



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

January 2025

Home Worship

Rev Robin Wooldridge

The Concept of Regeneration: Four Lessons for Everyday Life

Lesson 1: Awakening to the Spiritual Path

The Teachings teach that regeneration begins with a moment of awakening, when we start to recognise that our lives are part of something much larger and more meaningful than we had previously thought. This can happen in many different ways: through a personal crisis, an unexpected insight, or a growing sense that there is more to life than material success and daily routines. This awakening can be sudden or gradual, but it is always a moment of deep realization. We start to sense that there is a spiritual world and that our lives here on earth are connected to a higher purpose.

This stage mirrors the message found in the Bible when Jesus tells Nicodemus about the need for a spiritual rebirth:

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”
(John 3:3)

The Teachings emphasise that this "birth" is not a physical event but a spiritual one:

“A person’s first state after being born is called reformation. This takes place when the person begins to think about heaven and the spiritual life.” (True Christian Religion, 571)

This is a time when we start to reflect on who we are, why we are here and what happens after this life. In this stage of awakening, the soul begins to long for deeper truths and higher values. Often, we may feel called to read spiritual literature, seek out meaningful conversations, or engage in prayer and meditation. The awakening is like a seed being planted in our hearts, ready to grow into something beautiful if we nurture it.

But this initial stage is just the beginning. Regeneration is a journey that requires our willingness to change and grow. As we continue along the path, we will experience challenges and growth opportunities that will shape us spiritually.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, open my heart to the stirrings of Your Spirit within me. Help me to see that my life has a higher purpose and lead me on the path to a deeper connection with You. Strengthen my desire for spiritual truth and guide me as I awaken to Your presence in my life. Amen.



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Lesson 2: The Struggle Between Good and Evil

After we awaken to the spiritual life, we quickly realize that it's not an easy path. This is because regeneration involves a very real inner battle between good and evil, or between our higher, divine nature and our lower, selfish desires. According to the Teachings, this struggle is an essential part of the regeneration process. The Teachings refers to it as the "combat of temptation," where we face spiritual trials that test our commitment to living a better life.

Temptations come in many forms. They can be moments of doubt, fear, anger, or selfishness that try to pull us away from the good we are striving for. When we try to change, our old habits and tendencies often push back. This can be uncomfortable and challenging, but it is through this very struggle that we grow stronger spiritually.

The Teachings state:

"No one can ever be regenerated except through temptations and indeed by many of them, for the reason that without them evils and falsities cannot be subdued." (*Arcana Coelestia*, 8403)

Temptations are part of God's way of helping us purify our inner selves. Just as Jesus faced temptations in the wilderness, we too must go through our own trials to deepen our spiritual commitment:

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." (Matthew 4:1)

In this stage of regeneration, we learn to rely on God's strength to help us overcome these temptations. We begin to see that every struggle is an opportunity to choose love, kindness and truth over selfishness, fear and falsehood. This is a slow process, but each victory in these inner battles brings us closer to spiritual maturity.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, give me the strength to face the struggles in my life with faith and courage. Help me to see that my challenges are opportunities for spiritual growth. Lead me through these temptations with Your guiding light and help me trust that with Your help, I can overcome any obstacle. Amen.



Lesson 3: Letting Go of the Old Self

As we progress in our spiritual journey, regeneration requires us to release our attachment to the "old self"—the part of us that is tied to selfish desires, negative habits and false beliefs. According to the Teachings, this process is a form of spiritual cleansing, where our inner impurities are gradually removed to make space for the divine. It's a bit like removing weeds from a garden so that healthy plants can grow.

This stage of regeneration is about letting go of the aspects of ourselves that no longer serve our spiritual growth. We may find ourselves reflecting on harmful behaviours unhealthy relationships, or toxic thought patterns that hold us back. As we become aware of these aspects, we must actively choose to let them go.

