God’s Psychiatry

Healing for Your Troubled Heart

Dr. Charles L. Allen
To my father
The late Reverend J. R. Allen

And to my mother
Lula Franklin Allen
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The Healing of Mind and Soul

Our modern word *psychiatry* comes from the two Greek words ψυχή (psyche) and ἰατρεία (iatreia): *psychiatreia*. The word psyche really means the person, and is variously translated as “breath,” “soul,” “mind,” “reason,” and the like.

The word *iatreia* means “treatment,” “healing,” “restoring,” and the like.

So, put the two words together and we have “the healing of the mind,” or, as David might have said, “the restoring of the soul.”

The word can mean medical treatment, or the treatment by a physician, but that is only one of its meanings, and I feel that the science of psychiatry is not to be limited to the medical profession. Often the minister is a psychiatrist, because he deals not only with the minds of people but also with their souls.

In fact, the very essence of religion is to adjust the mind and soul of man, and we have long ago learned, as in this book I quote Augustine as saying, “My soul is restless until it finds its rest in Thee, O God.” Healing means bringing the

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person into a right relationship with the physical, mental, and spiritual laws of God.

The physician is a minister of God. All true scientific research is merely an organized effort to learn the laws of God and how they operate.

The teacher is also a minister of God. The teacher seeks to train the mind, to seek truth and know truth when it is found. A mind which thinks error is a sick mind. So a teacher is practicing part of the great science of psychiatry.

Beyond our bodies and minds are our souls. The minister is concerned with man’s soul; he believes that if his soul is sick the man is sick, indeed. And only God can heal the soul.

So, the first and most important psychiatry must be God’s psychiatry, the essence of which I find contained in the four best known passages of the Bible: the Twenty-third Psalm, the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes.

As the pastor of a church located on a main thoroughfare in Atlanta, it has been my privilege to counsel with many people who needed help. As a result of writing a daily column for The Atlanta Constitution and speaking regularly for some years over WSB radio and WSB-TV, my mail has brought me many letters from people telling me of their problems. I have not yet found one in need of the healing of his or her mind or situation where I have not also found that somewhere back down the line in that life one of the basic principles that I write about in this book was violated. So I say that most of all we need God’s psychiatry.

In this small volume I have not concerned myself so much with cases or techniques as I did in two earlier books—Roads to Radiant Living and In Quest of God’s Power. Instead, I have sought here to explain the great principles that God has ordained to govern the life of man, believing, as I do, that if man lives according to these principles, his life will be whole.
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and healthy. If he violates them, he will be sick. As someone has put it:

He who formed our frame,
    Made man a perfect whole;
And made the body’s health
    Depend upon the soul.

There are many to whom I would like to express deep appreciation. To the members of the Grace Methodist Church in Atlanta, whose love and loyal support are far greater than I deserve; to my secretary, Mrs. Charles T. Moss, who not only is efficient but also is kind and understanding and loyal; to my assistant, Miss Mary Hogan, who daily does much work that I should be doing and thereby allows me more time for my study and speaking engagements; to my lovely wife, Leila, who continues to love me, though I give so much of my time to my work and to other people.

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PART I

How to Think of God
The Twenty-third Psalm

The LORD is my shepherd: I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.
A man I admire very much came in to see me. Many years ago he started with his company at the bottom but with determination to get to the top. He has unusual abilities and energy, and he used all he had. Today he is president of his company and he has all the things that go with his position.

Yet, along the way, he left out something, and one of the things he did not achieve is happiness. He was a nervous, tense, worried, and sick man. Finally, one of his physicians suggested that he talk with a minister.

We talked of how his physicians had given him prescriptions and he had taken them. Then I took a sheet of paper and wrote out my prescription for him. I prescribed the Twenty-third Psalm, five times a day for seven days.

I insisted that he take it just as I prescribed. He was to read it the first thing when he awakened in the morning. Read it carefully, meditatively, and prayerfully. Immediately after breakfast, he was to do exactly the same thing. Also immediately
How to Think of God

after lunch, again after dinner, and, finally, the last thing before he went to bed.

It was not to be a quick, hurried reading. He was to think about each phrase, giving his mind time to soak up as much of the meaning as possible. At the end of just one week, I promised, things would be different for him.

That prescription sounds simple, but really it isn’t. The Twenty-third Psalm is one of the most powerful pieces of writing in existence, and it can do marvelous things for any person. I have suggested this to many people, and in every instance which I know of it being tried it has produced results. It can change your life in seven days.

One man told me that he did not have time to be bothered with reading it during the day, so he just read it five times in the morning. However, when a physician prescribed a medicine after each meal, or every certain number of hours, no right-thinking person would take the full day’s dose at one time.

Some have told me that after two or three days they felt they knew it sufficiently, and thus, instead of taking time to read it thoughtfully, they would just think about it through the day. That won’t work. To be most effective it must be taken exactly as prescribed.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “A man is what he thinks about all day long.” Marcus Aurelius said, “A man’s life is what his thoughts make it.” Norman Vincent Peale says, “Change your thoughts and you change your world.” The Bible says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

The Twenty-third Psalm is a pattern of thinking, and when a mind becomes saturated with it, a new way of thinking and a new life are the result. It contains only 118 words. One could memorize it in a short time. In fact, most of us already know it. But its power is not in memorizing the words, but rather in thinking the thoughts.
A Pattern of Thinking

The power of this psalm lies in the fact that it represents a positive, hopeful, faith approach to life. We assume it was written by David, the same David who had a black chapter of sin and failure in his life. But he spends no time in useless regret and morbid looking back.

David possesses the same spirit that Saint Paul expresses: “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark” (Phil. 3:13), or the spirit of our Lord when He said, “Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

Take it as I prescribe, and in seven days a powerful new way of thinking will be deeply and firmly implanted within your mind that will bring marvelous changes in your thinking and give you a new life.