 8, Homily 44, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 191.

⁵ For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St. Athanasius Press, 2004, p. 21-27.

⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVIII, 3.

“It is not reasonable that an injured soul should cooperate with a wrongdoer, or that a man might be able to change an incorporeal power into another substance. In bodies this is impossible; and one cannot make a man’s body become that of a donkey; much more this is impossible in the invisible soul. One cannot transform it into the substance of an evil spirit. These sayings are conjured up only to frighten children.”

“It is also not possible for a soul, torn away from the body, to wander here in this life anymore. ‘The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God’ (Wisdom 3:1 LXX). If of the righteous, then those children’s souls also are in the hand of God. They are not wicked; and the souls of sinners are immediately led away from here. This is obvious from Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-30). And elsewhere Christ said, ‘Tonight your soul will be required of you’ (Luke 12:20). A soul, when it leaves the body, does not wander here. If we, as we go about on the earth, which is familiar and well known to us, are surrounded with a body, when we are journeying in a strange road, we do not know which way to go unless we have someone to lead us. How should the soul know where to walk without the body to show the way?

It is not possible for a disembodied soul to remain here. Stephen said, ‘Receive my spirit’ (Acts 7:59); and Paul said that he wished, ‘to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better’ (Philippians 1:23). Abraham ‘was gathered to his fathers, being cherished in a good old age’ (Genesis 15:15, 25:8 LXX). Regarding proof that the souls of sinners can’t continue here, the rich man pleaded a great deal for this, and didn’t obtain it (Luke 16:27-31). Had it been at all possible, he would have come, and would have told what happened to him there. From this it is evident that after their departure our souls are led away into some place and have no more power of their own to come back again, but wait for that dreadful day.

When Jesus commanded the demons to come out of the men, the demons begged Jesus not to torment them before the time (Matthew 8:29). This is an interesting request! Night and day, the demons had caused the two men to cry out in pain and cut themselves with stones (Mark 5:5). But yet now the demons don’t want Jesus to hurt them? John Chrysostom stated⁷,

“The demons’ words betray their shameless nature. They said, ‘Have You come here to torment us before the time?’ (Matthew 8:29). That they had sinned, they could not deny; but they demand that they not suffer their punishment before Judgment Day. He had caught them in the act of perpetrating those lawless horrors and deforming and punishing His creature in every way. They supposed that He, for the excess of their crimes, would not wait for the time of their punishment. Therefore, they begged Him. The enmity of the demons is obvious from the start, and the sea that Jesus just calmed was not as stormy as the disposition of these demons. They were invisibly receiving stripes and suffering things intolerable from His mere presence.”

⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVIII, 2.

Cyril of Alexandria noted⁸ that the demons asked Jesus, “What have I to do with You”. They had usurped His honor and glory and corrupted His creation. Jesus, as a kind loving shepherd, responded to protect His sheep.

“The Gergesene, or rather the herd of demons lying concealed in him, fell down before Christ's feet, saying, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of God Most High? I beg You, do not torment me’ (Luke 8:28). Observe in the demons the mixture of fear with great audacity, and arrogant pride; and that the words, which they are forced to utter, are coupled with inflated haughtiness! For it is a proof of the pride of the enemy, that he ventures to say, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of God Most High?’ The demons know, for certain, that He is the Son of God Most High, and they confessed this. In claiming adoration from men, they have usurped that which is His, and assumed a glory, which in no possible way is their right. Why then did they claim that Christ had nothing to do with them? With due cause, they had been expelled in their fallen ness from that dignity which is His alone! All men on earth are His; and these they corrupted, removing them far from the knowledge of Him, Who truly is the Lord and Maker of all, and plunged them into the mire of sin, making them worshippers of demons. What earthly king would endure to have those placed under his scepter harassed by barbarians? Or what shepherd is so unfeeling and indifferent, as when savage beasts attack his flocks, to take no heed of the calamity, nor endeavor to aid his sheep? The demons confessed, even against their will, who they are, and to Whom they speak. They uttered words that suit them; such as, ‘I beg You, do not torment me.’”

Jesus then asked the men their name, and the demons replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many!” (Mark 5:9). In the 1st Century, a legion⁹ represented 6,000 soldiers and included some cavalry.

Cyril of Alexandria asked¹⁰ why Jesus asked the demoniacs their name. It was primarily for our benefit so that we might know how wretched the demons are.

“Did Christ then ask because He did not know it, and like one of us, wished to learn it as something that had escaped Him? This is perfectly absurd for us to say or imagine anything of the kind. For being God, ‘He knows all things, and searches the hearts and reins’ (Psalm 7:9 LXX). He asked, therefore, for the plan of salvation's sake that we might learn that a great multitude of demons shared¹¹ the one soul of the man, creating in him a wretched and impure madness. For he was their work, and they indeed ‘are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge’” (Jeremiah 4:22 LXX).

⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 8, Homily 44, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 191-192.

⁹ Each legion was divided into 10 parts, each commanded by a Cohort, where each Cohort commanded 6 Centurions. Each Centurion commanded 100 soldiers.

¹⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 8, Homily 44, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 192.

¹¹ The word *mateneimato*, which he renders “divided” or “shared”, has probably only the meaning of “possessed”, the proper signification being to “graze off the land with cattle”.

The Demons Ask Permission to Enter Swine

The demons then begged Jesus that He might allow them to enter a herd of swine, about 2,000 (Mark 5:13), that were feeding a good way off from them (Matthew 8:30). Jesus permitted them to do so and suddenly the whole herd ran violently down the steep embankment into the lake and drowned.

Why did the demons request of Jesus to enter the swine, and then immediately destroy the swine? John Chrysostom stated¹²,

“Everywhere demons labor to drive men to dismay, and everywhere they rejoice in destruction. This, for instance, the devil did with respect to Job, and in that case too God allowed it, but neither in that case as complying with the devil, but willing to show His own servant more glorious, cutting off from the evil spirit all pretext for his shamelessness, and turning on his own head what was done against the righteous man. Here also the contrary of what the demons wished came to pass. For the power of Christ was gloriously proclaimed. The wickedness of the demons, from which He delivered those possessed by them, was more plainly indicated. He demonstrated how they lack power to touch even swine, without permission from the God of all.”

John Chrysostom gives¹³ several reasons why Jesus allowed the demons to enter the swine:

1. To teach those who are delivered from the wicked demons how great is the malice of the demons.
2. That all might learn how the demons are not even allowed to enter swine unless He should give them permission.
3. That the demons would have treated the two men worse than the swine, unless the two men, even in their calamity, had enjoyed much of God’s providential care. That the demons hate us more than beasts should be obvious to every man. Since the demons didn’t spare the swine, but in one moment of time threw them all down the precipice, much more would they have done to the two men whom they possessed. They would have led them towards the desert, carrying them away, unless the guardian care of God had been present, to curb and check the excess of their violence.

Cyril of Alexandria stated¹⁴ that this encounter with the Gergesene demoniacs illustrates Christ’s care for us in the face of forces that would easily overpower us.

“The herd of impure spirits asked for a herd of swine -- worthy of and like itself! And Christ purposely allowed them, though He well knew what they would do. And I can imagine someone saying, ‘Why did He grant their request?’ To which we answer, ‘He gave them the power, in order that this, like all His other conduct, might be a means of benefit to us, and inspire us with the hope of

¹² John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, XXVIII, 4.

¹³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, XXVIII, 4.

