

**CURRICULUM FOR EDUCATING  
INFANTS WHO ARE CALLED TO THE  
RANK OF PRIESTHOOD: NECESSARY  
AND USEFUL ADVICE WRITTEN BY  
LORD ARAK'EL, BISHOP OF SIWNIK',  
AND GRIGOR [OF TAT'EW], THE  
GREAT RHETOR**

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Lord Arak'el (c.1356-c.1422), the Bishop of Siwnik', and his maternal uncle, Grigor Tat'ewac'i (1346-1409), the Great Rhetor, underscore the important role of parents to nurture faith in their children—especially parents of those children with a calling to serve as ordained ministers of the Lord. The two Church Fathers composed guidelines in the form of a curriculum and offered guidance for parents educating such children dedicated to the priesthood. For these children, spiritual enrichment and religious education must not simply be a part of their lives, but the very center of it.

The title of the document, as it appears above, must be derivative, since it incorporates the names of the co-authors and employs two words in conjunction not found in the text: *Noracæneal mankanç'*, literally, "of newborn children." The translation of the latter as "infants" is but a convention that is true to the contents of the text. As for the translated text, it is part of the *Mec Maštoc*.<sup>1</sup>

Raising children has, throughout human history, been a social and cultural priority in order to ensure the continuation, success, and future of societies. Nowhere is this phenomenon more true or better exemplified than within the Christian community, where raising children in the light and example of our Savior Jesus Christ is integral

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<sup>1</sup> *Girk' Mec Maštoc Koč'eeçal* (Book Entitled Grand Euchologion) (Constantinople: Yohannesian Počos, 1807), pp. 337-342, incorporating at p. 340 the fourteen articles of faith from pp. 261-262; for an earlier edition, see *Girk' Astič'an Taloy dprac' ew Sarkawagac' ew Kahanayic'...* (Book on Granting Rank to Clerks and Deacons and Priests...) (Constantinople: Astuacatur, 1752), pp. 237-254.

to the preservation, continuity, and growth of the faith. Generation after generation, Christian parents, clergy, and others instill in children faith, morals, and values: love, honesty, humility, dedication, perseverance, commitment, mercy, and forgiveness. This is in keeping with Christ's great commission in which He challenges and commands His disciples to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..."<sup>2</sup> Naturally, Christians are called to be themselves the foremost missionaries to discipline their own children.

There is a considerable history of educating children in the Armenian tradition.<sup>3</sup> There, as in this document, admonitions from the Wisdom tradition to teach children "the fear of the Lord" are often contemplated alongside similar teachings on Christian virtues in the Gospels and the Epistles. Among the ancients, most education was religious education. Consequently, young boys dedicated to the priesthood by their parents, for reasons of which the high rate of infant mortality was not the least, were given additional care and attention. Planting the Christian virtues in them was an imperative ever since their birth, a process that began in infancy—long before they were tutored by related vardapets at the monastic schools. The home was, naturally, the first of these protected environments for their special upbringing.<sup>4</sup>

The two authors also seem to draw upon certain views found in the *General Epistle* of Nersēs Snorhali (1101-1173), who upholds the clergy as the first among those who belong to a higher kingdom in manners and behavior.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, those destined for ordination must possess certain virtues and values, integrity, innocence, purity and intelligence—these qualities manifested in children. It is through the course of growth and development in a fallen society that these good

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 28:19-20.

<sup>3</sup> For a survey, see (Fr.) Vardan Hac'uni, *Dastarakut' iunə hin hayoc' k'ov* (Education among Old-time Armenians) (Venice: S. Lazar, 1923), especially pp. 38-78.)

<sup>4</sup> At the time of Lord Arak'el and Grigor Tat'ewac'i, much of Armenia's spiritual culture was focused in its monasteries. It was in these monasteries that the religious lived and nurtured a spiritual environment for the religious nourishment of those who dedicated themselves to the service of the Lord. Therefore, often, it was to these monasteries that parents, having raised their children in a truly Christian setting and having instilled in them faith, discipline, and love, presented them to begin their journey to the ultimate service of the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> See the section entitled "To the Ranks of the Priests" in his *Indbanrakan Tutkē* (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1871), pp. 50-68; Eng. transl. by (Fr.) Arakel Aljalian, *General Epistle*, (New Rochelle: St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, 1996), pp.55-67.

attributes are corrupted and turned into vices. Christ illustrates the immaculate qualities of childhood, when He says, "...unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>6</sup> It is a remarkable task to preserve the faith, innocence, and other qualities of childhood and exemplify them through adulthood! If faith and purity are essentials for the faithful members of the Christian Church, then how much more crucial are they for the clergy, the ordained servants of our Lord?