The Teachings describe this process:

"Regeneration is the means by which a person is purified from evils and is consequently set free from them." (Heaven and Hell, 510)

It's important to note that this isn't something we do on our own. God is always working with us, gently guiding us to release what no longer serves us and fill that space with new love, new wisdom and new truth. This stage requires humility and trust—humility to recognise that we need to change and trust that God will guide us through the process.

This transformation is echoed in the Bible:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Letting go of the old self can be painful at times. We may feel vulnerable or unsure of what lies ahead. But The Teachings assure us that as we let go of what is harmful or false, we are allowing God to create something new and beautiful within us. This stage is a process of renewal and rebirth, where we begin to see life from a new perspective—one rooted in love, compassion and divine truth.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me to let go of my old ways of thinking and behaving that hold me back from living fully in Your light. Create in me a new heart that is open to Your love and truth. Give me the courage to trust in Your plan for my renewal and guide me to become the person You have created me to be. Amen.



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Lesson 4: Living a Life of Love and Service

The ultimate goal of regeneration, according to the Teachings, is not just personal transformation but also a life of love and service to others. Once we have gone through the struggles of temptation and let go of our old selves, we are called to embody the qualities of divine love in our daily lives. This means living with compassion, kindness and a genuine desire to help others.

The Teachings emphasise that the life of heaven is a life of service. When we are regenerated, we don't live for ourselves anymore—we live to serve God and others. This shift from self-centeredness to other-centeredness is the hallmark of true spiritual growth. The Teachings explain:

"The life of heaven consists in doing good to others and performing uses, because love to the Lord and love toward the neighbour consists in this." (*Heaven and Hell*, 535)

This idea is also clearly taught in the Bible:

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."
(1 John 3:18)

Living a life of love and service doesn't mean we have to do grand things. Often, it's the small, everyday acts of kindness that make the biggest difference. Holding a door open for someone, listening to a friend in need, offering encouragement—these are all ways we can serve others and live a life of love. As we practice these acts of kindness, our hearts grow more open and aligned with the divine love that flows from God.

This stage of regeneration is where we fully live out the teachings of love and service that we have learned along the way. It is not just about what we believe or say—it's about how we live and act in the world. Through living a life of love, we bring heaven into our daily lives and become true vessels of God's love.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, fill my heart with Your love and guide me to serve others with kindness and compassion. Let my actions reflect Your divine love in all that I do. Help me to live a life of service, bringing light to the world around me through small and great acts of kindness. Amen.

Conclusion

The Teachings on regeneration provide a deeply meaningful framework for spiritual growth. These lessons remind us that regeneration is a lifelong journey—one that requires awakening, struggle, self-reflection and, ultimately, love and service. As we grow in spiritual maturity, we move closer to God and become more aligned with the divine purpose for our lives. May these lessons guide and inspire us as we walk this path of regeneration.



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The General Conference of the New Church

2nd February 2025

Rev'd Christine Bank

This year I am being encouraged to look again at my hometown and see it in new ways. Bradford, West Yorkshire is the UK Capital of Culture for 2025. It's a place I take for granted as I've lived here all my life, but now it is the focus of all kinds of events which are intended to showcase and highlight what is here all the time as well as being a wide-ranging and year-round stage for events, displays and performances.

It's easy to be cynical and point to the downsides or negative aspects which are often very clear to us whenever we think about the familiar or the routine. Sometimes it takes a stranger's perspective to give us a jolt and help us to an appreciation that there are things in and around us which are not only quite OK, but maybe even a bit special, out of the ordinary or even truly unique and worth treasuring.

The idea of not being appreciative of what is literally on the doorstep has a resonance with **Luke Chapter 4**, it's worth reading the chapter which speaks of the temptation of Jesus and his early ministry, but when he went back to Nazareth there was scant respect and regard for the man they knew as 'Joseph's son'. Elijah and Elisha were sent to outsiders, to the Gentiles, rather than to Israelites, and we finish with Jesus being accepted and bringing miracles to the people of Capernaum but not at home in Nazareth.

