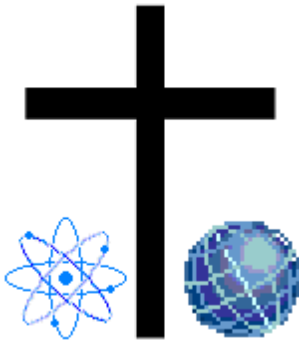


Science and Faith



"... through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16)

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Feature article

The Life of God in the Soul of Man Part 1..... (Henry Scougal)

"I cannot speak of religion, but I must lament, that among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means: some placing it in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions; and all the account they can give of their religion is, that they are of this and the other persuasion, and have joined themselves to one of those many sects whereinto Christendom is most unhappily divided. Others place it in the outward man, in a constant course of external duties, and a model of performances. If they live peaceably with their neighbours, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, frequenting the church, or their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves. Others again put all religion in the affections, in rapturous hearts, and ecstatic devotion; and all they aim at is, to pray with passion, and think of heaven with pleasure, and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they persuade themselves they are mightily in love with him, and from thence assume a great confidence of their salvation, which they esteem the chief of Christian graces." ...

Henry Scougal (1650-1678) was a Scottish theologian, minister and author. This excerpt is taken from his widely acclaimed "*The Life Of God In The Soul Of Man*, Nichols and Noyes, Boston. It was published when he was just eighteen years old.

Consider the creatures

Fiery serpents and vile worms

Mike L Anderson

The Son of God believed that living things could point us to God. He said birds "do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your

heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"¹ Birds point us to Jehovah-Jireh - God as provider.

So much for birds. But not all things are bright and beautiful. What about the creatures that are more loathsome than lovely?

A Monty Python song puts the matter in blunt relief:

"All things dull and ugly,
All creatures short and squat,
All things rude and nasty,
The Lord God made the lot."

How do we relate vermin to our loving heavenly Father? Jesus seems to intimate something about this. Before looking at what he said, let us examine the Old Testament passage to which he refers.

Fiery serpents

"They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"

Then the LORD sent venomous [actually fiery] snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived".²



The brazen serpent by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

What exactly are these fiery serpents?

Vile worms

Based on the symptoms and geographical location, most parasitologists accept that these "fiery serpents" were not reptiles at all, but parasitic nematodes called Guinea worms.³ Humans contract the debilitating disease by drinking unfiltered water containing larvae-infected copepods. The juveniles burrow into intestinal tissues and reproduce. The offspring are the final-stage worms. Females migrate to the skin. As they emerge a blister forms causing an excruciatingly painful, burning sensation.⁴ The name for the disease, dracunculiasis, means "affliction with little dragons".⁵

When the ancients use the term snake, we should not make the mistake of thinking they were being zoologically particular. The Greek Agatharchidas in the second century BC, long after the incident recorded by the Israelites, gave a description matching the symptoms of Guinea worm, but called the creatures "little snakes".⁶ Remember too that the Israelites lumped bats with birds.⁷ At up to a metre in length, Guinea worms are longer than many snakes. We can understand if the ancients had trouble classifying it.

Attempts have been made to absolve the Guinea worm on the grounds that dracontiasis is unlikely to cause such a high mortality.⁸ But the "fiery serpents" had little accomplices. Guinea worms cause secondary infections such as tetanus and gangrene that are a grave risk particularly in a world untouched by the benefits of modern medicine. Also, the parasite may well have been less evolved and more dangerous in the past. (Parasites often become more benign since they do not benefit from killing off their host). And in defence of snakes, they do not typically go after people *en masse*. Parasites do.



Persian physicians removing guinea worm by Velschius (1674)

Bronze serpent on a pole

It has been said, "If there's anything in nature that might call God's plan into question, it's the guinea worm".⁹ Another online magazine goes further asking, "Are you carrying around some vestigial conviction that God is good, or that Nature loves you? We guarantee that our newest Schopenhauer Award nominee, the Guinea Worm, will fix that in one easy lesson".¹⁰ How can our loving heavenly Father let Guinea worms feed on us? The creature is certainly incompatible with a designer (it evolved from free-living forms¹¹). But is it incompatible with the Benevolent Creator revealed in Jesus and the Bible?

If the Israelites were plagued by Guinea worms, then the bronze serpent on a pole suggested a treatment.¹² It was a revolutionary idea. The ancients would have felt despairingly helpless against the creature. The serpent wrapped around the pole gave people a simple way to deal with the parasite; you coiled it up using a stick. The bronze serpent on a pole



**Symbol of healing.
The rod of Asclepius**

worked as a visual aid showing that humans could do something about disease. Unlike using say snake oil against gout, the stick is a demonstrably effective treatment. Through Moses, God in his mercy inspired the people against the disease and sanctified the use of medical tools to eradicate parasites. Though simple, the stick has successfully treated dracunculiasis since antiquity.

Humans have done something about disease. The Guinea worm scourge is on the verge of being relegated to history. In 1986 there were 3.5 million cases reported globally in twenty countries. Last year it was down to less than five thousand in six countries!¹³ The remarkable thing about this story is that it has come about with a very limited budget and very largely by persuading people to use simple technologies and changing their behaviour.¹⁴

A man on a tree

If Guinea worms did plague the Israelites, then what was Jesus doing allowing a parasite to symbolise him!

He said, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."¹⁵

Is a parasitic worm really any worse than a snake? The traditional serpent represented Satan himself in the Garden of Eden. So how could a serpent represent the Son of God? It has been said, "...calling Christ our "healing serpent" offends us royally."¹⁶ Either way we have a demonstration of the incredible humility of God. Martin Luther was able to say of Christ, "He must have the form of a serpent; but even if He were still more repugnant to the eye and resembled a devil or vile worm, ... I look upon Him as my Savior."¹⁷

The parasite on a pole points us towards the work of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus allowed the human race to treat him like a worm, wrapping him around a tree. He revealed once and for all that God is not impervious to human suffering, but was prepared to go through it himself. Just as the parasite was wrapped around the pole and died for the sake of the patient, so Jesus was tied to the cross and died for his spiritual patients.

