

APRIL 2009

# OUR DAILY BREAD

SERMONS AND MEDITATIONS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH



## The Cross

# Invitation

You are invited to use *Our Daily Bread* as a source of inspiration and as a guide for personal meditation and reflection. It is also a resource for home, small group, and church worship. Each issue has a theme, with weekly sermons focusing on various aspects of that theme. Daily meditations provide food for thought throughout the week.

*Our Daily Bread* has been published by the Swedenborgian Church since December 1949. May you be fed with spiritual nourishment as the Lord gives us this day our daily bread.

# Prayer

Glory be to you, O Champion of all Loves, who for our sake endured the cross, encountered the enemy, and tasted death.

Glory be to you, O King of all Kings, who for our salvation wrestled with principalities and powers, subdued the forces of hell, and won the greatest of all victories.

To you be all praise, now and forever.

Amen.

- *Thomas Ken, 1637-1711*

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## From the Editors

Dear Readers,

Easter and spring go hand in hand. Many traditions have understood the season's sprouting leaves and flowers as symbolic of the divine's steadfast love manifesting in this world. But the beauty and joyfulness of the season make it tempting to forget the dark winter days that in their own way make spring's beauty possible. It is also tempting to forget that the unfurling of divine love in our souls is inevitably the result of challenges and temptations. This issue's theme, therefore, centers on the cross, which can be aptly understood as the fertilizer that makes possible the profound beauty of the Lord's flowering love.

In this issue, the Reverend Dr. William Woofenden reminds us that while the cross is a symbol of pain and suffering, it is also a sign of the Lord's fullness and power. The Reverend Antony Regamey notes that the cross is a doorway allowing each of us to understand that the Lord is with us in times of pain. The Reverend Kevin Baxter focuses on the image of the cross as the intersection between this world and the spiritual world, and considers the implications of the choices we make about our priorities in life. The Reverend George Dole closes the issue with a reminder that being at peace does not mean the end of pain or struggle; rather, it means living in the flow of divine providence, which holds at bay the evils that would otherwise beset us.

We hope that this season's beauty will open your heart to the joy that lies beyond (and through) life's struggles. May your crosses be lightened by the Lord's loving strength, this day and every day.

Leah Goodwin & Kevin Baxter

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# APR 5 The Passion of the Cross

The Reverend William Woofenden

## Matthew 26:47-68

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him." At once he came up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do."

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?" At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled."

Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end.

Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death,

but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"

The high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But Jesus was silent.

Then the high priest said to him, "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?"

They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?"

### ***Arcana Coelestia 2854:***

It is commonly supposed that the Father sent the Son to endure the harshest sufferings, even to death on the cross, and thus that by seeing the passion and merit of his son would be merciful to the human race. But anyone may recognize that Jehovah is not merciful to the human race on account of what he may see the son to have done, for Jehovah is mercy itself, but that the secret regarding the Lord's coming into the world is that within himself he united the divine to the human, and the human to the divine, which union could not have been effected except through the very bitter experiences brought about by temptations. And from this anyone may also recognize that by means of that union it was possible for salvation to come to the human race among whom no celestial or spiritual good, not even natural good, remained any longer. It is this union which saves those who possess that faith that is rooted in charity. It is the Lord himself who shows mercy.

Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent, called Passion Sunday in the traditional church calendar. It anticipates Good Friday and is an appropriate time to look at the meaning of the cross.

***Perhaps in our minds we condemn them for forsaking the Lord in this last dark hour.***

Earlier in this same chapter Jesus had predicted that, because of the events to come, all of his disciples would desert him. Peter had been especially insistent in his denial of this statement, saying, "I will never leave you, even though all the rest do!" And again, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you!"

All the other disciples had agreed. But when the crucial moment came, and the mob came with swords and clubs to nab Jesus, all the disciples left him and ran away!

Perhaps in our minds we condemn them for forsaking the Lord in this last dark hour. Perhaps we think we would have done differently. I wonder.

When Jesus had asked them who he was, Peter, speaking for all of them, said, "You are the Christ of God." "Christ" is the New Testament name for "Messiah," the one prophesied to redeem Israel. Just a few days before, he had ridden into Jerusalem on an animal used by kings, amid joyous shouts from the crowd. I doubt if we today can realize the great hope and the deep expectation that filled the hearts of the disciples during those days.

Then, what a shocking end it must have seemed! Complete and pathetic submission to his enemies! He offered not the slightest sign of resistance. As we follow all the events of that somber night—up to and including the lifting up of the Lord onto the cross the next day—we see nothing but absolute submission, complete surrender to his enemies.

Still, we can imagine the disciples hoping up to the last moment. As they heard the taunts of the people passing by—"If you are God's son, save yourself! Come on down from the cross,"—they must have hoped that now, now he would perform a great miracle, show his divine power, descend from the cross itself, crush his foes, drive out

the Romans, and establish Israel as the greatest nation on earth. But no; he died on that cross. His dismayed disciples were left alone, in bitter disappointment.

How strangely much of the world has misinterpreted the Lord's silence, his submission to his accusers! Millions have apparently seen in it only a sign of weakness. Many have felt that when the great test came, he failed. How wrong this idea has been!

Let us go back for a moment to the garden of Gethsemane and hear again the words the Lord spoke to Peter, who tried to defend the Lord and prevent his arrest. "Put your sword back in place," Jesus said to him. "All who take the sword will die by the sword. Don't you know that I could call on my father for help, and at once he would send me more than twelve armies of angels? But in that case, how could the Scriptures come true which say that this is what must happen?"

