

THE LIFE OF GOD
(J.F.M.H. – 5.5.2016)

The foundation of all religion, and all life is belief in God, the Supreme Spirit, who alone exists of Himself, and is infinite in all perfections. To feel His help and experience His kindness is the purpose of all spiritual ambition. For He is not merely the beginning but the end of all things; from Him we come and to Him we go. It is this overwhelming thought of God which is generally our primary view of Him, for his intimate relationship between Himself and creation, between Him and all the intricate complications that make up the sum of human life. The Old Testament is full of this nearness of all things to Him. The holy men of Israel are all marked with this sign of their appreciation of the Divine Presence. Many writers have attempted to describe God, usually by including in the description the perfections of His many attributes, and mostly these explanations are lengthy. God, when asked by Moses for a description of Himself to identify Him to the Israelites, used only a single attribute, His existence, replying, "I am who am," as all of God's attributes are perfect they have the unique property of being inclusive of all His other attributes. Once we have said, "He is" (Exodus 3.14) we have included all of them. It is a very short description.

Obedying the wishes of our Bishop several members of our parish are currently engaged in working our way through a book called 'The Big Picture' which comes with a helpful DVD. It involves a limited amount of studying the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It asks us to go over the grounds for what we believe about ourselves, the Bible and God's big plan. As anybody who has tried to think about God and His Creation, but lacked the training or words to express their conclusions adequately, quickly seek help from those who are better educated and have had the training and written about these subjects. Hence my gratitude goes to Fr. Bede Jarrett O.P. and St Nicholas of Flue (A Hermit who is famous for the severity of His Fasting. A Church investigation confirmed the fact that he has lived on The Blessed Sacrament alone.) The second thing we are doing is to combine this reading with another course on DVD called a "Life in the Spirit" titled 'The Gift'. Most of our knowledge about God is revealed by Christ through the Catholic Church, so a study of the Bible and of the Church Christ founded to teach the truth is not only helpful, but necessary.

There are two principles of action, duty and love. The first follows the law of being, the second the lure of love. To do ones duty is really nothing else than to fulfil the purpose of our existence. It is the natural development of the being itself. The duty of either soul or body signifies just that. The soul using to the fullest its every power, the body putting to the highest exercise all the wonderful capacities given it and using them for the purpose intended, by their creator. This law puts into practice all the facilities of our nature. But love is the attraction, which beauty sets to the will under the impulse of discerning reason. That is to say, when we love it is because reason has discovered something that calls from our heart an echo, something to which we eagerly go forward. Even to love oneself is nothing other than to discover in oneself, by reflex action, that there are certain excellences in us, which appeal strongly to us, make us, as it were, go out to it. The ideas described in the words "ought," "must," "etc.," the feeling of a moral obligation, are responsible for one half of human actions; the other half is governed by the appeal made to us by things, people, actions, that attract us. Doing what my Creator intended for me, and loving the lovable, is the sum-total of my life.

Now we can say, with obvious modifications, that these two laws can be found also in God Himself. The forces whereby God the Father, (in our human language), begot the Son, and whereby from the Father and Son proceeded the Holy Spirit, are termed not free, but natural. That is the precise phrase of the theologian, by which he endeavours to say, in language that is of scientific construction, that the Father in knowing Himself in the Son and loving Himself in the Holy Spirit could not have done otherwise, could not have chosen otherwise. He was not free to have acted differently. Not of course, that He was compelled to this by some higher power, for there can be no higher power than God; but it is out of the

very essence of His own being that this act of life comes. Again, too, it should be noted that when we say of God that He loves anything that He has made, we cannot suppose that His love is caught by something outside of Himself. He cannot be affected by anything that is outside of Him or He would not be an independent God. What He sees in us worthy of love, is not us, but His own reflection; He is enamoured of the loveliness of Himself. That is we must not look upon Him as at all influenced by any higher power, for He is Himself the highest power there is.

Yet there is also a third law, which is goodness. It consults no interest, awaits no command, and solicits no attraction of beauty. In a sense it includes in itself the law of being in so far as it is a spontaneous movement of nature, and the law of beauty in so far as goodness is beauty's highest perfection. It almost seems nobler than both; for it was divine beauty and divine being that were led by Divine Goodness to create the world. There was certainly no obligation on God's part to call the world into existence. We are compelled by our belief in God to say that He had no need for us. He could have been perfectly happy without us; hence we cannot say that His nature forced Him to have us. Neither could we pretend that God could see in us any beauty that attracted Him. We did not even influence Him to create us. Consequently we have to suppose that some sort of divine generosity which apart from the movement of His nature, led Him to make the world. It was as though "He heard the cry of worlds that were not, the cry of unmeasured misery calling to unbounded goodness." (Fr Bede Jarrett quotes P. B. Shelley, Prometheus Unbound, Act I) My attitude therefore, to God must be one of intense thankfulness that I have had the gift of life, that with His own perfect generosity, without any advantage to Himself (though indeed finding pleasure in it), He began the world. And all the subsequent kindnesses lavished on me are again not demanded from Him by Himself, but are the spontaneous gift of His goodness.

All the qualities we see in God the Son are available for us. Only too often we fail to make use of them. It is a common fault, and an abuse of our Free Will, even though Christ told us "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will not cast out." (John 6.37)

"Filled with My Spirit, how you will grow!
You are My branches; I am the tree.
If you are faithful, others will know
You are alive in Me."

**My God and my Lord, take from me whatever keeps me from You.
My God and my Lord, give me everything that leads me to You.
My God and my Lord, take me from myself and give me all to You.**
(St Nicholas of Flue)