



ACETICAL THEOLOGY

What does *Regula Vitae* mean?

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REGULA VITAE IS A LATIN PHRASE that, translated into English, means “a rule of life.” The meaning of the phrase, “a rule of life,” is one that every Christian ought to consider at some point. While studying this phrase, and what it has to do with us, it is helpful to understand that our English word, *regular*, is derived from the Latin word, *regula*.

Essentially, a “rule of life” is a private “rule” of prayer; that is to say, it is a thoughtful, personal, and conscious lifestyle that encourages one to grow closer to God and to become more and more like Him through a *regular* devotional life. To put it another way, to have a “rule” is to be a “regular” Christian, and to be a “regular” Christian is to be “... one who embraces the Christian life as opposed to the keen ‘draftee’ who goes to Church fairly often and tries to say his prayers now and again.”

According to The Rev'd Martin Thornton, an Anglican priest and author of *Christian Proficiency*, “A Christian regular is one who chooses to undertake his common obligations and duties, and to develop his personal spirituality, by acknowledging, accepting or ‘embracing’ some total scheme, system, pattern or ‘rule’ of prayer.” From this definition of what it means to be a “regular” Christian, we can see that being “regular,” that is, being a Christian who lives by a “rule,” is a matter of choice. To be a “regular” Christian is to choose to live a thought-out and intentional life of devotion.

As individuals, each of us should have our own “rule of life.” This is because a rule of life is not something that comes to the Christian as a one-size-fits-all. In fact, as our lives change, so should our rule. As Thornton says, “[A rule of life] should ‘fit,’ and the soul should ‘grow into it,’ so that by habitual use prayer fully becomes a solidly established part of life and personality—and this is the real meaning of the word *regular*.”