Although conditions have changed significantly in the intervening six centuries, a reading of the curriculum indicates the continuing relevancy of these traditional tenets.

### CURRICULUM FOR EDUCATING INFANTS\* WHO ARE TO BE CALLED TO THE RANK OF PRIESTHOOD

Now, in due time, it is necessary by the nourishment of holiness and wisdom to raise in the fear of God children who, like newborn crying babes seeking pure milk, might grow in salvation thereby; children who shall taste the sweetness of God according to the prophet; children who still approach the "living rock" and will be made a spiritual temple for spotless priesthood to offer God-pleasing spiritual sacrifice through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For as Paul says, "Those whom he first knew, he also called and those whom he called he also invited and those whom he invited he made righteous and those whom he made righteous, he glorified."<sup>7</sup>

Hence, after the sacrament of baptism, the rebirth and enlightenment of the holy font and the adoption by our Heavenly Father, the parents, as servant and teacher of the Heavenly Father's adopted child, receive the child in their home and educate him in the fear of God.

When the child begins to speak, first they shall put the blessing of God in his mouth as the prophet David says, "O Lord, if You open my lips, my mouth shall sing Your praise."<sup>8</sup> And again, "blessing shall come forth from the mouth of children." Hence at the coming of our Lord into Jerusalem, the mouths of forty-day-old sucklings were opened, and they sang aloud, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 18:3-4.

\* Lit., "Newborn Children" (*Noracəneal Mankanc*). These words in the title do not appear in the rest of the text.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:30

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 51:15

who comes in the name of the Lord. Praise to the Son of David.”<sup>9</sup> And our Lord rebuked the Jews who did not understand this mystery, saying to them, “Have you not read that ‘out of the mouths of babes and sucklings praise shall be established?’”<sup>10</sup> Thus, if the scholars and the illustrious were to keep silent, the stones would cry out. So babes who are still being nursed by their mothers shall offer praise to me, the Creator, instead of taking milk and nourishment. For it is necessary that the tongue of the child shall first utter blessing to God and then voice other words and meanings.

Thus, every morning when we wake up, we should first say, “O Lord, if You open my lips, my mouth shall sing Your praise.”<sup>11</sup> for it is obvious that our mouths are opened and closed at the command of the Creator. For from the evening hour until bedtime, we shall beseech God saying, “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, and a strong door for my lips.”<sup>12</sup> And in the morning when we wake from sleep, we shall ask God’s command, saying, “O Lord, if You open my lips...” Likewise, for all the senses we shall beseech the Lord, “Lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”<sup>13</sup> And again, “Cause me to hear joy and gladness. Let my suffering bones rejoice.” And others like these. For it is necessary that the tongue of the child should first utter blessing to God.

Second, when he is grown in stature and understands everything, they should show him all the movements of the sky and the course of the heavenly luminaries and their beauty and the changing of the seasons, and through these he should learn of their Creator and the greatness of His beauty. As the prophet says, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.”<sup>14</sup> And also they should show him the blossoming of plants and seeds and the fragrance of sweet-smelling lilies of various bright colors. Through these he should be given to recognize the beauty of the Creator, as he [the prophet] says, “the beauty of the field is with me” and through them he should recognize the Creator of beings. As Paul says, “For the invisible things of God are visibly seen by rational beings.”<sup>15</sup> And in this way little by little they should bring the child to the knowledge of his Creator.

Third, they shall teach him about the three persons of the One Godhead: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit consubstantial divinity. One

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 19:38, Mark 11: 9-10

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 21:16, Psalm 8:2

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 51:15

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 141:3

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 13:3, Psalm 51:8

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 19:1

<sup>15</sup> Romans 1:20

nature, one will, one energy, one ruler of everything visible and invisible.

Fourth, they shall teach him the ordering of the nine classes of Angels, which are Thrones, Seraphim, Cherubim, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. And they shall teach him about the demons who fell from the angelic ranks because of their arrogance and disobedience.

Fifth, they shall reveal to him the creation of our ancestor who was in paradise<sup>16</sup> and his fall by the deceit of Satan, for eating the fruit, by which man became mortal and fell from glorious paradise to this painful and mortal earth.