¹⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Chapter 8, Homily 44, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 193.

safety'. They asked for power over swine, plainly as something, which they do not possess. They would not have asked for it, if it had been in their power to take it without hindrance? But those who have no power over trifling and valueless things, how can they injure anyone of those whom Christ has sealed, and who place their hope on Him? Comfort your heart; for perhaps you were terrified at hearing that crowds of wicked spirits dwelt in one man and made him wander among the graves of the dead in shame and nakedness, devoid of mind and understanding. Inasmuch as you too are a man exposed to temptations, you feared a similar misery, should Satan attack you. Have confidence in your heart; do not suppose that any such thing can happen while Christ surrounds us with protection and love. It is certain that they possess no power even over swine. So great is the providence which the Almighty Governor of our affairs bestows on us. For He even said to the Apostles, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's will. And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows' (Matthew 10:29-31). For if He grants His protection on trifling and valueless things, how will He not consider us worthy of all regard, for whose sake He even became man, and endured the contempt of the Jews? Do not fear; for God helps and encircles with the armor of His good pleasure those whose wish it is to live for Him, and who seek to perform those things that are pleasing in His sight."

John Chrysostom concurred¹⁵ to say that this illustrates God's care for all men, even when they're not expecting it, and even when they are in dire straits like the two demoniacs.

"We learn from this that His providence is not only over all in common, but also over each in particular. He also declared to His disciples, 'But even the hairs of your head are numbered' (Matthew 10:30). From these demoniacs, one may clearly perceive this; they would have been choked to death by the demons long before, if they had not enjoyed the benefit of much tender care from above."

"For these reasons He allowed the demons to enter the herd of swine, that the Gadarenes, who dwelt in those places should learn His power. For where His name was great, He did not greatly display Himself. But where no one knew Him, but they were still in an insensible condition, He made His miracles to shine out, so as to bring them over to the knowledge of His Godhead. For it is evident from the event that the inhabitants of that city were a sort of senseless people; for when they ought to have adored and marveled at His power, they asked Him to leave."

The Reaction from the Townsfolk

The reaction to all this by the herdsmen and the townsfolk is almost as strange as the demoniacs' behavior. When the herdsmen brought the townsfolk out and they saw the former demoniacs clothed, in their right mind, and sitting at Jesus' feet, they were afraid. When the herdsmen explained all that had happened, the townsfolk were seized with great fear and asked Jesus to leave. The demoniacs weren't the only ones in the area that had problems.

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVIII, 4.

The men who were healed wanted to return with Jesus and the Twelve to Nazareth. However, Jesus sent them back to their own house to “tell what great things God has done for you”. The two men proceeded to “proclaim in all Decapolis what Jesus had done for them and all marveled” (Mark 5:20). Decapolis (Figure 1) is about 1,000 square miles; so they covered a lot of area with their testimony. The cities of Decapolis¹⁶ are shown in Table 1:

There may be a connection between these two healed demoniacs and the Apostle Paul. On the right-hand side of the map, we note that Decapolis is in the country of the Nabateans, as is the city of Damascus. This area was referred to in the 1st Century as Arabia, as was generally everything to the East of the Jordan River.

Table 1
Cities of Decapolis

<u>Scythopolis</u>	Gergesa
Hippos	Dion
Gadara	Canatha (not shown)
Pella	Damascus
Philadelphia	Raphana (not shown)

When the Apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3), he was led into the city and met the Prophet Ananias at the house of Judas on the street called Straight (Acts 9:11; this is the current location of the Patriarchate of the Church of Antioch). After his baptism, Paul went to Arabia (Galatians 1:17) and returned to Damascus. The place in Arabia he went is probably near Bostra and had been evangelized by the healed demoniacs back in 28 AD. Later on, Timon, of the Seventy and also of the first seven deacons (Acts 6:1-6) was Bishop of Bostra.

In relating all this to our lives today, we might ask whether all mental illness is actually demon possession, or whether only some of it is. Perhaps a larger question is whether all sickness is caused by demons. This certainly was the case for the Patriarch Job (Job 2:3-10), where Satan demanded the opportunity to inflict great misery on Job’s body to prove to God that Job wasn’t as righteous as God claimed he was. (Satan lost the argument, but Job spent a long time in great misery because of it – and was rewarded for his faithfulness). This was also the case of the woman with the back injury (Luke 13:10-17) “whom Satan had bound for 18 years.”

Cyril of Alexandria asked¹⁷ the question, “Why would the Lord permit demons to possess men like this?”

“The reason for these things is very deep; for so God is addressed by one of His saints, ‘Your judgments are a vast abyss’ (Psalm 35:6 LXX). We need to bear this in mind. The God of all purposely permits some to fall into the power of

¹⁶ Shown in Figure 1 are the traditional boundaries of Decapolis, where the cities in the table are those listed by Pliny, Natural History, V, 74. Damascus and Raphana are not within these traditional boundaries, and Ptolemy, Geography, V, xiv, 18, omits Raphana from the cities of Decapolis. Stephan of Byzantium, on the other hand, lists 14 cities within Decapolis.

¹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 8, Homily 44, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 193-194.

demons, not so much that they may suffer, as that we may learn by their example in what way the demons treat us and so may avoid the desire of being subject to them. For by the suffering of one, many are edified.”

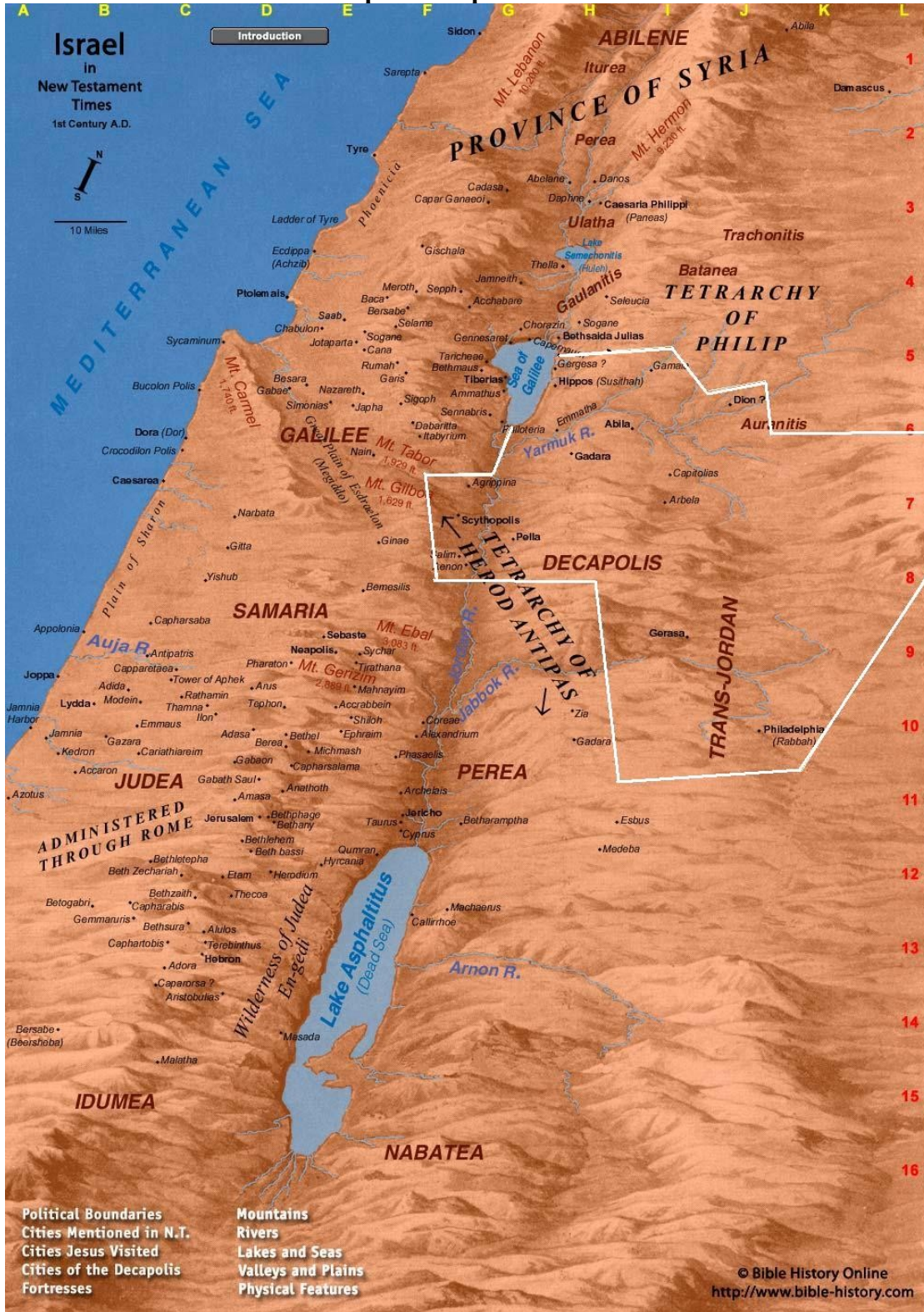
“Learning what happened to the herd of swine, we understand that wicked demons are cruel, hurtful and treacherous to those who are in their power. Proof of this comes from the fact that they hurried the swine over a precipice and drowned them in the waters. Christ, therefore, granted their request, that we might learn from what happened, that their disposition is ruthless and bestial, incapable of being softened, and solely intent on doing evil to those whom they can get into their power.”