Silence and submission, when they are voluntary, may express tremendous power—supreme self-control. The person who is helpless may submit without a struggle, knowing that to struggle would be useless. Or the helpless person might give in to fear and rage, but still not resist. This was not the case with the Lord. He had power—power to scatter his adversaries with a look. Recall his words recorded in John: "No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have authority to give it up, and I have authority to take it back." (10:18)

*Silence and submission, when they are voluntary, may express tremendous power.*

How little those words have been understood! From the moment Judas sneaked out into the night to betray his Lord—from that moment until that last cry from the cross—the Lord moved through those last scenes with a quiet majesty, an impressive self-controlled power that defies description. Even with a crown of thorns on his head, spit at, reviled, mocked by the brutal soldiers, we sense that he stood not as the vanquished but as the victor, the one glorious figure in the whole somber picture. He was a great rock of strength that the utmost fury of evil people could not move. It was really the corrupt priests who were powerless, the rabble that was impotent.

His silence—his compliance—were not evidences of weakness, but of amazing strength.

***It was not the strength of despair; it was the strength of immeasurable love.***

And it was not the strength of despair; it was the strength of immeasurable love: a love so deep, so true, so mighty, so tender, that he could look down from the cross on those who hated him, who reveled in the thought of his approaching death, and pray, "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing."

Weakness? The world has never known greater strength. Little wonder that the Christian church has taken the cross as the great symbol of Christianity!

Paul's message to the Corinthians has echoed around the world, and has been understood by the church to be the very foundation of Christianity: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2) For twenty centuries, a very limited interpretation of those words has been the sum total of the doctrine of salvation in the great majority of Christian churches: "Jesus Christ and him crucified." May I suggest that it's time that that concept, like smoking, became history?

This church believes that with the aid of a revelation given for this new age—teachings that form the backbone of Swedenborgian belief—we can now look back on those dark days in the light of a new and logical understanding of the divine message intended for all people. We can look back at the garden of Gethsemane, the high priest's palace, the great council chamber, the judgment hall of Pilate, Golgotha or the hill of Calvary, and see it all from a new perspective.

In the light of this new understanding we can perceive in greater depth the meaning of the Lord's silence as he stood before his accusers. We can know something about why the Lord stood in that hall, why he walked the road to Golgotha with never a word of defense or protest. We can know something about why he did not use his mighty power to disperse his enemies. The deeper truth of the Lord's redemptive work is the most inspiring by far of all the teachings of Christianity.



Put very simply, two forces were arrayed against each other that night. On the one hand was the force behind that group of evil and cruel people who were determined to destroy the Lord, people drunk with a lust for power who knew they could not endure the light of his truth. The real force behind that mob was the combined power of the hells, unseen yet there, bringing all their might, their cunning, their hatred to bear on the Christ, urging those evil people on, stirring up their hatred, their fury. Men and devils combined to make up one of the two great elements facing each other that night.

When we stop to think about it, we all know that hell is real. The evil beings in that dark region of the spiritual world, who were once human beings like you and me, but who chose the way of evil, never cease in their efforts to entice each one of us to succumb to our baser nature and do that which we know to be wrong. And whenever we yield, believe me, the hells rejoice!

Never before in history, nor ever since, has the sum total of the forces of good and evil been present as on that night. This was not play acting; it was a real battle, with the winner taking all! But what was the other force?

The Lord Jesus Christ.

I cannot hope to make clear the full nature of that being who stood in the center of the judgment hall almost twenty centuries ago. Nor do I want to try. But there is no need to lose the glory of sunshine because we do not know all that there is to know about the sun. Let us rejoice in what we can see.

Let's start with the familiar. We see a MAN—spell it with capital letters if you will. Hear his words as he went out of that hall and stood before the rabble. He said, "Behold the man!" No, despite the common trend in this passage from John 19:5 to put these words in Pilate's mouth, the name Pilate is not mentioned in the Greek. Remembering that in the opening chapter of John, Jesus is identified as the Word made flesh, these words, "Behold the man," coming from the lips of Jesus

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as he was being condemned, mean, "See what you religious people of today have done to divine truth!"

See Jesus earlier in Gethsemane and hear his prayer: "My Father, if this cup of suffering cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done." Hear him moments later saying to his betrayer Judas, "Be quick about it, friend!" Think of it: he called him "friend."

See him, surrounded by enemies, reaching out his hand to an enemy's servant to heal the wound caused by Peter's sword. Then

***He had to break the power of hell by the very purity and steadfastness of the truth.***

see him in silent majesty walk to his death unmoved. That was the other great power present that night—that night when the fate of the human race hung in the balance. Again we see the wisdom of Paul's words to the Colossians when he said, "In Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form." (2:9)

The Lord's task that night was too great for any ordinary person, or even any angel, to face. His task was to meet all that man and devil could inflict on him, from within and without—meet it without bitterness, without anger, without resentment, and instead meet it with pity, with sorrow, and above all with love. His task was to give the hells their fullest opportunity to use all the hatred, the cunning, the lust for evil that they possessed, all that they could ever bring against mankind, and overcome it with love. At the same time it was his last great temptation, his last great test (for "test" or "struggle" is the root meaning of "temptation"). In order to unite his human fully with the divine, he had to live love for others so perfectly, so wholly, that the utmost cruelty could not open his lips in anger or resentment.

He had to see and strive only for the good of humanity, in the face of all that evil humans could do to show their hatred for him and his love. He had to break the power of hell by the very purity and steadfastness of the truth. Had he allowed the slightest feeling of resentment, of anger, of retaliation to enter his mind that night, then he would have failed, and hell would have won. (And we wouldn't be here talking about it.)

By his actions that night he proved that evil has no power unless we give it to evil. It is no match for goodness, no match for love. So infinite divine love was able to descend in its fullness into that life, and Christ was glorified by it. He became GOD-MAN, fully divine and fully human, the one and only God of heaven and earth.