Sixth, they shall teach him about the incarnation of the Son of God for our salvation. Beginning from the Annunciation by Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, birth-giver of God, and the birth in the manger, they shall teach him about the descent of the multitude of heavenly hosts, about the arrival of the Magi and the coming to the temple on the fortieth day, the baptism of the revelation of God, the opening of heaven and the voice of the Father, and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove upon Him, and His coming willingly to suffer on the cross, the miracle-working of Christ, and the wonders which took place during the crucifixion. They shall teach him that the earth shook and the rocks were split and that the heavenly luminaries were darkened, and that the tombs were opened and many of the dead were raised and that they entered Jerusalem and that the curtain of the temple was torn. They shall teach him about the three days' burial, through which hell was destroyed and the souls saved and about the resurrection of God from the sealed tomb. The descent of angels, the appearance to the myrrh-bearers and disciples, the ascension to heaven and the sitting at the right hand of the Father, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the ranks of the apostles.

All of these it is necessary to impress on the mind of the child, according to the order of the dominical feasts.

Seventh, it is necessary to reveal to him the second coming of Christ from heaven and the resurrection of all mankind and the awesome judgment, the glory for the righteous and torment for sinners. For the child should be aware of all this, of both the beginning of creatures as well as the consummation of the world.

Eighth, they should teach him to go to church that he might view the liturgical rites and listen to the voice of the priest, the reading of the scriptures, the prayers, lamentations and weeping of the people, so that he might learn the order of Christianity and grow accustomed to the

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<sup>16</sup> Genesis 2:15, Genesis 3:76

same always. For this reason the prophet says, "I was glad when they said to me, let us go unto the house of the Lord."<sup>17</sup>

Ninth, they shall reveal to him that every evil word and hateful, repugnant and condemnable deed is repugnant to God and they shall strictly silence him from cursing and lying, from stealing and other such things. For from such strictness he shall realize the iniquity of sin and shall hasten to do what is right. For this reason, the prophet says, "When a child learns good and evil, he shall reject the evil and choose the good" and shall boldly say, "I hate and reject sin and love Your laws."<sup>18</sup>

Tenth, they shall remind him of the day of death, the hour of agony, and the battle of demons who encounter a man in the soul's journey and the confusion of sinners in the stations of souls and their remorse until the day of judgment. The parents shall always arouse all these things in the child's mind, so that his mind might be imbued with the fear of God. For this reason Solomon says, "I was a thoughtful child and I came upon a good spirit."<sup>19</sup> And the prophet Isaiah says, "My child take heed." And you might say, "How is one able to teach the child all this?" Thus the prophet Jeremiah said to God, "I am a child and I do not know how to speak."<sup>20</sup> And God said to him, "Don't say, 'I am a child', for I shall place all My words in your mouth, and you shall go before everyone I send you to."<sup>21</sup> It is necessary to teach every child everything in this way.

And after seven years his parents will take him with gifts to the church door and present him to God, committing him to the graces of the Holy Spirit. And they will take him to a chosen and God-pleasing priest to be instructed in divine knowledge. And taking the child as a spiritual father, he offers him to God and says, "For of such is the kingdom of God." And he exhorts the child's heart in the love of a God-pleasing way of life to the measure of the child's capacity and ability. And when he sees that he is well-versed in the primary curriculum, he commences the higher learning.

First, he instructs the pupil's mind to strive for the intelligible, as the abundance of luminous rays extends among the ranks of angels, and from there upon the nine orders of priesthood in the church. For as man is a composite of two parts, spirit and body, so also is he illumined by two kinds of light, that is, the sensible body by the sensible light and the intelligible spirit through the rays of God's wisdom. This is the food of the Spirit, as the prophet says, "You shall

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<sup>17</sup> Psalm 122:1

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 7:16

<sup>19</sup> Wisdom of Solomon 7:19

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah 1:6

<sup>21</sup> Jeremiah 1:7

give the river of delights for them to drink.”<sup>22</sup> And this is what makes up the faith, as is said, “Faith is the illumination of the mind, poured from the first light into our rational minds by which we know God.” According to the verse, “by the light of your countenance we see light.”<sup>23</sup>