“If, therefore, there is anyone among us wanton and swinish, filth loving and impure, and willingly contaminated with the abominations of sin, such a one by God's permission falls into their power and sinks into the abyss of perdition. But it can never happen to those who love Christ, to become subject to them. Nor to us, as long as we walk in His footsteps, and, avoiding negligence in the performance of what is right, desire those things which are honorable, and belong to that virtuous and laudable conversation, which Christ has marked out for us by the precepts of the Gospel.”

During the 40 years Israel wandered in the wilderness, the Lord promised to remove sickness from their midst if they would only obey His voice (Exodus 23:22-26, Deuteronomy 7:12-15). If they didn't obey His voice, He promised to bring the plagues and sicknesses that He brought on Egypt back on them (Deuteronomy 28:58-61). Similarly, at the Lord's coming, there is no more death, sorrow, crying or pain (Revelation 21:4); these former things have passed away along with Satan (Revelation 20:10). It certainly seems like wherever Satan goes, misery, sickness and death follows. If one were to take away Satan, it would appear that sicknesses would go also. But then, what would be the role of the various strains of bacteria and viruses? At one time before the Fall, they had some good, useful purpose (Genesis 1:31). These are some good things to meditate on as we consider how great the Lord is and how much He's done for us.

Figure 1

Map of Decapolis and Nabatea¹⁸



¹⁸ © Bible History Online <http://www.bible-history.com>

HOLINESS

October 20, 2024
17th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision D

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

Today's Epistle lesson is not used at all in the Western lectionary for Sundays.

Word Study: Holiness versus Uncleanness

There are a number of different words in the Greek New Testament that speak of holiness and sacred things versus uncleanness, defilement and contamination. Table I lists some definitions of Greek words. There are five root words listed that have different forms (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) and different connotations (the state of, the quality of), etc. To get a practical understanding of these words, let us look at how the root word *hagios* is used in the New Testament.

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Hagios is used as the name for the Holy Spirit (*Hagion Pneuma*). The Lord Jesus is referred to using *hagios*: “the holy (*hagion*) thing being born (of Mary) will be called Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Some other uses of *hagios* are as follows:

HOLY THING, PERSON	SOME REFERENCES
The Holy Prophets	Luke 1:70, Acts 3:21, 2 Peter 3:2
The Holy Apostles	Ephesians 3:5
The Holy Scriptures	Romans 1:2
The Holy Angels	Matthew 25:31, Acts 10:22
Jerusalem (The Holy City)	Matthew 27:53, Revelation 11:2
New Jerusalem (The Holy City)	Revelation 21:2, 10; 22:19
Mosaic Law (the Holy Covenant, The Holy Commandment)	Luke 1:72, 2 Peter 2:21, Romans 7:12

TABLE I
Greek Words Describing Holiness & Defilement

GREEK WORD	DEFINITIONS	REFERENCE # IN STRONG'S DICTIONARY
HAGIOS	the saints or the sacred ones	40
AKATHARTOS	impure in the demonic sense	169
MOLUNA	to make black, to soil	3435

Quite opposed to *Hagios* is the word *Akathartos*. While *Hagios* is used for the Holy Spirit, the most prolific use¹⁹ of *Akathartos* is for “unclean” spirits (*akatharton pneuma*) that Jesus, the Twelve, the Seventy and others cast out of people. *Akathartos* is also used together with other words such as adultery, fornication, greediness, lewdness, covetousness, etc. For example:

- “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: fornication, uncleanness (*akatharsia*) lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, etc.” (Galatians 5:19).
- Those alienated from God because of hardness of heart have “given themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness (*akatharsias*) in greediness” (Ephesians 4:19).
- “But fornication and all uncleanness (*akatharsia*) or greediness, let it not be named among you” (Ephesians 5:3).
- “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness (*akatharsian*), passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5).
- The ungrateful, who professed to be wise and worshipped creation, “God gave them over in the desire of their hearts to uncleanness (*akatharsian*) to dishonor their bodies among them” (Romans 1:24).

Not as commonly used is the word *moluno*, which comes from the Greek word meaning black, and therefore means to blacken or make dirty. It’s only used four times in the New Testament; once²⁰ in our Epistle reading (2 Corinthians 7:1).

What is Belial?

The Epistle reading starts off with a series of contrasts:

righteousness	lawlessness
light	darkness
Christ	Belial
believers	unbelievers
temple of God	idols

What is Belial? Belial here is a word borrowed from Hebrew meaning worthless. It is used a number of times in the Old Testament as “son of Belial” or “man of Belial” usually translated

¹⁹ Matthew 10:1, 12:43; Mark 1:23-27; 3:11, 30; 5:2-13; 6:7; 7:25; Luke 4:33-36; Luke 6:18; 8:29; 9:42; 11:24; Acts 5:16, 8:7; Revelation 16:13, 18:2.

²⁰ The other three uses are 1 Corinthians 8:7, Revelation 3:4, 14:4.

“worthless one” or “worthless man”. But it goes deeper than just worthlessness. Solomon referred to a man of Belial (Proverbs 6:12) as one who devised evil continually, and spoke of seven abominations that the Lord hates that were characteristic of the men of Belial. (Proverbs 6:16-19):

- Haughty eyes
- A lying tongue
- Hands that shed innocent blood
- A heart that devises wicked plans
- Feet that run to evil
- A false witness who utters lies
- One who spreads strife among brothers

These characteristics go deeper than just worthlessness; they’re of demonic origin and imply *akathartos*. David stated that the only way to deal with men of Belial was with iron and the shaft of a spear (2 Samuel 23:6-7), probably because they can’t be trusted to do anything right. What agreement can Christ possibly have with Belial?

Ignatius of Antioch referred²¹ to the audacity of Satan as Belial, in that he has no sense of shame and he perfectly fits what David and Solomon called the men of Belial.

“If, therefore, you are trodden down under the feet of the Lord, how do you tempt Him that cannot be tempted, forgetting that precept of the lawgiver, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God?’ (Deuteronomy 6:16). You even dare, most accursed one, to appropriate the works of God to yourself, and to declare that the dominion over these was delivered to you (Luke 4:6). Do you set forth your own fall as an example to the Lord, and promise to give Him what is really His own, if He would fall down and worship you (Matthew 4:9). How do you not shudder, O spirit more wicked through your malevolence than all other wicked spirits, to utter such words against the Lord! Through your appetite you were overcome, and through your vainglory you were brought to dishonor; through avarice and ambition you now draw others to ungodliness. O Belial, dragon, apostate, crooked serpent, rebel against God, outcast from Christ, alien from the Holy Spirit, exile from the ranks of the angels, reviler of the laws of God, enemy of all that is lawful. You rose up against the first formed of men (Adam), and drove them from obedience to the commandment of God, those who had in no respect injured you. You raised up the murderous Cain against Abel; you took arms against Job; do you now say to the Lord, ‘If You will fall down and worship me?’ O, what audacity! O, what madness! O runaway slave, who always needs whipping; do you rebel against the good Lord?”