But why on a cross? If God let Jesus die of old age, would his death have been any less efficacious for our redemption? In his wisdom, God chose Christ on a cross, a very public visual aid of the power of God's plan of redemption and the extraordinary extent of his sacrificial love. It worked. To this day Christ on the cross persuades many, many to come to him to be forgiven, to find spiritual life and to do something for others. One person that was so persuaded was former USA president, Jimmy Carter, who said in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "I worship Jesus Christ."¹⁸ He and his wife Rosalynn founded the centre that has led the global campaign to eradicate Guinea worm.¹⁹

Extracting God's plan from the origin of the Guinea worm (or our own personal suffering) is far too parochial. When Jesus mentions the serpent on a pole in the desert, it is to point us to a Great Plan. His plan did not begin and end with the origin of the fiery serpents, but continues right through to their demise. It most especially includes the demise of his

very own Son so that we might have eternal life. Is a parasitic worm on a stick really any more ugly than a tortured man on a cross? Yet our loving heavenly Father has achieved our redemption out of the crucifixion. God is working to this day to make all things bright and beautiful.

Notes

¹ Matthew 6:26-27. This does not mean that Jesus believed that nature alone could unambiguously reveal God. He presumed a background of special revelation.

² Numbers 21:4-9.

³ Cox, F.E.G. (2002) History of Human Parasitology. *Clinical Microbiology Reviews* 15(4):595-612.

⁴ Ballantyne, C. (2008) What is Guinea Worm Disease? *Scientific American*, December 8, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=what-is-guinea-worm-disease>

⁵ Barry, M. (2007) The Tail End of Guinea Worm - Global Eradication without a Drug or a Vaccine. *The New England Journal of Medicine* 356 (25): 2561-2564.

⁶ Schmidt, G.D. and L.S. Roberts (1989) *Foundations of Parasitology* Tim Mirror/Mosby College Publishing, Missouri, USA, p.482.

⁷ Leviticus 11:19.

⁸ Adamson, P.B.(1988) Dracontiasis in antiquity. *Medical History* 32:204-209.

⁹ Paulson, T (2001) Plotting the end of guinea worm disease. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* <http://www.seattlepi.com/africa/worm23.shtml>

¹⁰ Anonymous, (2003) Prince of Parasites: the Guinea Worm. *The exile* http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE_ID=6877&IBLOCK_ID=35&phrase_id=21487

¹¹ Blaxter, M.L. (1998) A molecular evolutionary framework for the phylum Nematoda. *Nature* 392: 71-75.

¹² Schmidt, G.D. *Ibid.*, p.486.

¹³ Staub, E. (2008) Guinea Worm Cases Hit All-Time Low: Carter Center, WHO, Gates Foundation, and U.K. Government Commit \$55 Million Toward Ultimate Eradication Goal. http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/gates_120508.html

¹⁴ Barry, M. (2007) *Ibid.*

¹⁵ John 3:14-15.

¹⁶ Marshall, R.F. (2001) Our Serpent of Salvation: The Offense of Jesus in John's Gospel. *Word & World* 21(4):385-393.

¹⁷ Quoted in Marshall, R.F. (2001) *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Text from the Nobel lecture given by The Nobel Peace Prize laureate for 2002, Jimmy Carter in Oslo, Dec. 10, 2002.

<http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/jec/nobel.phtml>

¹⁹ Ballantyne, C. (2008) *Ibid.*, Barry, M. (2007) *Ibid.*

News briefs (From the Internet)

Nature red in root and leaves

The struggle for life is not obvious in plants, but struggle they do. Researchers have found that sea rocket, a coastal plant, is able to recognise if neighbours are unrelated. While they cannot see or hear, they do sense chemical cues. When among family they hold back their root growth, otherwise they are much more aggressive and snub each other above ground - avoiding leaf contact. Hmmm, they day of the triffids may yet come.

<http://www.physorg.com/news174747583.html>

Pterosaurs no longer so easily stereotyped

Up to now pterosaurs were easily pigeonholed. There was an older group (emerging 220 million years ago) that had long tails and short skulls. The more recent group (dying out with the dinosaurs 65 million years ago) had short tails and elongated skulls. Paleontologists have now found a pterosaur with an advanced head and primitive tail dated at 160 million years old. It is called Darwinopterus in honour of Charles Darwin. Where to place it? Perhaps in between. That is the trouble with nature - it keeps confounding our neat categories.

<http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/2009/1014/2>

Particles behaving weirdly

The elementary charge (e) is the negative of the electric charge carried by a single electron. Its value is $-1.602176487 \times 10^{-19}$ coulombs. A charge can be zero, e , $-e$, $-2e$ but never $1/3 e$. At least that is the received wisdom. Physicists have now found that under certain conditions electrons in graphene (a one atom thick sheet of carbon) team up to act like quasiparticles with fractional charges. The finding could be applied to superfast quantum computing. One should never say never.

<http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/2009/1014/1>

How to see the wood despite the trees

Peripheral vision is more important than we may think. Psychologists have found that while central vision specialises in processing the details of a scene, it is peripheral vision that specialises in processing the overall kind of scene e.g. whether it is a forest, mountain or lake. The philosopher Whitehead famously said that the genius of modern science is its twin concern with the general and the particular. Nature had this genius a long time ago.

<http://www.physorg.com/news174820711.html>

Making better scholars out of fruit flies

Fruit flies can learn through classic negative conditioning. If flies are given an electric shock in the presence of a desirable odor, they will learn to avoid that odor. Neuroscientists have figured out a way to foster the learning without the pain. First they made an artificial form of the energy-storing chemical ATP. Then they used a laser light to activate the ATP at just the right moment to induce a negative association with a particular stimulus. The chemical activated certain neurons to release neurotransmitters. Perhaps some committee should begin investigating whether it is unethical to use the system on wayward children.

<http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/2009/1015/1>

Another asteroid impact may have killed off the dinosaurs

The Chicxulub crater (180 kilometres in diameter) underneath the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico is believed to be the result of an asteroid collision that wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Geologists have now found a much bigger crater (500 km) in the Shiva basin off the coast of India that originated from the same time period. At 40 km wide the Shiva asteroid was about four times bigger than the Chicxulub asteroid and perhaps played a more significant role in the extinction of the dinosaurs. It kind of puts the Kimberly hole in perspective.