Second, he teaches him to lift up his mind above the intelligible, to the stations of the ineffable, to the unattainable for contingent beings, to the interior of the veil, where the uncreated Godhead is: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For this reason, Paul says, “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.”<sup>24</sup> It is always necessary for us to dwell in the same passion of longing and to desire with eyes of faith. Accordingly, “just as a hart desires fountains of water, so my soul desires to be with you, O God. My soul thirsts for you, mighty and living God. When shall I come to be revealed to the face of God?”<sup>25</sup> For it is not possible for created beings to enter the divine abode, that is, while striving with our minds for God, He humbles Himself to us as to the prodigal, as it says, “the father went to meet him.”<sup>26</sup> And the Lord says, “My father and I shall go to him and we will make our dwelling in him.”<sup>27</sup> For the prophet says, “Make a highway for him who rides upon the heaven of heavens toward the East.”<sup>28</sup> Behold, in lifting up our minds to Him, He Himself is humbled to us as we demonstrated. Thus, there exist three types of vision in a man: 1) eyes of sense to see the visible creatures, 2) intelligible minds to behold the intelligible abodes of the angels, 3) and eyes of faith to know the uncreated Godhead. And thus it is necessary to instruct our minds in the communing with the ineffable One. For this reason, he says, “Ponder on things above.”<sup>29</sup>

Third, he teaches him by word the fourteen stages of faith as follows:<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Psalm 35:8

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 36:9

<sup>24</sup> Colossians 3:1

<sup>25</sup> Psalms 42:1-2

<sup>26</sup> Luke 15:27

<sup>27</sup> John 14:23

<sup>28</sup> Psalm 68:34

<sup>29</sup> Colossians 3:2

<sup>30</sup> What follows is an excerpt from the “Creed of the Ordination to the Holy Priesthood” by Tat’ewac’i. For a detailed analysis of the biblical and patristic sources, see Abp. Norayr Pot’arean, *Hay Eket’ec’woy Hawatoy Hanganakner* (The Credal Confessions of the Armenian Church) (New York: St. Vartan Press, 1991), pp. 11-20. The numbering of the fourteen points of faith has been supplied by us. For an English translation of the Armenian rite of Ordination in the *Mec Maštoc*, see Hratch Chilingirian,

[1] We confess and believe wholeheartedly (in) God the Father, uncreated, unbegotten, and without beginning, and also begetter of the Son and emanator of the Holy Spirit.

[2] We believe (in) God the Word, uncreated, begotten of the Father before all eternity, not next (in order) nor less, but in as much as the Father is father, so with Him also the Son is Son.

[3] We believe (in) the Holy Spirit, uncreated, eternal, unbegotten, but proceeding from the Father, coexistent with the Father and of the same glory with the Son.

[4] We believe in the Holy Trinity, one Nature, one Divinity, not three gods, but one God, one Will, one Kingdom, one Sovereignty, Creator of the visible and the invisible.

[5] We believe (in) the Holy Church, [6] (in) the remission of sins, [7] (in) the communion of Saints.

[8] We believe that one of the three Persons, God the Word, who was begotten of the Father before all eternity, in fullness of time descended into the Virgin Mary Mother of God, from whose blood He took and united it with His own Divinity. Nine months He patiently waited in the womb of the immaculate Virgin, and the perfect God became perfect man in soul, and in mind, and in body: one Person, one visage, and united in one nature. [9] (That) God became man without change and without alteration. [10] (That) His conception was without insemination and His generation without corruption. As there is no beginning to His Divinity, so also there is no end to His humanity, "for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."<sup>31</sup>

[11] We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ walked on earth. After thirty years He came to be baptized; the Father from on high bore witness: "This is my Beloved Son"; and the Holy Spirit came down like a dove. He was tempted by Satan and conquered him. He preached salvation to men; He labored in the body; He suffered fatigue, hunger, and thirst. Afterwards He voluntarily submitted to (His) passion; was crucified and died in the flesh but lived in His Divinity. His body placed in a tomb was united with His Divinity; and with His spirit He descended into hell, undivided from his Divinity. He

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"Ordination to the Priesthood in the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church," unpublished M.Div. thesis, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, NY, 1987, especially pp. 64-66 for the fourteen articles.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrews 13:8

preached to the spirits, destroyed hell and delivered the spirits. After three days He rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples.

[12] We believe (that) our Lord Jesus Christ ascended with the same body into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father. [13] Also (that) He will come with the same body and in the glory of the Father, to judge the living and the dead—Who is also the resurrection of all men.

[14] We believe also (in) the compensation for works: to the just everlasting life, and to the sinners everlasting torments.<sup>32</sup>

Fourth, he teaches the child about the lives of the holy hermits and virgins, the unbearable torment of the holy martyrs before which the bodies of all men tremble and by whose patience they are awestruck. And this is the order, either to examine intelligible things above or to contemplate the sufferings of the saints below. In these two things alone are to be the activity of the mind and the contemplation of the heart. As the apostle Paul says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life and imitate their faith."<sup>33</sup> It is to this end that the church every day reads of their sufferings.

