



A Balm for Gilead: Meditations on Spirituality and the Healing Arts

Daniel P. Sulmasy MD PhD

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Once rarely discussed in medical circles, the relationship between spirituality and health has become an important topic in health care. This change is evidenced in courses on religion and medicine taught in most medical schools, articles in journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and conferences being held all over the country. Yet, much of the discussion of the role of religion and spirituality in health care keeps the critical distance of only being *about* spirituality. *A Balm for Gilead* goes further, offering a work of spirituality.

Sulmasy moves between the poetic and the speculative, addressing his subject in the tradition of great spiritual writers like Augustine and Bonaventure. He draws from philosophical and theological sources—specifically, Hebrew and Christian scripture—to illuminate how the art of healing is integrally tied to a sense of the divine and our ultimate interconnectedness. Health care professionals—and anyone else involved with the care of the sick and dying—will find this series of meditations both inspiring and instructive.

Sulmasy addresses the spiritual malaise that physicians, nurses, and other health care workers experience in their professional lives, and explores how these Christian healers can be inspired to persevere in the care of the sick. Drawing on the parable of the prodigal son, for instance, Sulmasy illustrates how some physicians have put financial gain ahead of their patients, and how genuine spirituality might change their hearts. He examines both enigmatic topics such as the relationship between sinfulness, sickness, and suffering and the spirituality of more routine topics such as preventive medicine. In one especially stirring and poignant meditation, he reflects on the spirituality of dying in the light of Christian hope.

A Balm for Gilead interweaves prayer and reflection, pointing the way to a twenty-first-century spirituality for health care professionals and their patients.

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