The city, the home, is ours. Yes, it can be the place the physical foundations of our life are held, also it has the spiritual 'home' resonance with the doctrine or teachings which underpin spiritual truths we hold as important. We do tend to make it ours in a personal way by the process of daily life, of doing or not doing certain things which fit best with our understanding and the priorities this leads us to adopt. My house, my hometown can be familiar to me, comfortable, settled and reassuring in all kinds of ways.

So, imagine the confident and rather unsettling presence of Jesus coming by. He is there to challenge, to speak in ways that confront rather than smooth over the accepted patterns of life and it's a lot more appealing to try and get rid of the nuisance aspect than it is to attempt to work through the difficulties when any possible benefit is uncertain.

Miracles happen elsewhere, the references to Elijah and Elisha call back to the deep timeless messages of the Lord's love being far wider than the 'chosen people' but throwing Jesus off a cliff seems a good idea to the people in the synagogue. A first response to any challenge is so often reacting with anger and seeking to destroy and eliminate the perceived threat to our personal status quo.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it is so easy to say we accept your teachings in our life, while at the same time finding ways to protect what we consider to be our own 'home' priorities and special parts of life. May we find a new willingness to face the challenges of truly opening all of ourselves to You, being ready to accept and even welcome Your presence into the places we feel most vulnerable and which we have learnt to protect and reinforce with all our strength. We cannot leave the apparent safety of our own ideas alone, help our courage to grow, and our ability to see what You would have us do differently to lead us towards a richer life in You. Amen



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9th February 2025

The world of cuddly toys, soppy or funny cards and hearts, flowers and chocolates will go into overtime as St Valentines Day approaches. Not everyone subscribes to this of course, but enough money changes hands for it to be considered a major commercial event.

Reflecting on love seems to highlight that something which is a natural part of how we are all made can actually be so difficult for us to work with. The sense of there being an emotional dimension of love and care which defies description but enhances life when we find it for ourselves is very powerful. There is deep need to be loved within us all.

That sense of value and love may be found via other people, perhaps our beloved friends and family, we may love the deep satisfaction in productive and useful work or the pleasure from restoring our energy with holidays and new experiences. It can be so hard to put into words, yet the feeling is undeniably real and uplifting at the time, with the memory of it becoming a thing to treasure and hold onto afterwards.

Jesus reminds us of the need for love to be our strongest and most influential guide and in True Christian Religion 369.2-3, we see a spiritual to earthly connection forming as part of the Lord's purpose, and that this is intended by the Lord to be a two-way connection.

TCR 369 [2] *The fact that we are capable of not only thinking about God but also loving God is clear from the two commandments of God himself that read like this:*

You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like it: you are to love your neighbour as yourself. (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37-39)

We are also capable of doing what God commands, which is the same as loving God and being loved by God, as the following words show:

Jesus said, "The people who love me are those who have my commandments and follow them. Those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and manifest myself to them." (John 14:21)

[3] In fact, what else is faith but a partnership with God by means of truths that shape our understanding and thought? What else is love but a partnership with God through goodness that shapes our intentions and desires? God's connection to us is a spiritual connection that comes to an earthly plane; our connection to God is an earthly connection that comes from a spiritual plane. The ultimate purpose in creating us citizens of heaven and also citizens of the world was this partnership. As citizens of heaven we are spiritual and as citizens of the world we are earthly.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we acknowledge that all the love we have is originally from You. As we build our life may that heavenly love be a strong foundation which connects us more firmly to You, building us into a strong community where each person is truly loving and caring towards the other. Let us not forget to love and care for ourselves too; without our own health and strength we struggle in many ways. May we be generous in serving others and not too proud to accept our limitations and recognise the need to slow down or take care of ourselves when circumstances require. Amen.



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16th February 2025

I'd like to come back to the idea of the city, the stronghold if you like. The Old Testament and history in general holds plenty of accounts of people coming together in one place to set up a strong centre. It is built, but then becomes a target for attackers. It seems that any time a strong place is established it attracts trouble and needs to be defended. Jeremiah is one of many prophetic voices speaking to Jerusalem, and he lives to see it conquered. Resolving the question of who is in charge and how far their influence reaches isn't only a historical problem, we don't have to look far to see the same dynamic being played out with ever more sophisticated firepower and destructive potential in the world today.