John Chrysostom stated²² that by using such contrasting terminology, Paul was not flattering the Corinthians, but was pointing out the dark side of some in their midst. This is serious enough that it can never be forgiven, and the Corinthians really need to address it.

“Paul did not say, ‘those who are of the light, and those who are of the darkness; but he uses opposites themselves which cannot admit of their opposites,

²¹ Ignatius of Antioch, Spurious Epistle to the Philippians, 11.

²² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIII, v. 14.

‘light and darkness.’ He didn’t say ‘those who are of Christ, with those who are of the devil’; but, what was far wider apart, Christ and Belial, so calling that apostate one, in the Hebrew tongue. Paul is not simply censuring vice and praising virtue; he mentions persons without particularizing.”

“Now what he says is this. Your King has nothing in common with him, ‘for what concord has Christ with Belial?’ Nor have the things anything in common, ‘for what communion has light with darkness?’ Therefore, neither should we. First, he mentions their king and then themselves; by this separating them most effectively. Then having said, ‘a temple of God with idols’, and having declared, ‘For you are a temple of the living God’, Paul is not flattering them. Having said ‘I will dwell in them’, as in temples, ‘and walk in them’, signifies the more abundant attachment of God to them.”

“Do you bear God within you and yet run to them (lawlessness, darkness, Belial, etc.)? God, who has nothing in common with them? And in what way can this deserve forgiveness? Bear in mind Who walks and Who dwells in you”

Continuing with the Old Testament Temple analogy, Paul quoted from Isaiah 52:11 which contains mixed images from the restored Old Testament Kingdom and the future coming of the Kingdom of God in glory. Referring to the contrasts (Christ - Belial), Paul used the words of Isaiah to encourage the Corinthians to “come out from among them and be separate. Do not touch anything unclean (*akathartos, i.e., demonic*) and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17). Paul is not re-imposing the Mosaic Law rituals regarding washings; he is warning against something sinister involved with being unequally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). Paul follows with a loose paraphrase of 2 Samuel 7:14 which speaks of the close relationship between King David and the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:18).

What Communion Has Light with Darkness?

Paul stated, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

The renowned monk Antony loathed²³ the heretic Arians and drove them away from the cave where he lived. When the Arians lied and said that Antony’s opinions were the same as theirs, he traveled to Alexandria and denounced them. He warned all the brethren to have no fellowship with the most impious Arians, since there is no communion between light and darkness.

“Antony was altogether wonderful in faith, for he never held communion with the Meletian schismatics, knowing their wickedness and apostasy from the beginning. He had no friendly dealings with the Manichaeans or any other heretics; or, if he had, only as far as advice that they should change to piety. He thought and asserted that intercourse with these was harmful and destructive to the soul. In the same manner, he loathed the heresy of the Arians, and exhorted all neither to approach them nor to bold their erroneous belief. Once when certain

²³

Athanasius of Alexandria, Life of St. Antony, 68-69.

Arian madmen came to him, when he had questioned them and learned their impiety, he drove them from the mountain, saying that their words were worse than the poison of serpents.”

“Once also the Arians lied and said that Antony’s opinions were the same as theirs; he was displeased and angry with them. Being summoned by the bishops and all the brethren, he descended from the mountain, entered Alexandria, and denounced the Arians, saying that their heresy was the last of all and a forerunner of Antichrist. He taught the people that the Son of God was not a created being, neither had He come into being from non-existence, but that He was the Eternal Word and Wisdom of the Essence of the Father. Therefore, it was impious to say, ‘there was a time when He was not’, for the Word was always co-existent with the Father. Therefore, have no fellowship with the most impious Arians. There is no communion between light and darkness. For you are good Christians, but they, when they say that the Son of the Father, the Word of God, is a created being, differ in no way from the heathen, since they worship that which is created, rather than God the creator. But believe that the Creation itself is angry with them because they number the Creator, the Lord of all, by whom all things came into being, with those things which were originated.”

I Will Dwell in Them!

Paul said, “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among *them*. I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

Paul makes these contrasts to say that we are the temple of the Living God. He then quotes from Ezekiel 37:26-27, which in turn refers to the restored Kingdom of God that lasts forever. “I will dwell in them” as one dwells in a Temple.

John Cassian documented²⁴ the Desert Fathers’ analogies of the conquest of Canaan as applied to our lives for cleansing. This “conquest” is applied to our hearts to drive out all the evil passions that live there, since there is no fellowship of light with darkness.

“We are asked for our good to take possession of the ‘countries’ of those most wicked nations; this may be understood in this way. Each fault has its own special corner in the heart, which it claims for itself in the recesses of the soul, and drives out Israel, which can be seen as the contemplation of holy and heavenly things, and never ceases to oppose them. For virtues cannot possibly live side by side with faults. ‘For what participation has righteousness with unrighteousness? Or what communion has light with darkness?’ (2 Corinthians 6:14). But as soon as these faults have been overcome by the people of Israel, i.e., by those virtues which war against them, then at once the place in our heart which the spirit of concupiscence and fornication had occupied, will be filled by chastity. That which wrath had held, will be claimed by patience. That which had been occupied by a sorrow that works death, will be taken by a godly sorrow and one full of joy. That which had been wasted by listlessness and laziness, will

²⁴

John Cassian, Conference of Abbot Serapion, I, v, 23.

at once be tilled by courage. That which pride had trodden down will be ennobled by humility. When each of these faults has been expelled, their places (that is the tendency towards them) will be filled by the opposite virtues which are aptly termed the children of Israel, that is, of the soul that sees God. When these have expelled all passions from the heart we may believe that they have recovered their own possessions rather than have invaded those of others.”

John Cassian further showed²⁵ that an unclean soul cannot receive or give spiritual things, since they do not proceed from the treasure of a good conscience. No one pours rich ointment or fine honey into a dirty vessel; the ointment or honey gets contaminated by the dirty vessel quicker than the vessel receives any sweetness from the content. This is because there is no communion of light with darkness.

“It is impossible for a novice either to understand or to teach spiritual knowledge. If one is incapable of receiving it how can he be fit to pass it on to another? If he has had the audacity to teach anything on these matters, most certainly his words will be idle and useless and only reach the ears of his hearers, without being able to touch their hearts. They will be uttered in sheer idleness and unfruitful vanity, for they do not proceed from the treasure of a good conscience, but from the empty impertinence of boastfulness. It is impossible for an impure soul (however earnestly it may devote itself to reading) to obtain spiritual knowledge. No one pours any rich ointment or fine honey or any precious liquid into a dirty and stinking vessel. For a jar that has once been filled with foul odors spoils the sweetest myrrh more readily than it receives any sweetness or grace from it, for what is pure is corrupted much more quickly than the corruptness is purified. The vessel of our bosom unless it has first been purified from all the foul stains of sin will not be worthy to receive that blessed ointment spoken by David. ‘Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments’ (Psalm 133:1-2). Nor will it keep undefiled that spiritual knowledge and the words of Scripture which are ‘sweeter than honey and the honeycomb’ (Psalm 19:9-10). ‘For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial?’” (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)

We Are the Temple of God!

Gregory of Nyssa pointed out²⁶ that we are a Temple of God with our body and soul. This ceases at our death when the soul is separated from the body. At the Resurrection, when our soul and body reunite, we will again be a Temple of God.

“Jesus said, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’ (John 2:19). Just as we, through soul and body, become a temple of Him Who said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’ (2 Corinthians 6:16), even so the Lord terms their combination a

²⁵ John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Nesteros, II, xiv, 14.

²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, II, 13.