<http://www.physorg.com/news174827113.html>

Water bears to travel in space

The theory of panspermia says that life did not arise on earth, but crash-landed here from out of space. The theory is being tested using microscopic creatures called water bears or moss animals. The animals will be packed into a container acting as an artificial meteorite and sent to the Martian moon Phobos in 2011. With their renowned ability to suspend animation, water bears should easily survive the journey. The real test is the crash-landing on the moon surface and the second crash-

landing when returning home. Scientists will then open the container for signs of life. One presumes that they got they green light from the SPCA.

<http://www.physorg.com/news174659888.html>

Birds outsmart chimps

A fundamental concept in physics is called "support." Most people know that levitation does not happen in nature. Eggs do not mysteriously hang in the air and are not supported by the side of a table. Do birds know this? Yes, well crows do. It turns out that they stare longer at images of impossible situations and even understand lateral support better than chimpanzees. The zoologist who made the discovery: Christopher Bird.

<http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/2009/1009/2>

Sleep more and avoid Alzheimer's disease

If mice are anything to go by, more sleep may inhibit the onset of Alzheimer's disease. Both mice and men have a peptide called amyloid-beta that increases during wakefulness and decreases during sleep. Evidence suggests that build-up of amyloid-beta occurs in people with Alzheimer's disease. Neurologists were able to retard the build-up of the peptide in mice by administering a drug that blocks a hormone that induces wakefulness called orexin. Now you can sleep late for health reasons.

<http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/2009/924/3>

Wealth does not buy health

Money does not buy happiness right? The same seems to apply to health. Sociologists have uncovered more evidence that Americans were actually healthier during the Great Depression in the 1930's than during the periods before and after it. They are not sure why. Public health physician Stephen Bezruchka says that taken together all of the studies suggest that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a flawed measure of societal well-being. The little Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan may have an answer. The country made the pursuit of Gross National Happiness a greater priority than the pursuit of GDP. Now I just have to figure out how to be a health consultant to Bill Gates.

<http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/2009/928/1>

Humour from the Internet

A pastor, a priest and a rabbi were out for the day to go fishing. After getting into the boat they had just pulled away from the dock when the rabbi exclaimed, "stop the boat I forgot the coffee!" The pastor who was driving the boat offered to take the rabbi back to shore and the rabbi said "oh no need I will be right back". The rabbi quickly jumped out of the boat and literally ran across the top of the water to get to the shore and then to his car to fetch the coffee. He then ran back across the water and got back in the boat.

Well the pastor not wanting to be shown up by the rabbi said "oh dear I forgot the sandwiches" and quickly jumped out of the boat to attempt running across the water like the rabbi had, but instead sank quickly to the bottom of the lake. With that the priest looked angrily at the rabbi and said "That's not fair, you should have shown him where the rocks were!"

- o -

A Pastor, a Priest and a Rabbi go into the woods to see who can find and convert an animal.

The pastor goes in and comes out smiling. "It was wonderful," he says. He found a bear and preached the gospel. The bear was so moved he baptized him in the river.

The priest goes in and also comes out smiling. "It was amazing," he says. He also found a bear and read to him from the good book. The bear was so moved that they did a confession and then the bear took his first holy communion.

The Rabbi goes in not wanting to be outdone. He comes crawling out clothes torn to shreds. Both the pastor and priest run to his side.

He looks up and says, "I also found a bear and in retrospect, I should not have started with the circumcision."

- o -

A priest, a pastor and a rabbit walk into a bar. The bartender looks at them and says, "I think someone committed a typo".

- o -

A pastor, a priest, and a lawyer all died and appear before the gates of heaven. The pastor and priest enter normally, but when the lawyer tries to enter he is showered with confetti and a multitude of angels trumpet his arrival. Confused, the pastor and priest ask a nearby angel why he was getting so much attention. The angel replied, "We have plenty of people like you up here, but he's the first lawyer we've ever seen."

Wise as serpents and harmless as doves

Cliché thinking is for the birds

Mike L Anderson

An Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman walk into a bar. The bartender turns to them, takes one look, and says, "What is this - some kind of a joke?"

A cliché is an oft-used phrase. Should we avoid them like the plague or find pearls of wisdom in them? It's tricky.

One thing that should make us wary about slogans is that it is not hard to find their equally charming opposites. For example, "many hands make light work" but "too many cooks spoil the broth." And "great minds think alike" but "fools never differ." A cliché may have validity in a certain situation, but its literary appeal can make it loiter in the mind, displacing other thoughts (or opposite clichés) and persuade far beyond its real value. Lord Chesterfield said, "Most maxim-mongers have preferred the prettiness to the justness of a thought, and the turn to the truth."¹ That beauty is only skin deep can apply to clichés too!

They are often just too superficial to be reliable guides. It would be better if clichés came with qualifications. However, it is their very terseness that makes them so quotable. Consider the ditty "Red on yellow, kill a fellow; red on black, venom lack." This folk rhyme is

intended to help people distinguish venomous coral snakes from the similar-looking non-venomous Milk Snake and other mimics. It is true enough - for North America. A fellow who picks up a red on black banded snake in Africa may well end up dead. The rhyme is a practical shortcut. It fosters the quick and appropriate reaction of a cowboy to a snake so that he can get on with his other duties. Fair enough. A person who tries to apply the rhyme in all contexts has fallen into cliché thinking.

So, lets take a few clichés and examine in what situations they apply, if any.

Take "God helps those who help themselves." One poll found that three quarters of Americans believe that it appears in the Bible!² Actually it began as, "the gods help those who help themselves" in Aesop's fables. Aesop (620-560 B.C.) was talking about getting a wheel out of the mire. The monotheistic version was popularised by English politician Algernon Sidney and scientist Benjamin Franklin.³ There are situations in which the Bible supports applying the cliché. For instance, when the pursuing Egyptians were closing in on the praying Israelites, the word of God came to Moses saying, "Quit praying and get the people moving."⁴ The Israelites were looking to God alone while he was expecting them to play a part. Their physical well-being depended on them helping themselves! However, it is spiritual madness to apply it to eternal well-being. The Bible stresses that we are quite helpless to secure our own redemption. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast."⁵ God redeems those who refuse to try and redeem themselves.