AC402wherever the name of any city occurs. In the Word 'city' never means a city but something doctrinal or else something heretical.....For example, by the Holy City, they understand nothing other than the Lord's kingdom in general, or as it exists with each individual who has the Lord's kingdom within him.

So wherever the name of a city is mentioned in the Bible it is holding within the inner meaning an idea of the spiritual strength that true ideas or doctrines can hold, or the opposite qualities when it is false and heretical beliefs which are reinforced.

What happens in daily life is a way of seeing our spiritual progress. If we set ourselves to live with the strong and determined intention of following the Lord, then one way or another we are going to encounter forces which want to destroy that centre and leave us with nothing of spiritual value. A robust foundation allows us to build strongly as we follow the Lord's leading, and as part of this we will find ourselves tested or put under some inner pressure to abandon or divert our spiritual energies.

We probably live with many 'cities' or aspects in our life and they aren't all going to be on the same side. There will be areas of our life we see as being inspired and filled with heavenly qualities. Alongside this will be ideas which are much less delightful to contemplate if only we understood the true nature of their roots. If we ignore the inner warning of conscience, accept that we are doing OK so why worry, or similar lines of thought take hold we are in some danger. Our ability to read or recognise the motivations and subtleties of spiritual warfare is seriously hampered if we can be brought to a place of self-satisfaction or complacency. Then we forget to hear the Lord's challenge to our thinking, we build up our personal 'city' instead of the Lord's.

Jeremiah 51 and 52 include the prophesy of the ultimate destruction of Babylon, but before then Jerusalem itself is captured, and the Babylonian armies are victorious at this time. A dire outcome for Jerusalem indeed, but only after many of the Lord's prophets have been ignored and the continual offer of forgiveness and reconciliation with His people can't be given unless there is a willing, positive response to His Word.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you hold the power to turn back hellish forces and protect us far more than we can ever know. May we do what we can to set our lives in a heavenly path and keep our hearts humble as we continually return to You as our guide, protector and Lord each and every day. Amen



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23rd February 2025

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
Matthew 5: 14-16

The idea of good people being a ‘light’ in the world is one we can understand through our experience of those who we can see as positive role models. Their life really does serve as an example of integrity and reliability, wholeheartedly setting out to follow their dream, ambition or pathway. They become that city on their own personal hill, showing what is good, and glorifying the Lord through their efforts.

The size of the city and the size of the hill don’t really matter very much, it is the concept which speaks to us and resonates. Imagine a person with skills around design; it may be expressed through being an architect of enormous public buildings or quietly in a small workshop where ideas take shape. The scale isn’t important, but the sense of quality, attention to detail and desire to achieve the best possible result builds gradually into a reputation and establishes the confidence and trust among clients or colleagues.

Matthew gives us the Sermon on the Mount early in the life of Jesus; he is teaching and challenging the listener at every turn. Seeing the idea of the city as containing the truth we live by, then the idea of putting what we hold dear in a high place makes so much sense.

On the hilltop it is relatively safe and those with bad intent find it much harder to ambush or sneak up without being seen. It is also visible and makes a statement simply by its presence. If your life is that city, then what do those outside it see?

Is it strong and well protected with robust and vigilant defenders, and well provisioned so life there is obviously secure and comfortable? On the other hand, if the defences are a bit patchy, the perimeter is fractured and insecure then the resulting vulnerability and lack of confidence are highly visible too. The simple word picture is enriched by the easy way our thoughts can turn towards applying parables and images to human situations.

