



The Life of God in the Soul of Man





The Life of God in the Soul of Man



Henry Scougal

Edited by Joshua Schwisow



Copyright © 2026 by Generations
All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America
1st Printing, 2026
ISBN: 978-1-968345-00-6

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version
of the Holy Bible. Public Domain in the United States.

Book Design: Turley and Sons Design Co.

Published by:
Generations
PO Box 1398
Elizabeth, Colorado 80107
www.generations.org

For more information on this and other
titles from Generations, visit:
Generations.org or call (888) 389-9080



Contents



Introduction..... 7

PART 1

On Religion; the Natural and Divine Life; and the
Exemplification of Divine Love in Our Blessed
Savior 11

PART 2

On the Excellency of Religion
and Divine Love 45

PART 3

On the Difficulties and Duties
of the Christian Life 71





Introduction



This little book has changed lives. In particular, Scougal's work was an instrumental work in laying the foundation for the ministry of Great Awakening preachers including George Whitefield and John Wesley. Though Scougal's book was published many decades before the Great Awakening, yet it was read with great benefit by George Whitefield, who credited Scougal's book with producing a turning point in his thinking concerning true conversion. Here is what Whitefield said about Scougal's book:

*God showed me that I must be born again,
or be damned! I learned that a man may*

go to church, say his prayers, receive the sacrament, and yet not be a Christian. How did my heart rise and shudder, like a poor man that is afraid to look into his account-books, lest he should find himself a bankrupt. 'Shall I burn this book? Shall I throw it down? Or shall I search it?' I did search it; and, holding the book in my hand, thus addressed the God of heaven and earth: 'Lord, if I am not a Christian, or if I am not a real one, for Jesus Christ's sake, show me what Christianity is that I may not be damned at last!' God soon showed me, for in reading a few lines further, that, 'true religion is a union of the soul with God, and Christ formed within us', a ray of Divine light was instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and from that moment, but not till then, did I know what I must become a new creature.

Whitefield's testimony of Scougal's impact is the most well-known. But many others have been greatly influenced by Scougal's book since its publication. It is a book of enduring value. The Life of God in the Soul of Man answers several vitally important questions: what is true religion?

What is real Christianity? What does it mean to be a real Christian? Scougal answers on the basis of Scripture: true religion is to be alive in Christ. Through regeneration (or the new birth), we become spiritually alive, and now what motivates us is that divine life within, rather than living a certain way because we are constrained by external pressures. We live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

Because this work is of such enduring value and edification, we have reprinted it here with minimal changes to the original. In this edition of Scougal's work, we have left the original text unaltered, with the exception of modernized and US spelling of some words. When Scougal quotes or alludes to Scripture, a footnote is provided with the reference. Occasional explanatory notes are also provided as an aid to the reader.

Scougal was born in 1650 and died in 1678 of tuberculosis. He was just 27 or 28 years old when he died. However, despite his youth, Scougal had become an ordained minister in Scotland, and also served as a Divinity professor at the University of Aberdeen. Scougal was learned in theology and also gifted with a knowledge of various languages

including Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. In his few years of ministry, Scougal wrote a number of works. But the one for which he is most remembered and is still often read today is *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677).

Joshua Schwisow, Editor
January, AD 2026



PART I



On Religion; the Natural and Divine Life; and the Exemplification of Divine Love in Our Blessed Savior

My dear friend,

This designation doth give you a title to all endeavors 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 anything here which you knew not before, yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleased to honor 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 molding 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 neighbors, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship,¹ frequenting the church, or their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves.² 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 Savior, 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.³ Thus are these things which have any resemblance of piety, and at the best are but means of obtaining it, or

-
- 1 To pay attention to the spiritual fruit or inward response which comes from worship
 - 2 Scougal is saying that those who can “check off” the kinds of things on this list may believe they are sufficient indicators of possessing true religion.
 - 3 Scougal is describing what we might call “emotionalism” where the emotions or affections towards God are the chief indicator of true religion.

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 humour⁴ and sullen pride must pass for Christian severity; whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies, must be called holy zeal; whose petulancy⁵ towards their superiors, or rebellion against their governors, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

The Nature of Religion a Divine Life

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,

4 a rough, irregular, ill-tempered disposition

5 childish, sulky, or bad-tempered behavior

"It is Christ formed within us."⁶—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 anon⁷ they flag⁸ 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.⁹ 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

6 Gal. 4:19

7 soon, shortly

8 become tired, weaker, or less enthusiastic

9 Matt. 13:6, 21

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 vigor, 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.¹⁰ 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 scurrility¹¹ 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.”¹² 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;

10 charitable or generous activity

11 low, vulgar, indecent, or abusive language

12 1 John 3:9

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 Savior said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers, that "it is their meat and drink to do their Father's will."¹³ 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 propension¹⁴ 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 languid¹⁵ 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.

¹³ John 4:34

¹⁴ a natural inclination, tendency, or disposition toward something

¹⁵ weak or faint

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 vigor, 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 honor. Hence also this religion is scant and niggardly¹⁶, 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

16 In this context, Scougal uses the word "niggardly" to refer to a religion that is sparse in doing any good. It is lacking in charity and good works.

required. It is a law that compels them, and they will be loath to go beyond what it stints¹⁷ 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 liberal¹⁸—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.