It is in this light that we may now look at the cross. Yes, it still means the suffering and death of the Lord to us, it still means Gethsemane and Calvary, but it also means far more, far more than a sacrifice. For us the open, empty cross should be the symbol of the risen Christ, the glorified Christ in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It means divine love and divine truth completely manifested in the person of our Lord.

And it can mean salvation for you and me—if we grasp the truth that he so gloriously lived, and seek to follow in his footsteps, not alone, but in his strength. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden  
is a retired minister of the  
Swedenborgian Church. He has  
held many pastorates and taught in  
the Theological School.



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## Prayer

My Lord Christ, love held you to the cross for my sake,  
but not mine alone.

Your love is frightening in its breadth and depth;  
When I embrace it, it stretches my poor spirit.

Enlarge my heart to make space for your goodness and truth;  
Let me love as one forgiven; let me love as one freed.

Amen. *(adapted from a prayer by Peter Storey, Listening at Golgotha: Jesus' Words from the Cross (Upper Room Books: 2004), p. 37)*

# Daily Meditations

## Monday, April 6

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Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price. *Isaiah 55:1*

Heaven is from the human race, and is an abiding with the Lord to eternity; it follows that this was the Lord's end in the Creation. *Divine Providence 27*

## Tuesday, April 7

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Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food. *Isaiah 55:2*

The natural mind takes its form in part from the substances of the natural world; but the spiritual mind, only from the substances of the spiritual world. *Divine Love and Wisdom 270*

## Wednesday, April 8

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Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.  
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David. *Isaiah 55:3*

When the spiritual mind is opened, the state of the natural mind is entirely different. Then the natural mind is disposed to obedience to the spiritual mind. *Divine Love and Wisdom 263*

**Thursday, April 9**

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See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.  
See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you.

*Isaiah 55:4-5*

The spiritual mind acts upon the natural mind from above or from within, and removes the things therein which react, and adapts to itself those that act in the same manner with itself.  
*Divine Love and Wisdom 263*

**Friday, April 10**

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Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;  
let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

*Isaiah 55:6-7*

Every person is to be created anew; and this is effected by means of the understanding; for he must from infancy drink in understandings of truth and good, which shall teach him to purpose and to act rightly. *Influx 14*

**Saturday, April 11**

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For you shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall burst into song,  
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. *Is. 55:6-7*

All that the Lord does is providence; which has within it what is eternal and infinite--eternal because it looks to no limit from which, nor any limit to which it extends; infinite because it looks at once in every least particular to the universal, and in the universal to every least particular. *Arcana Coelestia 5264*

# APR 12 **Sunset at Noon**

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The Reverend Antony Regamey

*This sermon was preached at the Church of the New Jerusalem, 136 Bowdoin St., Boston, MA, in April 1954.*

## **Matthew 27:33-55**

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.

And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

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The cross is shrouded in darkness. The day is not yet half-spent, but a pall of gloom has settled on that lonely hill where, with outstretched arms, the Savior of the world suffers the agony of utter rejection.

The Sun of Nature hides his face. Ominous lowering clouds are drawn as a curtain between the heavens and the earth—as if the majestic order, beauty, and harmony of the universe had been betrayed; as if the remainder of God's creation would have no part in the abysmal tragedy.

From here, the darkness extends "over all the land." Nay, "over all the earth," says the Gospel of Luke—which is, of course, the author's way of expressing his feelings. Perhaps he wants to underline the all-encompassing dimensions of the love that is being crucified, the cosmic magnitude of the divine struggle with the powers of darkness. Perhaps he remembers the words of Isaiah: "And he will destroy, in this mountain, the face of the covering cast over all the peoples, and the veil that is spread over all the nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces."

If it be so, he is right. For what happens in the world of nature is indeed an image of the inward drama that is taking place. The

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impenetrable gloom now encircling the Savior's cross is the darkness of sin everywhere, man-made, black as the night, harsh as self-love, wily and secretive as our hidden motives, insatiable and terrible as our every evil passion, fearful as a horde of wild beasts unleashed.

Again, Isaiah says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that he cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." The "veil" He came to lift and to "destroy" is that of the awful reality of sin, the unfathomable depths that always escape our definitions. It is only as one sees it in action that evil stands revealed as something we must hate with intense loathing, and shun with a strength greater than our own.

The obscuration at the Cross is the angry cloud of self-love and sin in their desperate attempt to black out man's vision of God's truth and love, at that time the last flickering hope of mankind. There we see Him, in the limitations of our nature, "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and (as a race) we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not—But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed."

Yes, more unfathomable still than the depths of our sinfulness are the depth and the length and the breadth and the height of this care. He made Himself one with us. It was for us that He suffered and died ... for us that He submitted to the cruel torture ... the spittle, the mocking, the flagellation, the crown of thorns, the nails, the thirst ... God in heaven! In the contemplation of it, can any man stay unmoved? Yet the physical suffering it entailed was the least part of it all.

This was not only an event in history. It was an event in eternity—in this world, and in the world both beyond and within this. "He descended into hell," says the ancient creed. That is, of course, a



manner of speech. In this final, direst temptation by which He glorified his humanity, ridding and purifying it of all its least and last hereditarily evil tendencies, all the powers of darkness assaulted Him as never before. From without, and on all the levels of the spirit, the cross was the final target on which, with the fury of a cyclone, sin rose to the attack.

But He overcame. Hatred, revenge, cruelty, covetousness, hypocrisy, pride, indifference, and prejudice crucified Him. Yet there is no evil that He did not conquer. Thus He made his own the power to overcome the hells in us as well, if we will receive him. Thus, by the victory of his love, He made himself a God at hand, available, always near, closer to us than ever before.