Jesus tells these things in ways which we are free to treat just as we wish. In our God-given freedom we can connect with images of our own spiritual life and prayerfully address what we understand as needing attention. Equally it can be received as a powerful message with application to others, but perhaps not to me or my situation. Or it can be dismissed without attempting to think any further at the moment, but perhaps our memory, under Divine Providence, brings it to mind at a later, more receptive time when what we know can be of real and important use in life.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You allow us the freedom to build our life in the ways we choose. Help our knowledge of your love and truth be the basis of all we strive towards, to follow the path of love to the Lord above everything else. Putting our life under heavenly order brings a pattern to our growth and development which leads us in the best of ways. May we be among those who light the way for others and show your glory in the world. Amen



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The General Conference of the New Church

Home Worship: Sunday March 2nd Stephen Thomas

“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offence that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.” Deuteronomy 19:15

Please read Isaiah 43: 8-13

Mosaic law demanded the testimony of two witnesses, who must agree absolutely. It is not just a useful precaution for judges in our court cases – but it also expresses a fundamental characteristic of genuine religious life. There are two aspects to such a life: the commands of truth that our faith understands, and the will (desire) to obey and use them that is at the heart of a genuinely good life. Unless the desire is present within us to use the truth we know, there is no true religion.

We can quote the truth to condemn others or to support and justify our own selfish ambitions – but it is not a true witness unless it is being used to bring love and service into the world. Our best witness is the life that we live. If others see us as honest and true, loving, and compassionate, because we believe we should serve the Lord by living that way, they will realise that there is a real power in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to show love and light that He has brought into our lives. Our greatest service to our neighbour is in our daily work and our care for others, and there we can truly fulfil our witness by loving honest service.

One of the problems with truth is that it appears to be its own witness. It is not the result of argument and debate, neither does it depend on a nice balancing of probabilities. Truth reveals our human situation and the action that needs to be taken, and it does this unsupported by reasoned argument. Such arguments can be suggested afterwards, but it is the nature of truth that these reasoned arguments only confirm it, but they do not produce it. All our human arguments can be used to confirm and illustrate the truth, but we cannot prove it! By its very nature, truth comes from a higher level than our earthly level of reasoning.

It is the origin of truth that is its witness, not our subsequent confirmation. It is the purpose of truth that speaks to its very nature. Our human judgement with our earthly desires and actions has no power with such truth. **The power of truth is always from the love of God that sent it.** It is small wonder that the truth about humankind and creation depends quite simply on the witness of the love of God that first made it! In our lives we too must show a true witness, and we must be willing to receive the Lord into our lives by loving and serving our fellows, and by changing our attitudes and behaviour in working with others.

Let us show true witness by powering the truth that we understand and always from the warmth and love of God. **With every blessing. Stephen.**



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The General Conference of the New Church

Home Worship: Sunday March 9th Stephen Thomas

Heavenly Treasure

Please read Matthew 6: 19-24

Everything that this world can offer is of only temporary value. Nothing that we see around us is permanent. All earthly things are lost or are broken and worn out in the process of time. Even if a particular thing lasts for a hundred years, then we will gain no benefit from it when we leave this world. So it is that though the world we live in has so many pleasures and delights to offer us, we would be very foolish to place an immense importance on them. A wise person realises that only spiritual things, things that last forever, have any true significance. If we set our hearts upon the things of this world, if we lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth, then we will be most disappointed. If what we value is not stolen or destroyed by moth or rust, or by the process of time, we will, nevertheless, lose it when we die. How much more sensible it would be to place importance not upon the things of this world but on the qualities of our spirit. We all know this! It is so obvious when you think about it. And yet it is of course, something we so easily forget. We get caught up in the affairs of this world and tend to treat the things of this world and our lives as most important.