Fifth, he teaches him how to confess the seven deadly sins and their venial aspects. For God spoke thus by the prophet Isaiah, "Set forth your wrongdoings, that you may be proved justified."<sup>34</sup> For he who stays firm in confession, remains untempted by any sin.

Sixth, he teaches him how to fast, genuflect, and be diligent. For this is how every sin is chased from mankind. As the Lord says, "This kind of evil never comes out of a man except by prayer and fasting."<sup>35</sup> And again he says, "Pray that you be not led into temptation."<sup>36</sup>

Seventh, he shall teach temperance in food and drink and clothing, for he should not be gluttonous or drunken or foppish. For he says, "an abundance of wine and grain were the cause of the destruction of

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<sup>32</sup> The credal text concludes with the following admonition: "This is the Orthodox confession of our faith, which every Christian ought always keep in his heart and have it on his tongue. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto Salvation, says the Apostle. This is the foundation upon which good works ought to be build; for these are the steps of faith through which we go up to heaven unto God, pace by pace, through mind and faith. And after death, through spirit and good works. But after resurrection, through body and soul."

<sup>33</sup> Hebrews 13:7

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 43:26

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 17:21

<sup>36</sup> Mark 14:41

your sister Sodom."<sup>37</sup> And Moses says, "He became fat, he became thick and became wide, and he left the Lord God his Creator. And after that, he forsook God his savior."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the holy Fathers say that the religious man's food should be bread and water, and of those little. And about wine and meat what shall I say, but that they are not all worthy.

Eighth, he teaches him silence of tongue and solitude, for he should not be talkative and a gadabout. For the prophet Jeremiah says, "He sits alone silently in his home, for by himself he has taken on the yoke of the Lord."<sup>39</sup> And the apostle James says, "If a religious man among you does not bridle his tongue, his religion is vain."<sup>40</sup> And for those who gadabout, the saints say that a plant continually moved does not take root but dries up and is good only for firewood.

Ninth, he shall teach him to be temperate and patient in all virtues: in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, in toil, in distress, in sorrow, in vigilance, and in the struggle against demons. For if anyone lacks temperance, Satan plucks him from every good work and thrusts him into evil. For Paul says, "Therefore, if you stand upright, take heed lest you fall."<sup>41</sup> And Sirach says, "If you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for all sorts of temptation."<sup>42</sup> and if through temperance he is ready, he will not be disrupted according to the words of the prophet.

Tenth, he shall teach him the four virtues, according to the parts of the soul, that is, prudence, courage, wisdom, and justice. And he shall extract from his soul the six opposites of the same which by their six-fold action destroy the souls of man; namely: cunning, ignorance, temerity, cowardice, extravagance, licentiousness, and relentless greed. For these six are the cause of all evil, and if a person is able to rid himself of these, no evil thing will happen to him. Hence, the instructor ought to teach all these to the pupil by the time of ordination.

And when he becomes an adult, reaching the age of Christ's maturity, the age of thirty, the time for his ordination approaches, according to the election of God.

Then his father confessor through various means and counsel examines the preparedness of his soul. First, whether or not what he has learned since his childhood has been confirmed according to the willingness of his heart. For if it is not in conformity with the

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<sup>37</sup> Ezekiel 16:49

<sup>38</sup> Deuteronomy 32:15

<sup>39</sup> Lamentations 3:28

<sup>40</sup> James 1:26

<sup>41</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:12

<sup>42</sup> Sirach 2:1

intention of what he learned from his instructor, he shall not be invited to the vocation, according to the saying, "he who does not want a blessing, shall remain far from it."<sup>43</sup>

Second, he sees whether he practices the same, or whether it is only by words he has learned and not by deeds; for the apostle says, "One is justified not by listening to the laws, but by practicing them." And the Lord says, "Whoever says, and does not do, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, and whoever does it and teaches it shall be called great."<sup>44</sup> For whoever is void of good deeds is deprived of God's grace and is unrewarded on the day of crowning.

Third, he sees (even though he might be perfect in deeds) whether he did what is good under pressure from his instructor or with willingness of heart. For if he did it under pressure, when the pressure is increased, he will leave the work and take up another job and will put the [priestly] rank in disrepute. And he who does what is good upon compulsion and not willingly, shall not receive a reward of God.