Sometimes we misunderstand the story. Sometimes we think of the cross as a defeat that was made good afterwards by the resurrection of Christ. But the cross itself is the victory. The only defeat for him would have been if love had failed. If he had yielded to selfishness; if one word of bitterness had escaped his lips; if the desire for revenge had possessed his mind, that would have been defeat. But love was true to itself through utmost anguish and was "made perfect through suffering."

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There is something absolute in all this. There is an absolute disclosure of God in it. Once, all that was good and true and holy came into the world; and, in the darkness of their hearts, men declared that it was not fit to dwell among them. Once, God became incarnate in the human family, but men would have none of his fellowship. "He came unto his own, and his own received Him not." Yet that offer still stands. The cross is our reassurance that He is love so completely that He will never stop loving us.

But, by the same token, the Cross also is our judgment. It reveals us to ourselves. In drawing us to Him, it becomes the measure of our shortcomings. It is the absolute denial of our pretensions to goodness without Him.

“Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light?” says Amos. “It shall come to pass in that day that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.” How it is with us, in this struggle to the death between the forces of good and the forces of evil? How is it with us in the noon-hours of life, while busi

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ly, in the strength of the day, we follow our pursuits? Are we part of the clouds and darkness that still enfold his continuing Calvary? Or do we “let our light so shine before men?” Are we too occupied with our selfish interests to give thought to our deeds and thoughts and motives in the light which He is? Then it is night and our sun has set, though it may still be high noon.

Again, how is it with our world? One hundred years ago, had our ancestors been told that at this day we would possess the power we have wrenched from the atom, they would then have said that probably all our problems were solved. Has the “H” bomb brought us nearer to the solution, do you think, or closer to “sunset at noon” for our civilization? What a challenge our times are to the moral responsibility of the nation! What an urgent call to the Church to promote a more intensive growth of mankind’s social conscience!

Beloved, we need have no fear, except of the darkness of sin—and with Him we can conquer it. Because of the cross, God is now on this side, on the earth side of the clouds that hover over us—no matter what they are. With the cross, He has opened up a path through the darkness of our ignorance and our evils, straight to our hearts and minds, to enlighten and empower them with his presence, if we will but receive Him.

He thought that we were worth dying for, that with Him we might live and let Him fashion us into our true spiritual stature. When we do, there is hope in every darkness, serenity in every trial and sorrow, inner peace in every outward tribulation. Come what may and even in death, as wrote Clement, “He turns our sunset into sunrise.”

“Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land.” But then there comes the ninth hour. That scene is vividly recreated in the play by Ram Kennedy, *The Terrible Meek*. At last, on Calvary, the sun breaks through the gloom, touching with golden light the faces of the weeping women. Out of the darkness a soldier says, “Look, it’s coming light again.”

To this the Centurion replies, “Eternally.”

The Rev. Antony Regamey was ordained in 1923 and served New Church parishes and the denomination for over fifty years.



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## Prayer

Loving Lord Christ, beneath me are your everlasting arms, and they bear the print of the nails. No matter how far I have sunk, you descend to lift me up. You have plumbed all the hells of this world that you might lift us upwards. You are our firm support. Lord Christ, I trust in you. Amen.

*(adapted from David Adam, The Edge of Glory (Triangle/SPCK: 1985))*

# Daily Meditations

**Monday, April 13**

---

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you. *Isaiah 60:1-2*

The person who is gifted with a heavenly proprium is also in tranquility and in peace; for he trusts in the Lord. *Arcana Coelestia 5660*

**Tuesday, April 14**

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Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice. *Isaiah 60:4-5*

A person never comes into a state of freedom until she is regenerated and is led of the Lord by the love of good and truth. When a person is in this state she is for the first time able to know what freedom is; for she then knows what life is, and what the true delight of life is. *Arcana Coelestia 892*

**Wednesday, April 15**

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Who are these that fly like a cloud,  
and like doves to their windows? *Isaiah 60:8*

Those will receive and acknowledge the Lord who are in simple truth and good, who are such as perceive the truths of the Word in a natural way--that is, according to the sense of the letter--and do them. *Apocalypse Explained 406.10.f*

**Thursday, April 16**

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Your gates shall always be open;  
day and night they shall not be shut,  
so that nations shall bring you their wealth,  
with their kings led in procession. *Isaiah 60:11-12*

We can see clearly love's ability to accept the elements of truths that suit it, and love's longing to unite those elements to itself, in people who have been brought into heaven. *Heaven and Hell 18*

**Friday, April 17**

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The descendants of those who oppressed you  
shall come bending low to you,  
they shall call you the City of the Lord,  
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. *Isaiah 60:14*

Just as the Lord wholly changed his human state into a divine one, so...when he is regenerating us, he wholly changes our state and makes a new person out of the old one. *Arcana Coelestia 3296:2*

**Saturday, April 18**

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The sun shall no longer be  
your light by day,  
nor for brightness shall the moon  
give light to you by night;  
but the Lord will be your everlasting light. *Isaiah 60:19*

When a union of the good and true occurs within regenerated people, which happens especially after temptation-trials, then they come into a state of delight that derives from heavenly peace. *Heaven and Hell 289*

# APR 19 Crossroads

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The Reverend Kevin Baxter

Mark 8:27-38

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

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While I was in seminary, I commuted to and from a chaplaincy program at San Francisco General Hospital. Most of the time, my commute was a fairly quiet twenty-minute trip. Few people wanted to

talk on their way home from work, so we all just stared blankly at our newspapers, reading or pretending to read. We usually commuted during rush hour, but on this particular trip, my partner and I had finished one of our evening shifts. The subway ride was taking place a bit later at night, and the people on the train were remarkably different from the usual crowd.

One of the passengers decided to strike up a conversation with me.