‘temple’, of which the ‘destruction’ signifies the dissolution of the soul from the body. If the heretics allege the passage in the Gospel, ‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14), in order to make out that the flesh was taken into the Godhead without the soul, on the ground that the soul is not expressly mentioned along with the flesh, let them learn that it is customary for Holy Scripture to imply the whole by the part. For He that said, ‘O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come’ (Psalm 65:2), does not mean that the flesh will be presented before the Judge apart from the souls. When we read in sacred History that Jacob went down into Egypt with seventy²⁷ souls (Deuteronomy 10:22), we understand the flesh also to be intended together with the souls. So, then, the Word, when He became flesh, took with the flesh the whole of human nature. Hence it was possible that hunger and thirst, fear and dread, desire and sleep, tears and trouble of spirit, and all such things, were in Him. For the Godhead, in its proper nature, admits no such affections, nor is the flesh by itself involved in them, if the soul is not affected coordinately with the body.”

Ambrose of Milan stated²⁸ that creatures don’t have temples; only God has that. We are the Temple of God, not many Temples, but one Temple. We are not just the residence of the Holy Spirit, but also of the Father and the Son. He does not dwell in us as a priest or minister, but as God.

“You have read that the Holy Spirit has a temple. ‘Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?’ (1 Corinthians 3:16). Now God has a temple; a creature has no true temple. But the Spirit, Who dwells in us, has a temple. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

“But He does not dwell in the temple as a priest, nor as a minister, but as God, since the Lord Jesus Himself said: ‘I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people’ (Leviticus 26:12). David says: ‘The Lord is in His holy temple’ (Psalm 11:4). Therefore, the Spirit dwells in His holy temple, as the Father dwells and as the Son dwells. He says: ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him’” (John 14:23).

“But the Father abides in us through the Spirit, Whom He has given us. How, then, can different natures abide together? Certainly, it is impossible. But the Spirit abides with the Father and the Son. Paul joined the Communion of the Holy Spirit with the grace of Jesus Christ and the love of God, saying: ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all’” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

“We observe, then, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit abide in one through the oneness of the same nature. Therefore, He Who dwells in the temple has divine power, for as of the Father and of the Son, so are we also the

²⁷ In Acts 7:14, the Archdeacon Stephen said it was 75 souls. There may have been some servants included in the 75. Most translations refer to this as 70 “persons”, taking liberty with the text that says 70 souls. See also Genesis 46:27.

²⁸ Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, III, xii, 90-93.

temple of the Holy Spirit. We are not many temples, but one temple, for it is the temple of one Power.”

Cyril of Jerusalem encouraged²⁹ everyone not to be ignorant of the glory of chastity. Because the Lord dwells in us, the crown of chastity is angelic and its excellence is above man. Since our bodies will shine as the sun, let us not defile it with momentary pleasure.

“Let us all by God’s grace run the race of chastity, ‘Praise the Lord from the earth, young men and maidens, old men and children’ (Psalm 148:12); not going after wantonness, but praising the name of Christ. Let us not be ignorant of the glory of chastity; for its crown is angelic, and its excellence above man. Let us be circumspect of our bodies which are to shine as the sun; let us not for short pleasure defile so great, so noble a body. Short and momentary is the sin, but the shame for many years and forever. Angels walking upon earth are they who practice chastity; the Virgins have their portion with Mary the Virgin. Let all vain ornament be banished, and every hurtful glance, and all wanton gait, and every flowing robe, and perfume enticing to pleasure. But in all for perfume let there be the prayer of sweet odor, and the practice of good works, and the sanctification of our bodies. That the Virgin-born Lord may say even of us, both men who live in chastity and women who wear the crown, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

Come Out from Among Them!

Paul said, “As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among *them*. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’. Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate’, says the Lord. ‘Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’” (2 Corinthians 6:16-17).

John Chrysostom elaborated³⁰ on why we need to avoid evil men. It’s like having a limb that has gangrene; the whole body may die if the limb is not amputated. Evil men can subvert a good man quicker than bubonic plague can affect a town. Even if we are not injured by evil men, we still won’t escape, since people judge us by the company we keep. If people who don’t know us see us keeping company with evil men, they may be offended and keep company with evil men themselves and lose their salvation as a result. We will have to answer for this at Judgment Day.

“These things I say, that we may shun wicked men, and follow the good. If we amputate a limb when it is rotten and incurable, fearing lest the rest of the body should catch the same disease, how much more must we do this in the case of those who consent with us for evil? If we can set them right without receiving injury ourselves, we ought to use every means to do so; but if they remain incorrigible and may injure us, it is necessary to cut them off and cast them away. Doing so, they will often be gainers rather than losers. Paul exhorted, ‘Those who are outside God judges. Therefore, put away from yourselves the evil person’ (1 Corinthians 5:13); and, ‘You are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you’ (1 Corinthians

²⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XII, 34.

³⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LVII, 3.

5:2). A dreadful thing, dreadful indeed, is the society of wicked men. The pestilence seizes and the itch infects those that come in contact with those under the disease, not nearly as quickly as does the wickedness of evil men. For ‘Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits’ (1 Corinthians 15:33). And Isaiah said, ‘Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean *thing*; go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord’ (Isaiah 52:11). Let no one then have a wicked man for his friend. When we have bad sons, we publicly disclaim them; much more ought we to fly from our companions and acquaintances when they are wicked. Even if we receive no injury from them, we shall not be able to escape ill report, for strangers search not into our lives, but judge us from our companions. This advice I address to young men and maidens. ‘Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men’ (Romans 12:17). Let us then use every means that our neighbor be not offended. For a life, though it be very upright, if it offends others has lost everything. But how is it possible for the life that is upright to offend? When the society of those that are not upright invests it with an evil reputation! When, trusting in ourselves, we consort with bad men, even though we are not harmed, we offend others. These things I say to men, women and maidens, leaving it to their conscience to see exactly how many evils are produced from this source. Neither I, nor any of the more perfect, may suspect anything evil. But the simpler brother may be harmed by occasion of your perfection; and you ought to be careful also for his infirmity. Even if he receives no injury, yet the Greek is harmed. Now Paul asks us to ‘Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God’” (1 Corinthians 10:32).

Tertullian pointed out³¹ how the Apostles came out from the midst of the synagogue and its uncleanness. This was predicted in the Psalms and was fulfilled by the early Church, where the uncleanness of the synagogue stemmed from its rejection of Christ and its plotting against Him.

“You have the work of the apostles also predicted, ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings the gospel of peace, Who brings glad tidings of good *things*, Who proclaims salvation’ (Isaiah 52:7, Romans 10:15), not of war nor evil tidings. In response to which is the psalm, ‘Their voice is gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world’ (Psalm 19:5 LXX). These are the words of those who carry round about the Law that proceeded from Sion and the Lord’s Word from Jerusalem, in order that that might come to pass which was written: ‘They who were far from my righteousness, have come near to my righteousness and truth’ (Isaiah 46:12-13). When the apostles girded their loins for this business, they renounced the elders, rulers and priests of the Jews. This was above all things that they might preach the very selfsame God, whose scripture they were with all their might fulfilling! ‘Depart! Depart! Go out from there; touch no unclean *thing*’, that is blasphemy against Christ. ‘Go out from the midst of her’, even of the synagogue. ‘Separate yourselves, you that bear the vessels of the Lord’ (Isaiah 52:11). For already had the Lord, according to the preceding words (of the prophet), revealed His Holy

³¹ Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 3, 22.

One with His arm, that is to say, Christ by His mighty power, in the eyes of the nations, so that all the universe and the utmost parts of the earth have seen the salvation, which was from God. By thus departing from Judaism, when they exchanged the obligations and burdens of the law for the liberty of the gospel, they were fulfilling the psalm. ‘Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast away their yoke from us’ (Psalm 2:3); and this indeed they did. After that ‘the nations raged, and the people plotted vain things’ (Acts 4:25); after that ‘the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered themselves together against the Lord, and against His Christ’ (Psalm 2:2). What did the apostles thereupon suffer? Your answer: Every sort of iniquitous persecution, from men that belonged to that person who was the adversary of Him whom they were preaching.”

Athanasius of Alexandria compared³² the followers of the 4th century heretic Arius with the 1st century heretics Philetus and Hymenaeus. Paul had to deliver Philetus and Hymenaeus over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh in order to teach them not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:20). Because all of these are polluted and unclean, they are not able to celebrate the Paschal Feast with the Church.