Fourth, he shall ask whether or not his character is capable of enduring this holy life. For if he is not capable, even though he is willing, his disposition would stumble and err. Therefore, let him not approach this rank. Hence, he shall ask if he has the desire for holiness according to his natural will, so that he can approach this rank. And if he loves holiness by the force of his will, let him not approach this rank, in case the force of his natural inclination overcome him and he fall and be numbered among the ranks of the fallen. As our Lord says, "He is able to stand with ten thousand against him who attacks with twenty thousand; otherwise he would send the messengers to him so that he might remain in peace." As our Lord speaks of the love of holiness, "Not everybody is capable of it, but [only] those to whom it is given."<sup>45</sup>

Fifth, he asks, though he be a lover of holiness in will and nature, whether he desires with willing heart to take upon himself the yoke of priesthood, as is necessary for those who are called to come to this rank. And if he should choose not to enter under this heavy yoke he should not be constrained, for as Paul says, "Let each one decide according to his own mind."<sup>46</sup>

Sixth, he shall ask whether he has any mortal or venial sins, or any habits which he cannot give up. Perhaps he has become inured over a long period of time to the same errors and cannot quit them, according to the verse, "a long-standing practice will become second nature." Let that sort of person not approach the rank of priesthood.

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<sup>43</sup> Psalm 109:14

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 5:19

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 19:11

<sup>46</sup> Romans 14:15

Seventh, he shall ask whether he has remained free of all corruption from birth to that day, whether he might have erred and now suffers remorse and has taken refuge in confession that by this he might be worthy of priesthood. Such a person should know that although confession remits sins, still he cannot become a priest, as is well known from the prodigal son, who said, "Father, I have sinned before you and heaven." And although the father took pity on him and forgave his sins, nevertheless he did not give him authority to offer the divine sacrifice. But he said to others, you slay the fatted ox for him, i.e., the sacrifice of Christ. Since if he has erred, he is not worthy of priesthood. Let him not be ordained, for he is not worthy of assuming the authority of the priesthood. In the same way if he errs after ordination, he shall no longer have the authority to celebrate the seven sacraments of the church, but if he should repent, let him pray with the people. But if he should carry out the priestly functions insolently, although unworthy, he will bring the wrath of God upon the people, and he will be condemned with the God-killers who were burned by such fire, as St. Nersēs says, "For if Nabath and Abiud were burned by such fire, now in the time of the true priesthood how much worse should the eternal inextinguishable fire be which the unworthy priests will bear in the next life."<sup>47</sup>

Eighth, the father confessor shall instruct him to confess all his wrong-doing on the same day and not to leave it until the next. For the Lord says, "Let tomorrow take care of itself, the evils of this day are more than enough."<sup>48</sup> Further, he shall instruct him not to enter the church or pray without confessing, for the priest is an intercessor for the people to God, and when he himself is in need of an intercessor, he cannot be an intercessor for others. Therefore, it is necessary that he himself first become worthy to pray to God without intercession before interceding with God for the people. For as long as he has sins, his prayers are unacceptable. As the prophet David says, "If I see sin in my heart, can the Lord hear me?"<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the priest must approach all the sacraments of the holy church with confession, that he might say, "I stood in prayer before you, Lord, at the acceptable time."

Ninth, the father confessor should counsel him to be humble, obedient, calm, patient, long-suffering, God-fearing, and conscientious to receive God's grace. As God says, "Where shall I rest, if not among the meek and humble and among those who tremble at my words?"<sup>50</sup> But any who are proud and quick to anger, contentious and contrary,

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<sup>47</sup> Num. 3:4; 26:61. Cf. the reference to Korah and Dathan (Num. 16) in Nersēs Šnorhali, *General Epistle*, p. 65 (Eng. trans.).

<sup>48</sup> Matthew 6:34

<sup>49</sup> Psalm 66:18

<sup>50</sup> Isaiah 66:2

dissolute, arrogant, and unscrupulous, are devils, not priests. For it says, "The Lord scorns scorners and gives grace to the humble."<sup>51</sup>

Tenth, the father confessor should advise him against wantonly cursing people without warrant, so that the curse should not turn back on him. As it is written, "If a son of peace be there, your greeting of peace shall rest there; if not, it shall turn back to you."<sup>52</sup> So too with curses. Rather, he is bound to bless those who curse him, to love his enemy, to do good to those who are hateful, to pray for those who persecute him, for this is the perfection of goodness. Thus, says the Lord, "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."<sup>53</sup> All this must the father confessor teach someone who wants to become a priest. To Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory unto the ages. Amen.

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<sup>51</sup> Proverbs 3:34

<sup>52</sup> Luke 6:10

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 5:48