Clearly, this English gentleman had been celebrating something; he was happy, talkative, and inebriated. I believe I was reading a book for a class the next morning, which caught his attention. He had read the book himself and inquired as to why I was reading it. I mentioned that my commuting partner and I were in seminary.

The gentleman and I discussed metaphysics and religion for some time, but his response at that first moment was particularly noteworthy. He was in awe that the two of us were training to be ministers—but, he said, he himself could not even be Christian.

*He said the message of Christ was too much for him.*

I was puzzled by this statement, since he was obviously so interested in religion. I expected him to begin some sort of diatribe about the nature of religion in relation to an unknowable God, the rise of science, the search for the historical Jesus, or one of the other philosophical issues with which agnostics wrestle.

His response, however, caught me by surprise. He said he could not be Christian because the message of Christ was too much for him. His understanding of what it meant to be a Christian was very similar to that of St. Francis of Assisi. This man said that the message of Christ was so profound that if he were to accept it he would have to give up all that he had. He went on to mention a wife and child and the trappings of a San Francisco financial executive. He could not, he said, give up his life and take up the cross. For him, being a Christian was such a radical choice that it would mean completely redefining his life and his priorities, a step he was not currently capable of taking.

I tried to let him know that there are other approaches to understanding the “give up your life” statements in the Bible. As

Swedenborgians, we read the Lord's command in a more symbolic way. This church teaches that the things we own are not just pieces of property in the physical world, but also a form of false self-reliance that separates us from the Lord. When we look somewhere other than to the Lord for security or life, when we make something other than the Lord our parent, we create a false spiritual family. Our spiritual family then becomes what divides us from God.

If we, as unregenerated people, were to hop into a car and take a trip to a spiritual family reunion, we would see a much different

***When we look  
somewhere other  
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family than the one we have courtesy of our birth parents. We would see a false spiritual family. Our spiritual parents would be our desires to take things for ourselves and hoard them. Our spouse would be either the falsity that supports our delusions or the desire for control and earthly treasure. Our children would be delinquents, constantly destroying beautiful things. Our family home would be a dirty shack that spews forth odors and gasses.

But spiritual family reunions are far different for people who have truly accepted the love of the Lord into their hearts and acknowledged that the good in and of their lives comes from the Lord. These people recognize the Lord himself as their spiritual parent. Their spouses love to talk about the goodness of the Lord and giving to the community. Their spiritual children are acts of service, giving to others, and praise to the glory of love. Such people's spiritual homes are majestic indeed, but they do not take credit for their beauty, simply saying, "It is a symbol and sign of the goodness of God." These homes are clean, and they smell good, too. It certainly sounds as though it would be much nicer to go to that spiritual family reunion. I bet the potato salad would taste better there!

Each of us stands at a crossroads between loving the Lord and loving ourselves. I am assuming that most of us here want to learn how to love the Lord and the neighbor better. So, we make our choice at this crossroads to follow the sign that says, "This way to the family with better potato salad."



The problem is, the path is not always clear and well-defined. It doubles back and crosses the path to the bad, smelly potato salad. Now, the other path, at least at first, looks a lot easier to walk on. In fact, I think I there's even one of those flat people movers that would take you down the path without your having to walk at all—you could ride down the path! The choice is yours. You stand at a crossroads.

“Crossroads.” I find it interesting that we use this term specifically to talk about choices. A crossroads is the meeting point of two (or more, but for this illustration I am using two) divergent paths. The same can be said of the symbolism of the cross we bear. The cross itself consists of two perpendicular objects that meet. The cross is a crossroads for us. The choice to pick up the cross is a decision to start working on a better, more loving life, but the cross is also the temptation to reverse that decision. The cross is a constant reminder of a choice and a decision that takes work. The base of the cross is the natural world, and the top of the cross is the spiritual life. We must choose between the two. A cross is painful and difficult to carry, and choosing to follow the Lord leaves us open and vulnerable.

Before going any further, I want to insert a caveat. I believe that having a rich and wonderful body of church teachings that allows us to delve into spiritual matters is not only our greatest strength, but also our greatest weakness.

One professor at my graduate school told our dean, “You Swedenborgians can spiritualize all the problems in the Bible away.” She is right. Thanks to correspondential interpretation, we can turn the rape, murder, incest, war, and genocide depicted in the Bible into abstract concepts directed toward helping us become better people. That's great. But this ability is also one of our greatest spiritual challenges.

*The cross is a  
constant reminder  
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work.*

Before we get on with the directions to our spiritual family reunion, I want to go back to the man I met on the subway. I was moved by the conversation we had, to a degree and in a way that few other discussions have moved me. I walked away from that conversation

struggling with an overwhelming sense of sadness for both him and me. I was saddened by his feeling that picking up the cross was too difficult. I was also saddened by his assumption, before even trying, that the task was too much for him personally. On the other hand,

***I wondered whether my spiritualizing everything in the scriptures was really doing myself or the Lord justice.***

I was awed by how seriously he took the Christian call. I wondered whether my spiritualizing everything in the scriptures was really doing myself or the Lord justice.

I learned something from him about the way I approach my faith. I have a deep love for the level of respect he gave to the Lord for the lessons of Christ. After all, Jesus was speaking truth from the Lord and was mocked, insulted, spat upon, and tortured for some of his teachings. He was a revolutionary to such a degree that the authorities wanted him “taken care of.”

I believe we often misunderstand the relationship between the things of the natural world and their spiritual correspondences. We can read about how fathers and mothers correspond to a selfishness of either wisdom or love, which makes it possible to say, “Of course I will leave my father and mother, as the Lord says, because I don’t want to be selfish.”