“We speak of two things: faith and godliness — the hope is the same, everlasting life; for Paul said, ‘Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life’ (1 Timothy 6:12). And, ‘Exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come’ (1 Timothy 4:7-8). For this cause, the Ario-maniacs³³, who now have gone out from the Church, being opponents of Christ, have dug a pit of unbelief, into which they themselves have been thrust. Since they have advanced in ungodliness, they use ‘smooth words and flattering speech to deceive the hearts of the simple’ (Romans 16:18). Blaspheming the Son of God, they say that He is a creature, and that He has His being from things which are not. But as then against the adherents of Philetus and Hymenaeus³⁴, so now the Apostle forewarns all men against ungodliness like theirs, saying, ‘The solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His”, and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity”’ (2 Timothy 2:19). For it is well that a man should depart from wickedness and deeds of iniquity, that he may be able properly to celebrate the feast. For he who is defiled with the pollutions of the wicked is not able to sacrifice the Passover to the Lord our God. Hence, the people who were then in Egypt said, ‘We cannot sacrifice the Passover in Egypt to the Lord our God’ (Exodus 8:26). For God, Who is over all, willed that they should go far away from the servants of Pharaoh, and from the furnace of iron (Deuteronomy 4:20). So that being set free from wickedness, and having carefully put away from them all strange notions, they might receive the knowledge of God and of virtuous actions. For He said, ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’ (2 Corinthians 6:17). For a

³² Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XI, 10.

³³ This is the term that Athanasius used for the Arians to indicate that he thinks that their logic is crazy.

³⁴ Philetus and Hymenaeus were at one-time apostles and companions of the Apostle Paul; however, they apostatized to follow the arch heretic Simon Magus. See 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18. For further details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2004, pp. 58-59.

man will not otherwise depart from sin, and lay hold on virtuous deeds than by meditation on his acts. When he has been practiced by exercise in godliness, he will lay hold on the confession of faith. Paul, after he had fought the fight, possessed, the crown of righteousness which was laid up; which the righteous Judge will give, not to him alone, but to all who are like him” (2 Timothy 4:8).

John Cassian encouraged the people of Constantinople to separate themselves from the arch heretic Nestorius³⁵, who had just been deposed as Patriarch of Constantinople. Cassian warned the people to come out from the midst of the Nestorians and don't touch the unclean things that he is saying. Instead Cassian encouraged the people to listen to the teachings of the patriarchs prior to Nestorius.

“As Paul says, when the smaller part of the body is grieved, the greater part grieves and sympathizes with it (1 Corinthians 12:26), how much more should the smaller part sympathize when the greater part is grieved? It is indeed utterly inhuman for the smaller parts not to feel the sufferings of the greater in one and the same body, if the greater feel those of the smaller. Therefore, I pray and beseech you, you who live within the circuit of Constantinople, and who are my fellow-citizens through the love of my country, and my brothers through the unity of the faith. Separate yourselves from that ravening wolf ‘who eats up my people *as* they eat bread, and do not call on the Lord’ (Psalm 14:4). ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle’ (Colossians 2:21) anything of his, for all those things lead to death. ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean’ (2 Corinthians 6:17). Remember your ancient teachers, and your priests; Gregory³⁶ whose fame was spread through the world, Nectarius³⁷ renowned for holiness, John³⁸ a marvel of faith and purity. John, I say; like John the Evangelist who was indeed a disciple of Jesus and an Apostle; and reclined on the breast and heart of the Lord. Remember him. Follow him. Think of his purity, his faith, his doctrine, and holiness. Remember him always as your teacher and nurse, in whose bosom and embraces you grew up. He was the teacher in common both of you and of me, whose disciples and pupils we are. Read his writings. Hold fast his instruction. Embrace his faith and merits. For though to attain this is a hard and magnificent thing: yet even to follow is beautiful and sublime. For in the highest matters, not merely the attainment, but even the attempt to copy is worthy of praise.”

Cleansing Ourselves

³⁵ Nestorius taught that Jesus was two persons, one divine, one human. His heresy was debunked at the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431 AD and again at the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 AD.

³⁶ That is, Gregory the Theologian, who was Patriarch of Constantinople up to 381 AD.

³⁷ That is Nectarius, who was Patriarch of Constantinople from 381 to 397 AD.

³⁸ That is, John Chrysostom, who was Patriarch of Constantinople from 398 to 404 AD, and who was exiled by the empress Eudoxia, causing Chrysostom's death en route. Chrysostom angered Eudoxia by his criticism of her morals, and stating that Eudoxia, like Herodias (Matthew 14:1-11), was asking for the head of John (himself) on a platter.

Paul said, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

What does being “clean” mean? It has nothing to do with dirt on the flesh; instead it is a spiritual dimension regarding how one relates to God. This can be illustrated by the definition of clean versus unclean animals that are capable of being offered as a sacrifice under the Old Covenant. As Christians, we are all sacrifices, as Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*” (Romans 12:1).

Clement of Alexandria pointed out³⁹ the meaning of clean versus unclean animals, and who these animals refer to. Clean animals part the hoof and ruminate; these are those who study the oracles of God and ruminate on them in the soul’s receptacle for instructions. Those that ruminate but don’t part the hoof are the Jews, who have the oracles of God, but don’t have the twofold support of faith and are apt to slip. Those that part the hoof but don’t ruminate are the heretics who go by the Name of the Father and the Son, but are incapable of grinding down the clear declaration of the oracles.

“We can contemplate the Church from the law of sacrifices respecting clean and unclean animals. In this way the common Jews and the heretics are distinguished mystically from the divine Church. For such of the sacrifices as part the hoof, and ruminate, the Scripture represents as clean and acceptable to God (Leviticus 11); since the just obtain access to the Father and to the Son by faith. For this is the stability of those who part the hoof, those who study the oracles of God night and day, and ruminate them in the soul’s receptacle for instructions. The Law expresses this under the figure of the rumination of the clean animal. But such as have neither the one nor the other of those qualities it separates as unclean.”

“Those that ruminate, but do not part the hoof, indicate the majority of the Jews, who have indeed the oracles of God, but have not faith, and the step which, resting on the truth, conveys to the Father by the Son. This kind of cattle are apt to slip, not having a division in the foot, and not resting on the twofold support of faith. For ‘no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him’ (Luke 10:22). Those also are likewise unclean that part the hoof, but do not ruminate⁴⁰. This refers to the heretics, who indeed go upon the name of the Father and the Son, but are incapable of grinding down the clear declaration of the oracles. And besides, they perform the works of righteousness coarsely and not with precision, if they perform them at all. To such the Lord says, ‘Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?’ (Luke 6:46). Those that neither part the hoof nor chew the cud are entirely unclean.”

³⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VII, 18.

⁴⁰ Such as the swine, which parts the hoof, but doesn’t ruminate.

John Cassian wrote⁴¹ that pride is connected to uncleanness. When people get puffed up, they are given over to confusion and delusion that they might see their impure desires and their uncleanness. People usually don't see this coming.

“He who is puffed up with pride, and has permitted himself to be worshipped as God, is ‘given over to vile passions and a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting’ (Romans 1:26-28). Because, ‘everyone that is proud in heart is unclean before God’ (Proverbs 16:5 LXX). He who is puffed up with swelling pride of heart is given over to most shameful confusion to be deluded by it, that when thus humbled he may know that he is unclean through impurity of the flesh and knowledge of impure desires. This was a thing which he had refused to recognize in the pride of his heart. The shameful infection of the flesh may disclose the hidden impurity of the heart, which he contracted through the sin of pride, and that through the patent pollution of his body he may be proved to be impure. He did not formerly see that he had become unclean through the pride of his spirit.”