Moses leading Israel out of Egypt

Or take "Cleanliness is next to godliness." One wonders whether some sneaky medieval mother tried to coerce cleanliness out of her son by giving it eternal significance. John Wesley (1703 - 1791) and George

Whitefield (1714 - 1770) approvingly quoted it.⁶ They should have known better. True, there are many ceremonial laws in the Old Testament regarding cleanliness. However, Jesus criticised the Pharisees and teachers of the law for giving externals too much importance, quoting Isaiah, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."⁷ The trouble with cleanliness or dirtiness is that *both* have been used as marks of spirituality. Some during the Middle Ages so neglected themselves in reaction to worldly comfort that they became infested with lice. This was seen as a sign of saintliness!⁸ Jesus declared that a person is not made spiritually unclean by being physically clean⁹ nor made spiritually clean by being physically dirty.¹⁰ It is all too easy to use externals to manufacture an artificial spirituality, but God sees inside the heart.

Paradoxical humour in a cliché can give it an undeserved measure of import. Mark Twain has often been quoted: "Faith is believing what you know ain't so."¹¹ His definition may well describe the kind of faith that he had. The apostle Paul had a different view. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."¹²

Jesus explained one context: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."¹³ Sure, the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, but God incarnate was quite visible. And the effects that God has on people are evident in their lives. One question is "does faith breed charity?" Atheist Roy Hattersley admits it does. Writing in the Guardian, he acknowledges that after the hurricane Katrina disaster it was the Salvation Army and mostly other faith groups that got stuck in with relief work. He added, "Notable by their absence are teams from rationalist societies, free thinkers' clubs and atheists' associations - the sort of people who not only scoff at religion's intellectual absurdity but also regard it as a positive force for evil."¹⁴

Nobel prize-winning physicist Steven Weinberg made a statement that has become a cliché overnight. It got 141 000 hits on Google!¹⁵ The statement: "for good people to do evil things - that takes religion."¹⁶

The concept of religiously inspired evil is not new with Weinberg. Jesus warned his disciples, "In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God."¹⁷ Christians should not be surprised when religion co-operates with evil. Indeed, Jesus never calls us to faith in religion (he does not even mention the term); he calls us to

faith in God. Does this mean that all religion is invariably bad? No, because Jesus goes on to identify the true source of the evil saying, "They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me."¹⁸ There is a religion that springs from knowing God and it leads to doing good things. The apostle James says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."¹⁹ James implies that there is a kind of religion that God does not accept and which is impure and faulty.

It has been noted that Weinberg's statement "would play badly in almost any context and demanded clarification."²⁰ To be fair he did try. He said, for instance, "I think that on balance the moral influence of religion has been awful,"²¹ implying that religion has done some good. How often does the qualifier accompany the provocative statement on the Internet? Very much less than one percent of the time.²² Still, the qualifier itself needs to be qualified. There are and have been throughout history a great deal of religious people of various persuasions on the planet. Investigating the effect of religion on recent disaster relief alone is a big task. What kind of religion does Weinberg think inspired those who helped the victims of Katrina? One would have to be God to accurately sum up the global effect of religion throughout history." Even the Son of God, who knew his disciple's future, spoke specifically instead of generalising about the effects of religion.

In contrast, when it comes to spiritual matters, Weinberg is less into qualifying statements and more into the sweeping kind. It is a little like noticing the wretched lives of drug abusers and saying, "drugs are bad – use snake oil." Ample clinical trials demonstrate that *prescribed* drugs used wisely are far better for particular patients than no drugs at all. Weinberg is welcome to attack religiously motivated evil (Jesus did), but he must do so accurately. He makes no distinction between converting to religion and converting to Christ. He pulls a fast one in promoting Christlessness. God does not prescribe religion, but Jesus.

How does one avoid being taken in by the slogan? Avoid being overawed by its literary appeal or air of profundity. Remember that just like any other claim, slogans have to be evaluated. A cliché may be as cute as a bunny but as safe as a rabid one. Cliché thinking is for the birds; only a bird-brain would think otherwise.

¹ Quoted in Hoover, A.J. (1982) *Don't you believe it*. Moody Press, Chicago, p. 99.

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- ² McKibben, B. (2005) The Christian paradox: How a faithful nation gets Jesus wrong. *Harper's Magazine*, August.
- ³ Philpott, K. (1974) *If the Devil wrote a Bible*. Logos International, New Jersey, p. 11
- ⁴ Exodus 14:15 Living Bible.
- ⁵ Ephesians 2:8-9
- ⁶ Philpott, K (1974) *Ibid.*, p 20.
- ⁷ Matthew 15:8.
- ⁸ Harpur, J. (2002) *Sacred Tracks: 2000 years of Christian Pilgrimage* Frances Lincoln Limited, London, p. 108.
- ⁹ Matthew 15:16-20.
- ¹⁰ Matthew 5: 16-18.
- ¹¹ Quoted in Konner, J. (2007) *The Atheists Bible: An illustrious collection of irreverent thoughts*. HarperCollins Publishers, HarperCollins, p. 125.
- ¹² Hebrews 11:3.
- ¹³ John 3:8.
- ¹⁴ Hattersley, R (2005) Faith does breed charity. *The Guardian*, Monday 12 September.
- ¹⁵ Accessed on 17th September using the search items Weinberg, "for good people to do evil things," and "that takes religion." It was done this way because punctuation varied.
- ¹⁶ Weinberg, S. (2001) *Facing Up: Science and its Cultural Adversaries*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 242.
- ¹⁷ John 16:2.
- ¹⁸ John 16:3.
- ¹⁹ James 1:27.
- ²⁰ Giberson, K. and M. Artigas (2007) *Oracles of Science: Celebrity Scientists versus God and Religion*. Oxford University Press. p. 182.
- ²¹ Weinberg, (2001) *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- ²² The qualifier received only 230 hits on Google compared to the 141 000 for the provocative slogan.
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Feature article