It is easy to say that. In our chapel’s reading group recently we were reading about how our minds and thoughts can be lifted into heavenly light by truth and instruction. But the heart—well, the heart is not so easy to change. It is simple for us to understand the beauty of making the right choice, and even to talk about what the right choice is, but to take the first step in the Lord’s direction at each moment of temptation is difficult.

In fact, the decision is so incredibly difficult that we refer to it as “leaving the things we love.” That wording is not a mistake. We refer to turning our heart toward the Lord as “leaving our family and home,” as well as “losing our life,” because that is what these things are to us. Our selfhood is our identity, and our identity—at least our self-reliant understanding of it—is what we are asked to give

up when we make the decision to follow the Lord. That is a heavy responsibility and should not be taken lightly.

It is at that moment, when we are put to the test, that our hearts have the ability to be lifted into the light of the Lord. At that moment, we have an opportunity to sample the yummy potato salad of heaven.

And we must keep in mind another promise of the Lord. When we look at the trials and temptations of life, they may seem too difficult to bear, but the Lord tells us a beautiful thing in Matthew 11:28-30:

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

The Rev. Kevin Baxter was ordained in 2004. He is currently pastor of the Cambridge Society and is co-editor of *Our Daily Bread*.



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## Prayer

Holy Jesus, Lord Christ,  
I hear God's mighty "Yes!" in your resurrection.  
You invite me to live also;  
I want to say "Yes!" to you.  
Take me out of the tomb that imprisons me,  
lead me into the morning of new life,  
and walk with me wherever your love may lead.  
Amen.

(Peter Storey, *Listening at Golgotha: Jesus' Words from the Cross*  
(Upper Room Books: 2004), pp. 87-88)

# Daily Meditations

**Monday, April 20**

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I love you, O Lord, my strength.  
I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised;  
so I shall be saved from my enemies. *Psalm 18:1 & 3*

A human being is an organ of life, and God alone is life.  
God pours his life into the organ and all its parts, as a sun  
pours its warmth into a tree and all its parts.

*True Christian Religion 504:5*

**Tuesday, April 21**

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In my distress I called upon the Lord;  
to my God I cried for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice,  
and my cry to him reached his ears. *Psalm 18:5-6*

The Lord is, in fact, present with everyone; for there is  
no other source of life; and he oversees the smallest details  
for everyone, even for the worst people and for people in  
hell. *Arcana Coelestia 2706*

**Wednesday, April 22**

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He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
and from those who hated me;  
for they were too mighty for me.  
He brought me out into a broad place;  
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.  
*Psalm 18:17 & 19*

God in His essence is divine love, and that divine love is  
like the purest fire; and as love viewed in itself seeks no other  
end than to become one with him whom it loves, so divine  
love seeks no other end than to unite itself to humanity and  
humanity to itself. *True Christian Religion 838*

**Thursday, April 23**

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With the pure you show yourself pure;  
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.  
This God—his way is perfect;  
the promise of the Lord proves true;  
he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

*Psalm 18: 27 & 30*

When we follow the divine design in the way we live we are in God, because God is present everywhere in the universe, in its each and every detail. In things that are not in accord with the design, however, God is everywhere present through an ongoing struggle against them and through constant effort to restore them to the divine design.

*True Christian Religion 70:2*

**Friday, April 24**

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The Lord lives! Blessed be my rock,  
and exalted be the God of my salvation,  
the God who gave me vengeance  
and subdued peoples under me. *Psalm 18:46-47*

God alone acts; we let ourselves be acted upon and react to all intents with apparent independence, although this too, more inwardly, comes from God.

*Intercourse between the Soul and the Body 14*

**Saturday, April 25**

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Great triumphs he gives to his king,  
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,  
to David and his descendants forever. *Psalm 18:50*

Our appropriation of the Lord's life comes from his love and mercy toward the whole human race, from the fact that he wants to give himself and what is his to each individual, and that he actually does so to the extent that we accept it--that is, to the extent that we are involved in lives of goodness and lives of truth. *Arcana Coelestia 3742*

# APR 26 **The Road to the Cross**

— The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole

## **Zechariah 14:1-9**

See, a day is coming for the Lord, when the plunder taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses looted and the women raped; half the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that half of the Mount shall withdraw northwards, and the other half southwards. And you shall flee by the valley of the Lord's mountain, for the valley between the mountains shall reach to Azal; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

On that day there shall not be either cold or frost. And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the Lord), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

## **Mark 11:1-10**

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'"

They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"

They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

### *Apocalypse Explained* 405:23

The Lord will go forth and battle against the nations: on that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives will be split, part of it toward the east, and toward the sea, a great valley. Part of the mountain will move off toward the north and part toward the south. Then you will flee through the valley of my mountains, and the valley of the mountains will reach to Azal.

Zechariah 14:3-5

This is said concerning the last judgment executed by the Lord when he was in the world; for when the Lord was in the world, he brought everything in the heavens and the hells back into order ...

"His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem on the east," means that he will act from divine love, through the divine truths that emanate from his divine good. When "the Mount of Olives" is associated with the Lord, it means divine love.

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If we lift the Palm Sunday story out of its context, it offers us a striking image of accepting the Lord into our lives. He entered Jerusalem like a king returning from battle. Had this in fact been the situation, at least in pre-Roman times, he would have been followed

by his army, carrying the spoils of war and leading the captives who would soon be sold as slaves. Jerusalem would be in for a year of peace and prosperity. The king himself would be at his best, surely relieved that a battle had been won, confident that he was secure on his throne, basking in the admiration of his subjects.

***Jesus knew full well that he was not the kind of Messiah the crowds were hailing.***

If, that is, we lift the story out of its context.

We could scarcely ask for a more dramatic example of the distortion that ensues when we lift a story out of its context. The Lord was not returning from battle; rather, he was facing the greatest battle of his earthly life.

