

The human mind, being created, has an understandable uneasiness about the Uncreated. We do not find it comfortable to allow for the presence of One who is wholly outside of the circle of our familiar knowledge. We tend to be disquieted by the thought of One who does not account to us for His being, who is responsible to no one, who is self-existent, self-dependent, and self-sufficient.

A.W. Tozer

AN INFORMED DEVOTION

part one

THE HABIT OF YOUTH

(at least the youth of my generation) dictated that when happening upon a body of water larger than a bucket or backyard swimming pool, one would immediately begin collecting any small, smooth stones lying in the vicinity. Each stone would, in turn, be grasped by its edges between thumb and forefinger, then spun out on a low trajectory across the surface of the water—the object being to see how many times one could skip the stone, glanced off the surface, before it would run out of momentum and sink.

As with most such youthful occupations, competition made the process more interesting, and two young boys could while away a fair portion of a hot summer afternoon skipping stones across the surface of a lake. The prize? Well, the champ didn't win much of anything; the prestige was fleeting, quickly forgotten even before the next activity. But it was something to do.

REVELATION

Here is the picture of the relationship most Christians choose to have with God. Uncomfortable with anything deeper, they

skip lightly across the surface of Deity, glancing off here and there, picking up little snippets of knowledge, keeping only what is pleasant and throwing away the rest.

For the most part we do not know our God. We stumble through our days laboring under well-meaning but ill-conceived notions about Him, clinging to hazy images picked up originally in the Sunday School of decades past, or from the bilge spouted by guests being interviewed outside the latest celebrity funeral. When something pleasant happens, we pronounce our God to be good and loving. But when something unpleasant transpires, we're left bewildered: *How could a loving God have let this happen?*

The "He" so many of us are reluctant to know is a fascinating, complex God who nonetheless reveals Himself in rather alarming detail in Scripture. There certainly are mysteries about Him, but far fewer than we imagine. For the most part, God

delights in telling us all about Himself, His methods, His habits and ways.

God revealed Himself best when He sent His Son, for Jesus was not only all-God on the inside, but He displayed God to us on the outside.

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works."

John 14:7-10

Rather than with the haphazard skipping of a stone across the surface, our devotion to Him it is to be with the penetrating submersion of a high dive. We are to come

to God armed with a realization of His personality, as well as an openness of spirit and honesty of heart. Good intentions alone may be sufficient in today's society, but they will go only so far toward establishing and nurturing a relationship with a holy God.

Through the inspiration and penning of His word, and the sacrificial birth, life, and death of His Son, God has gone out of His way to reveal Himself to us. And when we worship Him, we are to worship—in a knowledgeable, well-reasoned way—the truth of His awesome personality.

"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 4:22-24

LIFE IN HIMSELF

"Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:

**'I am the first and I am the last,
And there is no God besides Me.'"**

Isaiah 44:6

"For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man."

John 5:26-27

It may be one of the most difficult concepts for the human mind to grasp—yet, once grasped, it becomes the determining link that sets into proper perspective the God-man relationship.

Within the system of earth, nothing generates spontaneously on its own. If a sprout emerges from the soil, seemingly for no apparent reason, then it is the result of something—squirrel, rain, wind, bird—setting a seed there. If the wind suddenly comes up, it has been generated by invisible weather patterns. If a chicken is hatched, it is because an egg was laid. Every occurrence in this world is the result of something else.

Cause and effect is the rule.

But God is unique. He did not have a beginning, as He will not have an end. Nothing greater than He set the seed for God; He was neither born, nor created.

No one gave Him life. Rather, God *is* life; He is the generator from which life is created. On earth, the generator that makes electricity has been created by other machines and human hands. But in heaven, the Generator of life is self-existent. He not only is self-generating—*He was never generated in the first place*. God always has been.

And there is no God besides Him.

TOO PROUD TO PRAY

**Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales;
Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.**

Isaiah 40:15

**The Lord sustains all who fall
And raises up all who are bowed down.**

Psalms 145:14

There is no better example of the yawning gulf between heavenly and earthly logic than the concept of self worth. To the minions preaching the faux gospel of self-determination, the individual has taken up residence on whatever throne there is in their lives.

This nauseating philosophy has been evangelized to countless graduating classes—encapsulated in the ubiquitous poem, *Invictus*:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

William Ernest Henley

■ ■ ■

In ancient days there existed a contrived panoply of deities—one for every day of the week, every river and tree and impressive mount. These demigods could be consulted much as one would select from a dinner menu, used for whatever plea, confession or absolution was appropriate for the moment. But this must be said of the ancients: they at least *had* their gods.

They at least had *something* they considered larger than themselves.

Today the god is self. Today the individual is taught that he or she does not need any god beyond themselves. But the concept isn't new; it is, in fact, as old as Adam:

The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:2-6

And 134 years ago then President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, addressed the same misguided conception of man:

We have forgotten the gracious hand which has preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving Grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.

There is no good way to convince a stranger to God that His ways are best. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that turns someone from the worship of self to the worship of an all-powerful God. But, once the Spirit is in residence, we can nurture this eternal precept by each day falling to our knees before the One who made us.



© 2007 David S. Lampel. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible (Updated Edition). Listening is published weekly. For a free subscription, go to <http://dlampel.com/subscribe/>.