The Life of God in the Soul of Man Part 1 Henry Scougal

My dear friend,

This designation doth give you a title to all endeavours whereby I can serve your interests; and your pious inclinations to do so, happily

conspire with my duty, that I shall not need to step out of my road to gratify you--but I may at once perform an office of friendship, and discharge an exercise of my function, since the advancing of virtue and holiness, (which I hope you make your greatest study,) is the peculiar business of my employment. This, therefore, is the most popular instance wherein I can vent my affection, and express my gratitude towards you, and I shall not any longer delay the performance of the promise I made you to this purpose; for though I know you are provided with better helps of this nature than any I can offer you, nor are you like to meet with any thing here which you knew not before, yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleased to honour with your friendship, and which is more particularly designed for your use, will be kindly accepted by you; and God's providence perhaps may so direct my thoughts, that something or other may prove useful to you. Nor shall I doubt your pardon, if, for moulding my discourse into the better frame, I lay a low foundation, beginning with the nature and properties of religion, and all along give such way to my thoughts, in the prosecution of the subject, as may bring me to say many things which were not necessary, did I only consider to whom I am writing.

I cannot speak of religion, but I must lament, that among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means: some placing it in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions; and all the account they can give of their religion is, that they are of this and the other persuasion, and have joined themselves to one of those many sects whereinto Christendom is most unhappily divided. Others place it in the outward man, in a constant course of external duties, and a model of performances. If they live peaceably with their neighbours, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, frequenting the church, or their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves. Others again put all religion in the affections, in rapturous hearts, and ecstatic devotion; and all they aim at is, to pray with passion, and think of heaven with pleasure, and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they persuade themselves they are mightily in love with him, and from thence assume a great confidence of their salvation, which they esteem the chief of Christian graces. Thus are these things which have any resemblance of piety, and at the best are but means of obtaining it, or particular exercises of it, frequently mistaken for the whole of religion: nay, sometimes wickedness and vice pretend to that name. I speak not now of those gross impieties wherewith the Heathens were wont to worship

their gods. There are but too many Christians who would consecrate their vices, and follow their corrupt affections, whose ragged humour and sullen pride must pass for Christian severity; whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies, must be called holy zeal; whose petulance towards their superiors, or rebellion against their governors, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

But certainly religion is quite another thing, and they who are acquainted with it will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows and false imitations of it. They know by experience that true religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle's phrase, "It is Christ formed within us."--Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it a Divine Life: and under these terms I shall discourse of it, showing first, how it is called a life; and then, how it is termed divine.

I choose to express it by the name of life, first, because of its permanency and stability. Religion is not a sudden start, or passion of the mind, not though it should rise to the height of a rapture, and seem to transport a man to extraordinary performances. There are few but have convictions of the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls, which may push them forward some steps with a great deal of seeming haste; but anon they flag and give over. They were in a hot mood, but now they are cooled; they did shoot forth fresh and high, but are quickly withered, because they had no root in themselves. These sudden fits may be compared to the violent and convulsive motions of bodies newly beheaded, caused by the agitations of the animal spirits, after the soul is departed, which, however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance; whereas the motions of holy souls are constant and regular, proceeding from a permanent and lively principle. It is true, this divine life continueth not always in that same strength and vigour, but many times suffers sad decays; and holy men find greater difficulty in resisting temptations, and less alacrity in the performance of their duties. Yet it is not quite extinguished, nor are they abandoned to the power of those corrupt affections, which sway and overrule the rest of the world.

Again, religion may be designed by the name of life, because it is an inward, free, and self-moving principle: and those who have made progress in it, are not actuated only by external motives, driven merely by threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it. The love which a pious man bears to God and

goodness, is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and prompting him to it; nor doth he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute only to appease the divine justice, or quiet his clamorous conscience; but those religious exercises are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of the new-born soul. He prays, and gives thanks, and repents, not only because these things are commanded, but rather because he is sensible of his wants, and of the divine goodness, and of the folly and misery of a sinful life. His charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him; his love makes him willing to give; and though there were no outward obligation, his heart would devise liberal things. Injustice or intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to his temper and constitution, as the basest actions are to the most generous spirit, and impudence and scurrility to those who are naturally modest. So that I may well say with St. John, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Though holy and religious persons do much eye the law of God, and have a great regard unto it, yet it is not so much the sanction of the law, as its reasonableness, and purity, and goodness, which do prevail with them. They account it excellent and desirable in itself, and that in keeping of it there is great reward; and that divine love wherewith they are actuated, makes them become a law unto themselves: Who shall prescribe a law to those that love?

Love's a more powerful law which doth them move.

In a word, what our blessed Saviour said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers, that "it is their meat and drink to do their Father's will." And, as the natural appetite is carried out toward food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives, so they are carried with a natural and unforced propension toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great use to excite and stir up this inward principle, especially in its infancy and weakness, when it is often so languid that the man himself can scarce discern it, hardly being able to move one step forward but when he is pushed by his hopes or his fears, by the pressure of an affliction, or the sense of a mercy, by the authority of the law, or the persuasion of others. Now, if such a person be conscientious and uniform in his obedience, and earnestly groaning under the sense of his dullness, and is desirous to perform his duties with more spirit and vigour, these are the first motions of the divine life, which, though it be faint and weak, will surely be cherished by the influences of heaven, and grow unto greater maturity. But he who is

utterly destitute of this inward principle, and doth not aspire to it, but contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by education or custom, by the fear of hell or carnal notions of heaven, can no more be accounted a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upward. It is cold and spiritless, like the uneasy compliance of a wife married against her will, who carries it dutifully toward the husband whom she does not love, out of some sense of virtue or honour. Hence also this religion is scant and niggardly, especially in those duties which do greatest violence to men's carnal inclinations; and those slavish spirits will be sure to do no more than is absolutely required. It is a law that compels them, and they will be loath to go beyond what it stints them to; nay, they will ever be putting such glosses on it, as may leave themselves the greatest liberty. Whereas, the spirit of true religion is frank and liberal--far from such peevish and narrow reckoning; and he who hath given himself entirely unto God, will never think he doth too much for him.