“This clearly shows that every soul of which the swellings of pride have taken possession, is given over to spiritual wickedness. It is entangled in the lusts of the flesh, that the soul being at last humbled by earthly faults, and carnally polluted, may recognize its uncleanness. While it stood erect in the coldness of its heart, it could not understand that through pride of heart it was rendered unclean in the sight of God. By this means, being humbled, a man may get rid of his former coldness. Being cast down and confused with the shame of his fleshly lusts, he may from then on hasten more eagerly towards fervor and warmth of spirit.”

John Cassian recorded⁴² the words of Abbot Theonas of the Desert Fathers saying that all the saints realized that they and the people around them were unclean. But they trusted in the grace and mercy of the Lord. They look for full justification, but they do not hope that they can achieve this by their own human frailty.

“With daily sighs all the saints grieve over this weakness of their nature and while they search into their shifting thoughts and the secrets and inmost recesses of their conscience, cry out: ‘Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous’ (Psalm 143:2). And this: ‘Who can say, “I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?”’ (Proverbs 20:9); and again: ‘There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin’ (Ecclesiastes 7:20). So, they have recognized that man’s righteousness is weak and imperfect and always needs God’s mercy. Consider Isaiah, whose iniquities and sins God purged away with the live coal of His word sent from the altar, after that marvelous vision of God, after his view of the Seraphim on high and the revelation of heavenly mysteries. ‘Woe is me, for I am pricked to the heart; for being a man, and having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people having unclean lips’ (Isaiah 6:5 LXX). I fancy that perhaps even then he would not have felt the uncleanness of his lips, unless it had been given him to recognize the true and complete purity of perfection by the vision of God. At the sight of

⁴¹ John Cassian, Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia, XII, 21-22.

⁴² John Cassian, Third Conference of Abbot Theonas, III, xxiii, 17.

God, he suddenly became aware of his own uncleanness, of which he had previously been ignorant. When he says: ‘Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips’, he shows that his confession that follows refers to his own lips, and not to the uncleanness of the people. But even when in his prayer he confesses the uncleanness of all sinners, he embraces in his general supplication not only the mass of the wicked but also of the good, saying: ‘Behold You were angry and we have sinned; therefore, we have erred, and we are all become as unclean, and all our righteousness as a filthy rag’ (Isaiah 64:5-6). What, I ask, could be clearer than this saying, in which the prophet includes not one only but all our righteousness. Looking around on all things that are considered unclean and disgusting, because he could find nothing in the life of men fouler or more unclean, chose to compare them to filthy rags⁴³”.

“Though he says here that the saints have sinned, and have not only sinned but also have always remained in their sins, he does not altogether despair of salvation, but adds: ‘You are indeed angry, for we have sinned. In these ways we continue; and we need to be saved’ (Isaiah 64:5). I will compare that to Paul: ‘O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!’” (Romans 7:24)

“You see then how all the saints with truth confess not so much in the person of the people as in their own that they are sinners, and yet by no means despair of their salvation. They look for full justification, which they do not hope that they can obtain by virtue of the state of human frailty, but from the grace and mercy of the Lord.”

To fight the spiritual warfare, Paul concludes “let us cleanse (*katharia*, the opposite of *akathartos*) ourselves from all filthiness (*moluno* or blackening, staining) of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (*hagiosune* as in the saints) in the fear of God” (7:1). Chrysostom pointed out that Paul did not say to avoid intermixing with unbelievers, but to avoid being yoked with them.

Another example of cleansing of heart and soul in order to appear before God is the example of Israel at Mt. Sinai. To prepare to hear the words of the Law spoken by a Holy God, the people needed to prepare to become a kingdom of priests by:

- Washing their clothes
- Fasting from sex
- Consecration by Moses

Anyone, man or beast, that touched the holy mountain that the Lord God came down on was to be put to death (Exodus 19:10-15).

“Cleansing” is amplified by the Apostle John (1 John 2:4-6, 3:1-3): “He who says he abides in Him ought to walk as He walked” (1 John 2:6). This world does not know us because it didn’t know Him (1 John 3:1, John 1:10). That’s why we separate ourselves. The world won’t have anything to do with us; we’ll just get blackened or dirtied by the world.

While we are in the world, we, like Christ and the Holy Spirit, are not of the world. We are made holy or sanctified (Greek: *hagiazō*) by the Word, which is Truth (John 17:14-19). By contrast, what the world offers is lawlessness, darkness, worthlessness, and delusion. As Ezekiel put it: “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols” (Ezekiel 36:24-25). The whole point of the Mosaic Law’s focus on clean vs. unclean was not to exclude Gentiles but to focus on holiness and avoid the filthiness of demons and idols. Seen in this light, the Mosaic Law really makes sense.

John Chrysostom compared⁴⁴ physical warfare in his day to the invisible warfare that the demons wage against us. Physical warfare is like child’s play in comparison. When a soul gets wounded by the demons, it is then tormented and gnawed on, since the demons have an implacable hatred against the human race. Savage beasts are meek and quiet compared to the activity of the demons in their warfare against us. To survive this invisible warfare, we need protection by the providential care of God.

“We are shut up in this body, as in some prison house, and are unable to see anything of the invisible world. If we could, we would see a far greater and more formidable conflict than any visible battle we could ever behold: the devil’s most gloomy battle array, and his frantic onset. There is no brass or iron there. No horses, chariots or wheels, no fire and arrows. These are visible things. But there are other much more fearful engines than these used in war. In fighting against these enemies, one does not need breastplate, shield, sword and spear; yet just the sight of this accursed array is enough to paralyze the soul, unless it happens to be very noble. We need a high degree of protection of our own courage from the providential care of God. If it were possible to see clearly and fearlessly with the naked eye the whole of his battle array, and his warfare against us, you would see no torrents of blood, no dead bodies, but so many fallen souls. There would be such disastrous wounds that the whole of physical warfare, you would think to be mere child’s sport and pastime rather than war. So many are smitten every day in the invisible warfare; the wounds in the two cases do not bring about the same death, but as great as is the difference between the soul from the body, so great is the difference between that death and this. For when the soul receives a wound, and falls, it does not lie as a lifeless body, but it is then tormented, being gnawed by an evil conscience. After its removal from this life, at the time of judgment, it is delivered over to eternal punishment; and if anyone is without grief with regard to the wounds given by the devil, his danger becomes greater because of his insensitivity. Whoever is not pained by the first wound, will readily receive a second, and after that a third. The unclean spirit will not cease assaulting to the last breath, whenever he finds a soul indifferent to his first wounds. If you inquire into the method of attack, you would find this much more severe and varied. For no one ever knew so many forms of craft and deceit as that unclean spirit. By this, he has acquired the greater part of his power, nor can anyone have so implacable a hatred against his worst enemies as the evil one has against the human race. If anyone asks about the vehemence with which he

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John Chrysostom, Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood, VI, 13.

fights, here again it would be ludicrous to bring men into comparison with him. If anyone chooses out the fiercest and most savage of beasts, and is minded to compare their fury against his, he will find that savage beasts were meek and quiet in comparison. Such rage does he breathe forth when he attacks our souls. The period of visible warfare is brief, and there are respites; for the approach of the night and the fatigue of slaughter, meal-times also, and many other things, afford a respite to the soldier. He can doff his armor and breathe a little, and refresh himself with food and drink, and in many other ways recover his former strength. But in the case of the evil one it is not possible ever to lay aside one's armor, it is not possible even to sleep, if one would remain always unscathed. For one of two things must happen: either to fall and perish unarmed, or to stand equipped and ever watchful. For he always stands with his own battle array, watching for our indolence, and laboring more zealously for our destruction, than we for our salvation."

John Cassian quotes⁴⁵ Abbot Serenus, one of the Desert Fathers, in pointing out how a man becomes unclean from the operations of the demons. The demons can't unite themselves to a man's soul – only God can do that – but they can overpower the weakness of our bodies just like wine or fever can. When a man is overpowered in this way, he may do things that he is not aware of and not remember afterward what happened.