Periodic reflection is most important in our lives. Otherwise, we would live in complete oblivion to the fact that we can and must prepare for life in the other world – the world for which we are created. This is the promise of the Lord of eternal life. To seek eternal life is not to live forever as a kind of reward at the end of our lives here. All of us will do that in the afterlife anyway. Eternal life is the kind of life that draws its love and joy from the love of God. That can never cease because it comes from the eternal life of God. All His love is unselfish, looking only to give itself and its joy away to us, for that is the whole purpose behind creation. We can only receive the quality of such love and joy when we too have no thought for ourselves, but only of how we might help our fellows. Each day can help us to learn the wonderful truth that other people are more important than we are, and that the Lord is more important than all of us! Also, we have the Word of God which from beginning to the end teaches to us that we were created to bring happiness and joy to others. We have everything which we need to acquire this eternal heavenly treasure. Indeed, we have is given so that we might acquire this treasure. Even worldly comforts and worldly honour have as their proper purpose so that we might find it easier to serve one another. And perhaps though a part of us may refuse to believe it, and though part of us may hate the very thought of it, there is no greater joy and delight, no greater treasure, than to forget ourselves and so concentrate on bringing happiness and delight to those around us. Such heavenly treasure will never be destroyed. It will last and grow to a greater fullness without end. This treasure of serving our Lord is eternal for it come directly from the Lord Himself. He is eternal and it is from Him alone that we can receive this everlasting treasure of heaven itself. **Stephen**



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The General Conference of the New Church

Home Worship: Sunday March 16th Stephen Thomas

The Marriage at Cana

Please read John 2: 1-12

Jesus uses the symbol of marriage in his teaching. This is because the whole effort of our daily living should be to marry up what we understand of God's way with a love that will use it in life. The marriage of two people depends similarly on their uniting the love they use in life with their vision of God's way. This marrying of love to the truth in our lives was the whole purpose of God's coming in Jesus, for only His love using the truth we know can give to us a new kind of life. And so, this miracle comes at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Water in the Word of God corresponds specifically to the truth of our spiritual life. And so, we also need to know about the Lord, the spiritual world, faith, charity, our will and understanding, the process of our spiritual rebirth or regeneration, divine providence, and many other things along these lines. We need to know them so that we can use them, like water, in many different ways. In the story of the Lord's first miracle, the water we read about was stored in six stone water jars. They were not for drinking and for cooking, but for washing, specifically for washing the dry dust of Palestine from the feet of visitors or guests as they entered the house. It is from these water jars filled with water which the Lord turned into wine, in fact, much better wine than the master of the feast had been serving up at that point!

The lack of wine marks the failing joy in the marriage feast, and Jesus restores it by using the water intended for purification. So far, the only change in us shown in the gospel has been John's baptism, when the water of truth washes us clean from our outward selfishness by obedience to its commands. But such an effort by itself does not bring the joy of living with God. We are just restraining our selfishness, rather than rejoicing in what we see from the warmth and the power of love. We can only make our lives obey the commands of Jesus (we fill the water pots of our earthly living with the cleansing truth "up to the brim") and it is only then that Jesus is able to transform and change that truth we understand into something wonderfully different. Until this point, His "time has not come." This marriage feast keeps the good wine until now!

For when God came in Jesus, our understanding of what He has done for us, and the use of his power in our living with our fellows will always keep eternal joy and power in our use of the truth as we live God's way. The turning of water into wine at the marriage should be a wonderful reminder to each one of us, that in all our personal efforts to marry truth in the Word of God to living it in our life, it is only the life of Jesus that makes the truth we learn, wonderfully comes alive with the joy and power of His love.

With every blessing to you. Stephen



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

Home Worship: Sunday March 23rd Stephen Thomas

Who is the Greatest?