By this time I hope it doth appear, that religion is with a great deal of reason termed a life, or vital principle, and that it is very necessary to distinguish betwixt it and that obedience which is constrained, and depends upon external causes. I come next to give an account why I designed it by the name of Divine Life: and so it may be called, not only in regard of its fountain and original, having God for its author, and being wrought in the souls of men by the power of his Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay, it is a real participation of his nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endowed with it may be said to have "God dwelling in their souls, and Christ formed within them."

Before I descend to a more particular consideration of that divine life wherein true religion doth consist, it will perhaps be fit to speak a little of that natural or animal life which prevails in those who are strangers to the other: and by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension towards those things which are pleasing and acceptable to nature; or self-love issuing forth and spreading itself into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations. The root and foundation of the animal life, I reckon to be sense, taking it largely, as it is opposed unto faith, and importeth our perception and sensation of those things that are either grateful or troublesome to us. Now these animal affections, considered in themselves, and as they are implanted

in us by nature, are not vicious or blameable; nay, they are instances of the wisdom of the Creator, furnishing his creatures with such appetites as tend to the preservation and welfare of their lives. These are instead of a law unto the brute beasts, whereby they are directed towards the ends for which they were made: but man being made for higher purposes, and to be guided by more excellent laws, becomes guilty and criminal when he is so far transported by the inclinations of this lower life as to violate his duty, or neglect the higher and more noble designs of his creation. Our natural affections are not wholly to be extirpated and destroyed, but only to be moderated and overruled by superior and more excellent principle. In a word, the difference betwixt a religious and wicked man is, that in the one divine life bears sway, in the other the animal life doth prevail.

But it is strange to observe unto what different courses this natural principle will sometimes carry those who are wholly guided by it, according to the diverse circumstances that concur with it to determine them; and then, not considering this doth frequently occasion very dangerous mistakes, making men think well of themselves by reason of that seeming difference which is betwixt them and others, whereas, perhaps, their actions do all the while flow from one and the same original. If we consider the natural temper and constitution of men's souls, we shall find some to be airy, frolicsome, and light, which make their behaviour extravagant and ridiculous; whereas others are naturally serious and severe, and their whole carriage composed into such gravity as gains them a great deal of reverence and esteem. Some are of a humorous, rugged, and morose temper, and can neither be pleased themselves, nor endure that others should be so. But all are not born with such sour and unhappy dispositions; for some persons have a certain sweetness and benignity rooted in their natures; and they find the greatest pleasure in the endearments of society, and the mutual complacency of friends, and covet nothing more than to have every body obliged to them: and it is well that nature hath provided this complexional tenderness, to supply the defect of true charity in the world, and to incline men to do something for one another's welfare. Again, in regard to education, some have never been taught to follow any other rules than those of pleasure or advantage; but others are so inured to observe the strictest rules of decency and honour, and some instances of virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing any thing which they have been accustomed to look upon as base and unworthy.

In fine, it is no small difference in the deportment of mere natural men, that doth arise from the strength or weakness of their wit or judgment,

and from their care and negligence in using them. Intemperance and lust, injustice and oppression, and all those other impieties which abound in the world, and render it so miserable, are the issues of self-love, the effect of the animal life, when it is neither overpowered by religion, nor governed by natural reason: but if it once take hold of reason, and get judgment and wit to be of its party, it will many times disdain the grosser sort of vices, and spring up into fair imitations of virtue and goodness. If a man have but so much reason as to consider the prejudice which intemperance and inordinate lust do bring unto his health, his fortune, and his reputation, self-love may suffice to restrain him; and one may observe the rules of moral justice, in dealing with others, as the best way to secure his own interest, and maintain his credit in the world. But this is not all; for this natural principle, by the help of reason, may take a higher flight, and come nigher the instances of piety and religion: it may incline a man to the diligent study of divine truths; for why should not these, as well as other speculations, be pleasant and grateful to curious and inquisitive minds? It may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating such opinions as they have espoused, and be very desirous that others should submit unto their judgment, and approve the choice of religion which they themselves have made. It may make them delight to hear and compose excellent discourses about the matters of religion; for eloquence is very pleasant, whatever be the subject: nay, some it may dispose to no small height of sensible devotion. The glorious things that are spoken of heaven, may make even a carnal heart in love with it: the metaphors and similitudes made use of in Scripture, of crowns and sceptres, and rivers of pleasure, &c. will easily affect a man's fancy, and make him wish to be there, though he neither understand nor desire those spiritual pleasures which are described and shadowed forth by them: and when such a person comes to believe that Christ has purchased those glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tenderness and affection towards so great a benefactor, and imagine that he is mightily enamoured with him, and yet all the while continue a stranger to the holy temper and spirit of the blessed Jesus; and what hand the natural constitution may have in the rapturous devotions of some melancholy persons, hath been excellently discovered of late by several learned and judicious pens.

To conclude, there is nothing proper to make a man's life pleasant, or himself eminent and conspicuous in the world, but this natural principle, assisted by wit and reason, may prompt him to it: and though I do not condemn those things in themselves, yet it concerns us nearly to know and consider their nature, both that we may keep within due

bounds, and also that we may learn never to value ourselves on the account of such attainments, nor lay the stress of religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

It is now time to return to the consideration of that divine life whereof I was discoursing before, that life which is hid with Christ in God; and therefore hath no glorious show or appearance in the world, and to the natural man will seem a mean and insipid notion. As the animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a man's self, and in his propension towards those things that are pleasing to nature; so the divine life stands in a universal and unbounded affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations, that they may never be able to betray us to those things which we know to be blameable. The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are love to God, charity to man, purity, and humility: for, as an excellent person hath well observed, however these names be common and vulgar, and make no extraordinary sound, yet do they carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. Faith hath the same place in the divine life, which sense hath in the natural, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things; it extends itself unto all divine truths; but in our lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declaration of God's mercy and reconcilableness to sinners through a Mediator; and therefore, receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed faith in Jesus Christ.