Life as a Vital Principle Producing Action

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

17 to restrain within certain limits, to bound, to confine

18 charitable or generous

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 life¹⁹ which prevails in those who are strangers to the other: and by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension²⁰ 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

19 life as governed by the physical senses or appetites

20 a natural inclination, tendency, or disposition toward something

to the preservation and welfare of their lives.²¹ 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 extirpated²² 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.²³

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

21 Our physical senses and appetites are not in themselves bad or evil. They have a purpose as designed by God. But we are also made for more than the physical realm and we were made for more than physical appetites.

22 to root out, to eradicate, to destroy totally

23 This aligns with Paul's distinction between the "natural man" and the "spiritual man" (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

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 behavior 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 humorous²⁴, 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 benignity²⁵ 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 everybody obliged to them: and it

24 Scougal uses this word in an older sense to refer to being given to a particular "humor" or "disposition". The idea is that one is affected by one's poor temper and cannot be pleased.

25 kindness and benevolence

is well that nature hath provided this complexional tenderness,²⁶ 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 honor, and some instances of virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing anything which they have been accustomed to look upon as base and unworthy.

In fine,²⁷ 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,²⁸ 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

26 God has made mankind with some measure of natural virtue to show tenderness, compassion, and concern for fellow human beings.

27 "in short" or "to sum up"

28 the effects of self-love

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 scepters, and rivers of pleasure, etc., 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 enamored 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.²⁹

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,

29 Scougal says that some may be drawn to religious things and the beauty of Scripture or the desirableness of heaven, but still not be inwardly changed by the Holy Spirit. In this case, the person in view has a fleshly interest or desire toward these things, but no real love for God.

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.

The Divine Life Hid with Christ in God

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;³⁰ and therefore hath no glorious show or appearance in the world, and to the natural man will seem a mean and insipid notion.³¹ As the animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a man's self, and in his propension³² 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

30 Col. 3:3

31 the natural man will have no understanding or interest in this spiritual life

32 a natural inclination, tendency, or disposition toward something

faith;³³ 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.³⁴

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

33 Gal. 2:20

34 Faith is a spiritual sense which enables us to see those things which are invisible to the natural eye. See Heb. 11:27.

thing for his sake, or at his pleasure. Though this affection may have its first rise from the favors 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 neighbor, 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,³⁵ may come under this head.

Humility imports a deep sense of our own meanness,³⁶ 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.³⁷

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

35 generous or forgiving, even toward enemies, and those who mistreat us

36 our own smallness or frailty

37 Paul references both of these things in Galatians (Gal. 1:10, 6:14).

concerning him, written in his own breast.³⁸ His love to God may give him assurance of God's favor 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."³⁹ The power and life of religion may be better expressed in actions than in

38 One does not determine whether one is "elect" according to God's decree by attempting to pry into God's secret decree (we don't have access to the rolls of heaven). Instead, we know that we are the elect of God by the evidence of the Spirit's work in our lives. Peter directs us to make our "calling and election sure" by the pursuit of godly virtue (2 Pet. 1:5-10).

39 Job 32:8

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 deportment⁴⁰ of those in whom they reside; especially as they are perfectly exemplified in the holy life of our blessed Savior, 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 conversation⁴¹ 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.

The Divine Life Exemplified in the Life of the Lord Jesus

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

40 a person's behavior or manners

41 conduct

will, and finish the work of him that sent him."⁴² 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 repining⁴³ 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,

⁴² John 4:34

⁴³ fretting, complaining, discontent

(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.”⁴⁴ Of what strange importance are the expressions, John 12:27. 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.”⁴⁵ 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

⁴⁴ Matt. 26:39, 42

⁴⁵ John 12:27

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 dullness, or tepidity of spirit,⁴⁶ 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

46 a non-enthusiastic spirit

comment upon it; for scarce anything is recorded to have been done or spoken by him, which was not designed for the good and advantage of someone 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 everyone was his friend who obeyed his holy commands.⁴⁷ And whosoever did the will of his Father, the same was to him as his brother, sister, and mother.⁴⁸

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,”⁴⁹ was really performed by him, that never

47 John 15:14

48 Mark 3:35

49 “the darling of mankind” is a translation of the Latin *amor ac deliciae generis humani* (“the love and delight of the human race”) which was applied to some Roman emperors such as Titus

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.⁵⁰ And certainly it troubled our Savior, 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.”⁵¹ 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 dissimulation⁵² of that miscreant who betrayed him, in no harsher terms than these: “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”⁵³ 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

⁵⁰ Mark 10:17-22

⁵¹ Mark 10:21

⁵² pretense or hypocritical behavior

⁵³ Luke 22:48

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 honored 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 Savior's sighs, and groans, and tears;⁵⁴ but never that he laughed; and but once that he rejoiced in spirit:⁵⁵ 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."⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ 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 justled⁵⁸ Caesar 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,

54 Heb. 5:7

55 Luke 10:21

56 Isa. 53:3

57 earthly happiness

58 to run against, to strike, to clash with

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."⁵⁹ 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."⁶⁰ 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 Savior'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

⁵⁹ Luke 9:58

⁶⁰ Matt. 11:29

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 pretenses to them. Hence did he refuse that ordinary compellation⁶¹ 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;”⁶² 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

61 title or manner of address

62 Mark 10:18

into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribeth the honor of all to his Father, telling them, "that of himself he was able to do nothing."⁶³

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 endeavoring 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.

⁶³ John 5:30

Closing 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 endeavors, till that new and divine nature prevail in my soul, and Christ be formed within me.