Please read Matthew 20: 20-28

Our desire to be first creeps into our lives in so many ways – ambition of many in business, sports and government. The world today is often seen not as a place in which to serve, but a “financial cake” from which each of us fights to get our slice of crumb. We may think that we are responsible for our own success which means we often applaud others for their success and deride and pour scorn on others for their failures. We may then come to despise our greatest chance to live with God while still trying to work from our conscience. God gives us life so that we may come to know His joy in living from and caring for others, and when we do that, God sees His infinite life accepted and alive in us and He knows that the purpose of His creation is being fulfilled. The world’s view of power, greatness and position is commonly that it gives the right to control others and make them do what suits the one in charge and so providing the opportunity for wealth and ease. How little the disciples understood! They could not grasp that the strength of love is in its complete unselfishness its giving without counting the cost whatever the situation. Unselfish love is TRUE GREATNESS, the greatest virtue and it achieves that by being the last thing thought of, by looking for ways of serving everyone to the best of our ability. The Lord challenges the disciples (and us) to think about what such an ambition of being greatest in the kingdom of heaven really means. We must endure his temptations – ‘drink from his cup’ – not as Jesus endured them because He was the love of God at work – but our willingness to endure and fight is possible because of the love he brought into the world, and he will lead us to each stage as is necessary in which we can fight our selfishness. In the Lord’s strength and not our own! To sit on His right or left hand is something which cannot be given. Our place in heaven must be prepared by long endurance and striving, for this phrase does not mean to sit on some outward position of power in heaven like organisation control in this world. The state we must reach spiritually is when the love and wisdom from the Lord motivates our lives in thoughts and action of true service. Jesus points out that power and position and control in this world is not God’s way of power, position and control. He looks only to give joy and power from His life away to all of us. However little success we seem to achieve, its importance for God is not so much what is done in the preparatory life of this world, as rather the quality of life, the motive from which it is done. When we love, care, and serve our fellows we are living with God. (True Greatness and not slaves to our selfish wanting). Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ lives in each one of us in our service to others and that is true joy – even in the stress and sadness and rejection we often experience. In the mistakes we make, we can learn from them as well for it is the reason we are living and that is day by day growing in true greatness by living with God.

God bless you. Stephen.



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

Home Worship: Sunday March 30th Stephen Thomas

A sermon for Mothering Sunday

Please read Exodus 2: 1-10

Moses had two women as his mother, the daughter of Pharaoh (in name only) who found him and his real mother (his nurse) who suckled and raised him. This is the way that the truth can begin to grow in our lives. The daughter of Pharaoh does not really worship the Lord; she has a sentimental interest in just finding a baby in the basket on the river. Our religious life starts out like that because we adopt a kind of religious sentimental feeling within us which pities those in desperate want – we wonder if this world has any real purpose for us and so we seek the reassurance of those around us who believe. **THIS IS NOT WORSHIPPING THE LORD!** We do not see our own selfishness, we are not repenting, we are not willing to be a servant of the Lord because we still want everything for our own comfort and satisfaction and reassurance. And yet this vague religious feeling pulls Moses out of the water! It recognises a ‘babe of the Hebrews’ in the river of our self-centred thought, and within those reeds of learning (the Bible) there is something alive and so different from all else within our earthly mind. It is in recognising this distinction that begins to make things happen:- while our earthly mind wants to understand and use this new life, it is possible for the good within to strengthen it. When offered the real mother as the nurse, Pharaoh’s daughter is willing that she should look after the child. What puts life and strength in the truth is a true desire to do good. The truth is then strengthened by this. And so, from a vague sentimental feeling, there comes a willingness to accept the child when he is brought back to Pharaoh’s daughter as her own. We need to see what the truth requires of us and the changes it demands of us so that we can begin to act from good. This is the challenge in that we must make a change to accept this truth with its living power as our own to use it in God’s loving way. Pharaoh’s daughter names the boy Moses which in Hebrew sounds like the word for ‘drawn out’ and we too must recognise the true quality of the living Word of God and draw it out from all the other knowledge of worldly ideas that we have. If we do not do this then sadly our Moses of truth cannot be cared for and nurtured within our spiritual mind.

In each of us the Lord has hidden away a beginning and He will nourish it to change us if we are willing! That wonderful attitude of the mother that has cared for and nourished our Moses of truth. As we have one essential part to play – that in one human life Moses is ‘drawn out’ of the water to begin our individual development to be a true servant of the Lord. On this Mothering Sunday may we turn our thoughts in gratitude for our earthly mothers and all that they have done for us. May we thank the Lord for His work through them and also thank them for their willingness to do so much.

With every blessing. Stephen