

Greetings church,

Henri adds a brief epilogue to round out and reflect upon his stated purpose from the prologue. You'll recall that in the prologue we learned that Henri's impetus for writing this book was that it was a very specific effort to write of the width, breadth, and depth of the love of God for a distinctively secular audience. Though this book has been incredibly important for, now, generations of Christian believers we were not the originally intended audience. Henri's friend who was a nominal Jew, newspaper article writer, and aspiring novelist and his secular friends looking for hope were the intended audience. I am sorry to report to you, as Henri is to us, that he failed in his effort.

"During our long conversations about the text of this book, it became increasingly clear that, although Fred had many good things to say about my words to him, I had not been able to do what he had hoped for. He had shown the manuscript to two of his friends, and it was clear that neither of them had been deeply touched."¹ What Henri comes to understand is that there is a divide between the language used by the sacred and the secular. It's like two different dialects. While the sacred and the secular are both speaking English, they are not speaking the same language. While people in the South and people in California are both speaking English, they are often not speaking the same language. This was a hard lesson for Henri to learn and it is a beneficial lesson for us as our nation continues to divide deeper and deeper along sacred and secular lines. We desperately need to recognize that we are speaking different dialects and begin the search for common ground. And this is not only applicable across the sacred/secular divide, but it is also applicable across different dialects of the secular! Perhaps we need a cohesive, consistent sacred language before we can even begin to have a constructive conversation with our secular friends and colleagues.

I sincerely hope this journey through "Life of the Beloved" has been helpful and encouraging. I further hope that you might have been encouraged to pick up and read a copy for yourself. Thank you for taking the time to go on this journey with me.

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Eddie

¹ Nouwen, Henri J.M. Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World. The Crossroad Publishing Company; New York, NY: 1992. p.142