The love of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and communion with him, and being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake, or at his pleasure. Though this affection may have its first rise from the favours and mercies of God toward ourselves, yet doth it, in its growth and progress, transcend such particular considerations, and ground itself on his infinite goodness, manifested in all the works of creation and providence. A soul thus possessed with divine love, must needs be enlarged, toward all mankind, in a sincere and unbounded affection, because of the relation they have to God, being his creatures, and having something of his image stamped upon them; and this is that charity I named as the second branch of religion, and under which all the parts of justice, all the duties we owe to our neighbour, are eminently comprehended: for he who doth truly love all the world, will be nearly concerned in the interest of every one; and so far from wronging or injuring any person,

that he will resent any evil that befalls others, as if it happened to himself.

By purity, I understand a due abstractedness from the body, and mastery over the inferior appetites; or such a temper and disposition of mind, as makes a man despise and abstain from all pleasures and delights of sense or fancy, which are sinful in themselves, or tend to extinguish or lessen our relish of more divine and intellectual pleasures; which doth also infer a resoluteness to undergo all those hardships he may meet with in the performance of his duty; so that not only chastity and temperance, but also Christian courage and magnanimity, may come under this head.

Humility imports a deep sense of our own meanness, with hearty and affectionate acknowledgment of our owing all that we are to the divine bounty; which is always accompanied with a profound submission to the will of God, and great deadness toward the glory of the world and applause of men.

These are the highest perfections that either men or angels are capable of--the very foundation of heaven laid in the soul; and he who hath attained them, needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him, written in his own breast. His love to God may give him assurance of God's favour to him; and those beginnings of happiness, which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his soul to the nature of God, and compliance with his will, are a sure pledge that his felicity shall be perfected, and continued to all eternity; and it is not without reason that one said, "I had rather see the real impressions of a God-like nature upon my own soul, than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me that my name was enrolled in the book of life."

When we have said all that we can, the secret mysteries of a new nature and divine life can never be sufficiently expressed: language and words cannot reach them; nor can they be truly understood but by those souls that are enkindled within, and awakened unto the sense and relish of spiritual things: "There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth this understanding." The power and life of religion may be better expressed in actions than in words; because actions are more lively things, and do better represent the inward principle whence they proceed; and, therefore, we may take the best measure of those

gracious endowments from the deportment of those in whom they reside; especially as they are perfectly exemplified in the holy life of our blessed Saviour, a main part of whose business in this world was to teach, by his practice, what he did require of others,--and to make his own conversation an exact resemblance of those unparalleled rules which he prescribed; so that if ever true goodness was visible to mortal eyes, it was then, when his presence did beautify and illustrate this lower world.

That sincere and devout affection wherewith his blessed soul did constantly burn towards his heavenly Father, did express itself in an entire resignation to his will; it was his very "meat to do the will, and finish the work of him that sent him." This was the exercise of his childhood, and the constant employment of his riper age. He spared no travel or pains while he was about his Father's business, but took such infinite content and satisfaction in the performance of it, that when, being faint and weary with his journey, he rested himself on Jacob's well, and entreated water of the Samaritan woman. The success of his conference with her, and the accession that was made to the kingdom of God, filled his mind with such delight, as seemed to have redounded to his very body, refreshing his spirits, and making him forget the thirst whereof he complained before, and refuse the meat which he had sent his disciples to buy. Nor was he less patient and submissive in suffering the will of God, than diligent in the doing of it: he endured the sharpest afflictions and extremest miseries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without repining thought, or discontented word: for though he was far from a stupid insensibility, or a fantastic or stoical obstinacy, and had as quick a sense of pain as other men, and the deepest apprehension of what he was to suffer in his soul, (as his bloody sweat, and the sore amazement and sorrow which he professed, do abundantly declare,) yet did he entirely submit to that severe disposition of providence, and willingly acquiesced in it.

And he prayed to God, that "if it were possible," (or, as one of the Evangelists hath it, "if he were willing,") "that cup might be removed:" yet he gently added, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Of what strange importance are the expressions, John xii. 27. where he first acknowledgeth the anguish of his spirit, "Now is my soul troubled," (which would seem to produce a kind of demur,) "and what shall I say?" And then he goes on to deprecate his sufferings, "Father, save me from this hour;" which he had no sooner uttered, but he doth, as it were, on second thoughts, recall it in these words, "But for this cause came I into the world;" and concludes, "Father, glorify thy name." Now,

we must not look on this as any levity, or blameable weakness in the blessed Jesus: he knew all along what he was to suffer, and did most resolutely undergo it; but it shows us the inconceivable weight and pressure that he was to bear, which, being so afflicting, and contrary to nature, he could not think of without terror; yet considering the will of God, and the glory which was to redound from him thence, he was not only content, but desirous to suffer it.

Another instance of his love to God was his delight in conversing with him by prayer, which made him frequently retire himself from the world, and, with the greatest devotion and pleasure, spend whole nights in that heavenly exercise, though he had not sins to confess, and but few secular interests to pray for; which, alas! are almost the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions. Nay, we may say his whole life was a kind of prayer; a constant course of communion with God: if the sacrifice was not always offering, yet was the fire still kept alive; nor was ever the blessed Jesus surprised with that dulness, or tepidity of spirit, which we must many times wrestle with before we can be fit for the exercise of devotion.

In the second place, I should speak of his love and charity toward all men: but he who would express it, must transcribe the history of the gospel, and comment upon it; for scarce any thing is recorded to have been done or spoken by him, which was not designed for the good and advantage of some one or other.--All his miraculous works were instances of his goodness as well as his power; and they benefited those on whom they were wrought, as well as they amazed the beholders. His charity was not confined to his kindred or relations; nor was all his kindness swallowed up in the endearment of that peculiar friendship which he carried toward his beloved disciple; but every one was his friend who obeyed his holy commands, John xv. 14. And whosoever did the will of his Father, the same was to him as his brother, sister, and mother.