"A spirit can be imperceptibly joined with a spirit, and exercise an unseen power of persuasion toward what is allowed to it. There is between them, just as between men, some sort of similarity and kinship of substance, since the description which is given of the nature of the soul, applies equally well to their substance. But it is impossible for spirits to be implanted in spirits inwardly or united with them in such a way that one can hold the other; for this is the true prerogative of Deity alone, which is the only simple and incorporeal nature."

"Those possessed by unclean spirits sometimes say and do what they do not want to, and are forced to utter what they don't know; for it is perfectly clear that they are not subject to the entrance of the spirits all in the same way. Some are affected by them in such a way as to have not the slightest conception of what they do and say, while others know and afterwards recollect it. But we must not imagine that this is done by the infusion of the spirit in such a way that it penetrates into the actual substance of the soul and, being as it were united to it and somehow clothed with it, utters words and sayings through the mouth of the sufferer. We ought not to believe that this can possibly be done by them. For we can clearly see that this results from no loss of the soul but from weakness of the body. The unclean spirit can seize on those members in which the vigor of the soul resides, and can lay on them an enormous and intolerable weight to overwhelm it with foulest darkness, and interfere with its intellectual powers. This sometimes happen also from the fault of wine and fever or excessive cold, and other indispositions affecting men from outside the body. It was this which the devil was forbidden to attempt to inflict on the blessed Job, though he had received power over his flesh. The Lord commanded him saying: 'Behold, I give

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John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Serenus, I, vii, 10-13.

him into your hands: only preserve⁴⁶ his soul' (Job 2:6). That is, do not weaken the seat of his soul and make him mad, and overpower the understanding and wisdom of what remains, by smothering the ruling power in his heart with your weight."

"Even if spirit is mingled with this solid matter, that is, flesh, should we therefore believe that it can be united to the soul, which is in like manner spirit, in such a way as to make it also receptive in the same way of its own nature? This thing is possible to the Trinity alone, which is so capable of pervading every intellectual nature, that it cannot only embrace and surround it but even insert itself into it and, incorporeal though it is, be infused into a body! We maintain that some spiritual natures exist, such as angels, archangels and the other powers, and indeed our own souls; yet we ought certainly not to consider them incorporeal. They have in their own fashion a body in which they exist, though it is much finer than our bodies are, in accordance with Paul's words when he says: '*There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another*' (1 Corinthians 15:40). Again: '*It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body*' (1 Corinthians 15:44); from which it is clearly gathered that there is nothing incorporeal but God alone. Therefore, it is only by Him that all spiritual and intellectual substances can be pervaded, because He alone is whole and everywhere and in all things, in such a way as to behold and see the thoughts of men and their inner movements and all the recesses of the soul. It was of Him alone that Paul spoke when he said: '*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*' (Hebrews 4:12-13). And David says: '*Who fashions their hearts one by one*' (Psalm 33:15); and again: '*For He knows the secrets of the heart*' (Psalm 44:22); and Job too: '*For You alone know the hearts of men*'" (2 Chronicles 6:30).

Justin Martyr pointed out⁴⁷ to Trypho, a Jewish philosopher, that the gifts that used to be present with Israel are now present within the Church, both good as in the prophets, and bad as in false teachers and false prophets. Just like Israel, this meant that the Church was required to cleanse itself in order to maintain these gifts, which meant both warnings to the wicked and living a holy life.

"The prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. You should understand that the gifts formerly among your nation have been transferred to us. Just as there were false prophets contemporaneous with your holy prophets, so there are now many false teachers among us, of whom our Lord forewarned us to beware. In no respect are we deficient, since we know that He foreknew all that would happen to us after His resurrection from the dead and ascension to

⁴⁶ Many English translations say "preserve his life". But that is the translator taking liberty with the Greek word "*psuche*", which means breath or soul.

⁴⁷ Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 82.

heaven. He said we would be put to death, and hated for His name's sake; and that many false prophets and false Christs would appear in His name, and deceive many: and so, has it come about. Many have taught godless, blasphemous and unholy doctrines, forging them in His name. They are still teaching those things, and these teachings proceed from the unclean spirit of the devil, and were put into their hearts. Therefore, we are most anxious that you be persuaded not to be misled by such persons, since we know that everyone who can speak the truth, and yet speaks it not, shall be judged by God. God testified by Ezekiel, 'I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. When I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die", and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul' (Ezekiel 3:17-19). On this account we are, through fear, very earnest in desiring to speak with men according to the Scriptures, but not from love of money, glory or pleasure. For no man can convict us of any of these vices. No more do we wish to live like the rulers of your people, whom God reproaches when He says, 'Your princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards' (Isaiah 1:23). Now, if you know certain among us to be of this sort, do not for their sakes blaspheme the Scriptures and Christ, and do not strive to give falsified interpretations."

Perfecting Holiness

Paul stated, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Since we are in the world, but not of the world (John 15:19, 17:14; 1 John 4:4-6, 3:1), seeking holiness is a continual process.

John Chrysostom pointed out⁴⁸ that the Scriptures apply the term "holiness" to both God, the angels and us. However, holiness for us is not the same as the holiness of God or the angels, just as holiness in the Old Testament was not the same as it is with us today. Old Testament holiness meant little more than being free from idolatry; we are called to a higher standard.

"If one considers the character of the holiness, what the first was and what the second, he will find there is a great difference. In the Old Testament, when they did not worship idols, commit fornication or adultery, they were called holy. But we become holy, not by refraining from these vices merely, but by acquiring things greater. This gift we obtain first by means of the coming upon us of the Holy Spirit; and next, by a rule of life far more comprehensive than that of the Jews. To prove that these words are not mere boasting, listen to what He said to them, 'You shall not use divination, nor cause your children to pass through the fire; you shall be blameless before the Lord' (Deuteronomy 18:10-13). So that holiness with them consisted in being free from the customs of idolatry'; but it is

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John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIV, 2.

not so with us. ‘That she may be holy both in body and in spirit’ (1 Corinthians 7:34). ‘Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord’ (Hebrews 12:14); and, ‘Perfecting holiness in the fear of God’ (2 Corinthians 7:1). For the word ‘holy’ does not have the same force to give the same meaning in every case to which it is applied; since God is called ‘Holy’, though not as we are. What, for instance, does Isaiah say, when he heard that cry raised by the flying Seraphim? ‘Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips’ (Isaiah 6:5). Though he was holy and clean; but if we are compared with the holiness which is above, we are unclean. Angels are holy; Archangels are holy; the Cherubim and Seraphim themselves are holy. Of this holiness there is a double difference; that is, in relation to us, and to the higher powers.”

John Chrysostom stated⁴⁹ that just avoiding unclean things does not make one automatically clean. True holiness is freedom from every kind of sin, including vainglory, and the manner in which holiness is perfected is important. Alms-giving is very helpful in this regard, provided it is not done out of pride.

“Let us neither touch unclean things, for this is cleansing of the flesh; nor things which defile the soul, for this is cleansing of the spirit. Yet Paul is not content with this only, but adds, ‘Perfecting holiness in the fear of God’ (2 Corinthians 7:1). Not to touch the unclean thing does not make one clean, something else is needed besides for us to become holy: earnestness, heedfulness, piety. Paul said it well, ‘In the fear of God’. For it is possible to perfect chasteness, not in the fear of God but for vainglory. Along with this he implies yet another thing, by saying, ‘In the fear of God’; the manner, by which holiness may be perfected. For if lust is an arrogant thing, if you occupy its territory with the fear of God, you have halted its frenzy. Now by holiness here Paul means not chastity alone, but the freedom from every kind of sin, for he is holy that is pure. Now one will become pure, not if he is free from fornication only, but if from covetousness also, and envy, pride and vainglory. This is especially true regarding vainglory, which one needs to avoid in everything. If alms-giving includes vainglory, it will also include display and cruelty. For when you don’t do it out of mercy, but from pride, such a deed is not only not alms but even an insult; for you have put your brother to open shame. Just the giving of money is not almsgiving, but the giving it out of mercy.”

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIII, v. 1.