He must have been fully, painfully aware of

the shallowness of the enthusiasm that surrounded him. Everyone loves a winner. We may be sure that in his human nature he did not know the future in any detail, but he knew full well that he was not the kind of Messiah the crowds were hailing, and he must surely have anticipated the depth and violence of their reaction when their high hopes were dashed to the ground. It was one thing to be part of the crowds that cheered the Titanic when she sailed on her maiden voyage; she was a technological marvel, the biggest, safest ship ever built. It is quite another thing to think of those crowds knowing the actual outcome of that voyage.

What the crowds expected was no less than the millennium, the fulfillment of ancient prophecies, the dawn of a new era. Think of it for a moment. There had been other rebellions against foreign occupation. The Maccabees had actually succeeded in gaining the nation's independence from the Seleucids, an independence that lasted for about a century until the Romans ended it.

Judah Maccabee, the prime figure in the triumph, stood squarely in the tradition of the Old Testament judges. He, like them, was a leader raised up to gather a militia that would repel some specific threat. Jesus was no ordinary military leader, though. He was a sage and a miracle worker, more like a prophet than a judge. There is a very significant story in the first chapter of John's gospel about a questioning of John the Baptist. The question was, "Who are you?" The answer was not "My name is John." The answer was, "I am not



the Messiah, or Elijah, or a second Moses; I am the voice crying in the wilderness, announcing the coming of the Lord" (John 1:19-23).

John the Baptist had been beheaded, but here, in Jesus of Nazareth, was someone whose credentials were far more impressive. He was of royal blood, for one thing. He was a potential king. He taught with authority, like Moses. He worked miracles like Elisha. And now, he came into the city in the style of a victorious king, and did so just before the Passover, the celebration of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Here, in other words, was Moses and David and Elisha all rolled into one.

Now translate this into our own times, to the turn of this millennium. Think of the Ugandans who apparently expected the end of the age, and who made it happen for themselves when it was not made for them. There was apparently a charismatic leader, someone who had gained the complete trust of hundreds of desperate people. There was a promise that was passionately believed and that could not possibly be fulfilled.

Why—why on earth, in fact—would the Lord deliberately raise hopes to a fever pitch when they could only be brutally demolished? The answer, I believe, can be found in the principle stated with painful clarity in Divine Providence: "Evils cannot be removed unless they come out in the open" (§ 278a).

There is nothing inherently evil about wanting peace and prosperity. It is surely much saner, much better, than wanting war and poverty, much better than apathy. The evil enters when this relatively external good is more important to us than deeper values—when, for example, a tyrant "pacifies" his country by eliminating the opposition, or when we build prosperity on the backs of child labor, as we did in Victorian times, in the era we associate with strong family values.

A simple example may serve to get the point across. How many people would flock to the streets for someone who promised to deliver us from our own moral and spiritual weaknesses? We seem far more

***Why would the Lord raise hopes to a fever pitch when they could only be demolished?***

interested in being saved from our circumstances than in being saved from ourselves.

***Revelation...shows us where to look for the promise that will not fail.***

From the beginning of his ministry, the Lord had made clear what the focus of his good news was. It was not the kingdom of Israel; it was the kingdom of heaven. Not many people were really interested. I'm reminded of a situation some years ago in which a teenage boy was feeling very out of it because all his friends seemed to have girlfriends, and he didn't. He learned that one evening the girls had gotten together and had been discussing boys. All had agreed that he was the nicest of the lot. Apparently, though, at that point in their lives they weren't looking for "nice." In *The Fountain of Age*, Betty Friedan tells of two women whose first marriages failed and whose second marriages succeeded. Both women said much the same thing: "The second time, I married someone I wouldn't have looked at twice when I was younger."

Again, it is not that what they were looking for at first was inherently evil. It was just that they were radically exaggerating its importance. Perhaps the only way they could find this out was by experience, by having their unrealistic hopes raised up, and then giving reality the last word. It may not be the most welcome message, but we must not forget that the result in each of these instances was that extraordinary blessing, a happy marriage, which was all the more treasured because of the contrast with what had gone before.

There is no point in raising those unrealistic hopes unless there is a blessing to be gained. People who have been hurt by those they love are bound to be wary of opening themselves to more hurt, wary of opening their hearts. It is the purpose of revelation not simply to awaken us to a joy that may lie beyond the pain, but also to show us where to look for the promise that will not fail.

When we ask where we can put our complete trust, the answer is of course theologically obvious. We could almost open the Bible or any volume of Swedenborg's writings at random and find it. For that matter, we could probably open any volume of Aquinas or Augustine or Luther or Calvin, we could open the Qur'an or the Book

of Mormon, and find much the same answer. If we would look for perfect security, we can look only to divinity. In fact, it is divinity itself that is responsible for this measure of unanimity, providing in every religion the guidance its believers need for their part in the purpose of creation, for the building of the heavenly community.

It is the beauty of that community that makes the whole trip worthwhile—even or perhaps especially that last leg of the journey that includes the triumphal entry, the Last Supper, and the cross. That is what Swedenborg means when he says, “When ‘the Mount of Olives’ is associated with the Lord, it means divine love.” What impelled the Lord to make that fateful ride? We can have some idea of what was going on in the minds and hearts of the crowd, because we are not all that different from them, but what was going on in the Lord’s mind and heart?

We need not guess at the answer. He was coming into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. He was coming from his love of us. The crowds were individuals who were infinitely dear to him, as we ourselves are. They had eyes that were blinded by their focus on material goals. If only their sight could be opened, if only the blinders could be taken off, they could see the beauty of the kingdom of heaven. Then they would be willing, eager, to sell all they had for that pearl of great price. Until then, they would cling to their possessions and never know what they were missing.