Never was any unwelcome to him who came with an honest intention, nor did he deny any request which tended to the good of those that asked it: so that what was spoken of that Roman emperor, who, for his goodness, was called the darling of mankind, was really performed by him, that never any departed from him with a heavy countenance, except that rich youth, who was sorry to hear that the kingdom of heaven stood at so high a rate, and that he could not save his soul and his money too. And certainly it troubled our Saviour, to see that when a price was in his hand to get wisdom, yet he had no heart to it. The

ingenuity that appeared in his first address had already procured some kindness for him; for it is said, "and Jesus, beholding him, loved him:" but must he, for his sake, cut out a new way to heaven, and alter the nature of things, which make it impossible that a covetous man should be happy?

And what shall I speak of his meekness, who could encounter the monstrous ingratitude and dissimulation of that miscreant who betrayed him, in no harsher terms than these: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" What farther evidence could we desire of his fervent and unbounded charity, than that he willingly laid down his life even for his most bitter enemies; and mingling his prayers with his blood, besought the Father that his death might not be laid to their charge, but might become the means of eternal life to those very persons who procured it?

The third branch of the divine life is purity, which, as I said consists in a neglect of worldly enjoyment accommodations, in a resolute enduring of all such troubles as we meet with in doing of our duty. Now surely, if ever any person was wholly dead to all the pleasures of the natural life, it was the blessed Jesus, who seldom tasted them when they came in his way; but never stepped out of his road to seek them. Though he allowed others the comforts of wedlock, and honoured marriage with his presence, yet he chose the severity of a virgin life, and never knew the nuptial bed: and though at the same time he supplied the want of wine with a miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger in the wilderness; so gracious and divine was the temper of his soul, in allowing to others such lawful gratifications as himself thought good to abstain from, and supplying not only their more extreme and pressing necessities, but also their smaller and less considerable wants. We many times hear of our Saviour's sighs, and groans, and tears; but never that he laughed; and but once that he rejoiced in spirit: so that through his whole life, he did exactly answer that character given of him by the prophet of old, that he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Nor were the troubles and disaccommodations of his life other than matters of choice; for never did there any appear on the stage of the world with greater advantages to have raised himself to the highest secular felicity. He who would bring together such a prodigious number of fishes into his disciples' net, and, at another time, receive that tribute from a fish which he was to pay to the temple, might easily have made himself the richest person in the world. Nay, without any money, he could have maintained an army powerful enough to have justled Cesar out of his throne, having oftener than once

fed several thousands with a few loaves and small fishes; but, to show how small esteem he had of all the enjoyments in the world, he chose to live in so poor and mean a condition, "that though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet he, who was Lord and heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head." He did not frequent the courts of princes, nor affect the acquaintance or converse of great ones; but, being reputed the son of a carpenter, he had fishermen, and such other poor people for his companions, and lived at such a rate as suited with the meanness of that condition.

And thus I am brought unawares to speak of his humility, the last branch of the divine life; wherein he was a most eminent pattern to us, that we might "learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart." I shall not now speak of that infinite condescension of the eternal Son of God, in taking our nature upon him, but only reflect on our Saviour's lowly and humble deportment while he was in the world. He had none of those sins and imperfections which may justly humble the best of men; but he was so entirely swallowed up with a deep sense of the infinite perfections of God, that he appeared as nothing in his own eyes; I mean so far as he was a creature. He considered those eminent perfections which shined in his blessed soul, not as his own, but the gifts of God; and therefore assumed nothing to himself for them, but, with the profoundest humility, renounced all pretences to them. Hence did he refuse that ordinary compellation of "Good Master," when addressed to his human nature, by one who, it seems, was ignorant of his divinity: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but God only;" as if he had said, 'The goodness of any creature (and such only thou takest me to be) is not worthy to be named or taken notice of. It is God alone who is originally and essentially good.' He never made use of his miraculous power for vanity or ostentation. He would not gratify the curiosity of the Jews with a sign from heaven, some prodigious appearance in the air; nor would he follow the advice of his countrymen and kindred, who would have all his great works performed in the eyes of the world, for gaining him the greater fame. but when his charity had prompted him to the relief of the miserable, his humility made him many times enjoin the concealment of the miracle; and when the glory of God, and the design for which he came into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribeth the honour of all to his Father, telling them, "that of himself he was able to do nothing."

I cannot insist on all the instances of humility in his deportment towards men: his withdrawing himself when they would have made him a king; his subjection, not only to his blessed mother, but to her

husband, during his younger years; and his submission to all the indignities and affronts which his rude and malicious enemies did put upon him. The history of his holy life, recorded by those who convened with him, is full of such passages as these; and indeed the serious and attentive study of it is the best way to get right measures of humility, and all the other parts of religion which I have been endeavouring to describe.

But now, that I may lessen your trouble of reading a long letter, by making some pauses in it, let me here subjoin a prayer, that might be proper when one, who had formally entertained some false notions of religion, begins to discover what it is.

A PRAYER.

Infinite and eternal Majesty! Author and Fountain of being and blessedness! how little do we poor sinful creatures know of thee, or the way to serve and please thee! We talk of religion, and pretend unto it; but, alas! how few are there that know and consider what it means! How easily do we mistake the affections of our nature, and issues of self-love, for those divine graces which alone can render us acceptable In thy sight! It may justly grieve me to consider, that I should have wandered so long, and contented myself so often with vain shadows and false images of piety and religion; yet I cannot but acknowledge and adore thy goodness, who hast been pleased, in some measure, to open mine eyes, and let me see what it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoice to consider what mighty improvements my nature is capable of, and what a divine temper of spirit doth shine in those whom thou art pleased to choose, and causest to approach unto thee. Blessed be thine infinite mercy, who sentest thine own Son to dwell among men, and instruct them by his example as well as his laws, giving them a perfect pattern of what they ought to be. O that the holy life of the blessed Jesus may be always in my thoughts, and before mine eyes, till I receive a deep sense and impression of those excellent graces that shined so eminently in him! And let me never cease my endeavours, till that new and divine nature prevail in my soul, and Christ be formed within me.

Henry Scougal (1650-1678) was a Scottish theologian, minister and author. This excerpt is taken from his widely acclaimed *“The Life Of God In The Soul Of Man*, Nichols and Noyes, Boston. It was published when he was just eighteen years old.

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