***Sometimes you have  
to care very deeply  
about someone to  
say “No.”***

Sometimes you have to care very deeply about someone else to say “No.” It hurts. It is far easier to say “Yes,” but it is easy for the wrong reasons.

Just this past week, one of my students called my attention to an image tucked away in the treatment of the wilderness wandering in Swedenborg’s *Secrets of Heaven*. It seems that the dew that fell in the morning, leaving behind the manna when it evaporated, was an image of something called “the truth of peace.” That truth, we are told, comes from the Lord and “because it is inmost, flows subtly into truth that is below it and brings that lower truth to life... Once that lower truth has been brought to life, the truth of peace rises up—that

is, it seems to disappear—and what holds our attention is the truth that has gained life from it. This is how the truth of faith is born” (*Secrets of Heaven* §8456).

This needs to be put together with the definition of “peace” offered in the previous paragraph. “Peace has within itself a trust in the Lord, that he is in control of everything and is taking care of everything and that he is leading toward a good outcome. When we are ‘in’ this faith, then we are at peace. We are not afraid of anything; no worry about the future disquiets us. “

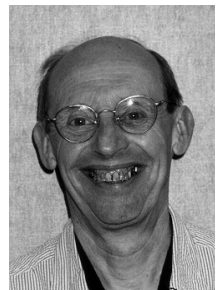
As he rode into Jerusalem, the Lord knew that the cross lay ahead, but he also knew that the resurrection lay beyond the cross. He had told his disciples about it beforehand (see, for example, Mark 10:33f.). He knew this with enough depth of conviction to carry him through that appalling week. We can scarcely imagine a beauty radiant enough to shine through that darkness. We can scarcely imagine the sheer strength of “the truth of peace.”

The definition of “peace” is not left standing alone. It leads directly to the following statement: “We come into this state to the extent that we are caught up in love for the Lord. The state of peace banishes everything evil, especially our reliance on ourselves” (*Secrets of Heaven* §8455).

We have come full circle. To love the Lord is to be drawn toward the beauty of that divine humanity, of the image in which and for which we ourselves were created. To be drawn toward that beauty is to be stirred into motion on the path of regeneration that is our faint echo of the Lord’s glorification. It is to long and to work for the time when this church will represent that beauty to the community that surrounds it, the community on which it depends.

Amen.

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is the pastor of the Bath Society in Maine. He is also a faculty member at the Swedenborgian House of Studies.



# Daily Meditations

Monday, April 27

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We give thanks to you, O God;  
we give thanks; your name is near.  
People tell of your wondrous deeds. *Psalm 75:1*

The Divine fills all spaces of the universe without [being bound by] space. *Divine Love and Wisdom 69*

Tuesday, April 28

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At the set time that I appoint  
I will judge with equity.  
When the earth totters, with all its inhabitants,  
it is I who keep its pillars steady. *Psalm 75:2-3*

If you gather everything that is known and subject it to your mental insight and explore in some elevation of spirit what is common to everything, you can only conclude that it is love and wisdom. *Divine Love and Wisdom 28*

Wednesday, April 29

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I say to the boastful, "Do not boast,"  
and to the wicked, "Do not lift up your horn;  
do not lift up your horn on high,  
or speak with insolent neck." *Psalm 75:4-5*

Everything civil, everything moral, and everything spiritual depend on love and wisdom; and apart from them nothing exists. *Divine Love and Wisdom 28*

## **Thursday, April 30**

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For not from the east or from the west  
and not from the wilderness comes lifting up;  
but it is God who executes judgment,  
putting down one and lifting up another. *Psalm 75:6-7*

The Divine is the same in the largest and the smallest things... The person is a recipient, and the recipient or recipient vessel may vary... Still, the Divine is the same in the one as it is in the other. *Divine Love and Wisdom 77*

## **Friday, May 1**

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For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup  
with foaming wine, well mixed;  
he will pour a draught from it,  
and all the wicked of the earth  
shall drain it down to the dregs. *Psalm 75:8*

Every evil bear its own punishment with it: they are united. So the person who is involved in an evil is also involved in the punishment of that evil. *Heaven and Hell 509*

## **Saturday, May 2**

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But I will rejoice for ever;  
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.  
All the horns of the wicked I will cut off,  
but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted. *Ps. 75:10*

The only way anyone can be prepared for heaven is by insights into what is good and true--therefore, only through being taught. For no one can know what is spiritually good and true and what is evil and false... without being taught. *Heaven and Hell 512*

# Our Daily Bread

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**The Swedenborgian Church** bases its teachings on the Bible as illuminated by the works of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a Swedish scientist and theologian. Swedenborg envisioned a new Christianity coming into being that was revitalized by the Spirit of the Lord.

We believe that there is one God, known by many names. We worship Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God, who made himself known to us through his life as the divine human Jesus of Nazareth, and whom we continue to know through his Holy Spirit, which operates through and around us.

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that in its pages we find two parallel stories: the account of people, places, and events; and within that account a spiritual reflection of our individual and corporate journeys. The Bible, with its infinite depth of meaning, is truly a living Word, guiding us as we strive to make ourselves temples for the Lord by loving and serving others. We believe that, above all, "all religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good."

The Swedenborgian Church exists to help people be open to the Lord's presence and leading, and to facilitate their spiritual well-being. We invite you to participate with others who are seeking to deepen their inner life and pursue their spiritual journey.

# ***Our Daily Bread* is a ministry of the Swedenborgian Church**

## **Our Beliefs in Brief:**

- God is pure love, pure wisdom, and pure creative power.
- God became human in Jesus Christ and dwells with us.
- The Bible is God's Word, and has many levels of meaning.
- God loves and saves people of all religions.

*All Returns to:  
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