

SOUL FOOD



For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder. (Isaiah 9: 6)

Love and Judgment

Excerpts from Rev. Mike Gladish

A Big Spiritual Dilemma

Most Christians say that we are saved by faith in the "fact" that He suffered and died on our behalf, offering Himself as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the whole human race (past, present and future). The idea is that in confronting the evils and falsities of the world He became a "lightning rod" for all the hatred of the world, and that by suffering on our behalf He relieved us of any need to suffer. In classic Christian theology this is called the "vicarious atonement." But this makes the love of God rather demanding, don't you think? – that He should require a Divinely human sacrifice to move Him to pity and forgiveness? Indeed, it seems rather pagan, doesn't it? One gets the sense of an angry, jealous God demanding payment for the sins of the world and being appeased only by the brutal murder of His own Son. What kind of love is this, and what kind of judgment?

Unconditional Love?

*What a contrast this is from all the talk we hear today about "unconditional love," that is, love that requires nothing but accepts all people without qualification. We hear it everywhere! "God loves me just as I am." And it's TRUE! But does He love the WAY we are? Note the Gospel is ALL about the need to change, beginning with the first words of Jesus' public ministry, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**" (Matt. 4:17). So how can we understand God's love? And how can we reconcile that love with what He does require? Here's a simple answer: **God's love is such that He wants to make us happy to eternity** (True Christian Religion 43). You can't ask for much more than that.*

But in order to be happy we have to live in harmony and co-operation with the laws of order. Who could possibly imagine that God would love our misery or our mistakes, our selfishness or our stupidity? No, it is because He loves us that He wants us NOT to be miserable, selfish or stupid. And this love is unconditional, but it requires wisdom, or judgment to be effective.

So getting back to Christmas, we can think of it this way: – God in His Infinite love says to Himself, "My people are miserable, what can I do to make them happy?" And from His infinite wisdom He replies, "I must go down there and show them how to find happiness; I must not force them, but teach them, and show them, so that they have a choice and can turn their lives around."

The Real Nature of Judgment, or Conditions for Salvation

*There is an appearance in the literal stories in the Gospels that God sent His Son as someone separate from Himself into the world, "that the world through Him [not the Father] might be saved." But the truth is that God, being pure, unconditional love in its very essence, provided for the salvation of the world by **clothing HIMSELF in the human form AS Jesus Christ** so that He could teach the truth with love and so remove all the obstacles to a life of faith.*

This is why, in perhaps the most famous Advent prophecy of all, we read, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given... and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Note, He is all of these in ONE person.

This is why Jesus Himself said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30); "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

But how could the Infinite be contained in a finite body? And who looked after the rest of the universe while it was so contained?

We might as well ask how the mind can look after the body while its thoughts are focused on one small thing. The fact is, the infinite is not contained or limited in any way, but it does manifest itself in a focused way in the love and wisdom of Christ.

The Dilemma Solved *So we see that the story of Christmas is not the story of God demanding any thing, least of all a human sacrifice. It is the story of love providing the wisdom necessary for us to take responsibility, to make good judgments, and to keep His commandments for our own sake, indeed, for our eternal welfare. So it is the story of love and wisdom working together, as they always do, and working in this case in a human form for all to see and understand.*

"I have come," Jesus said, "as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). And "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

So, may this and "all your Christmases be bright" with the light of His love and wisdom!

Christmas Daily Readings.....register online now

This year's Christmas readings are gathered around a theme titled, "Our Part". It's a theme which acknowledges the role that each one of us plays in our eternal destiny. The Lord our God is the Saviour of all, but He can't prepare us for heaven without our cooperation. He has given us hearts that can love, minds that can think wisely and creatively, and bodies that can do many useful things. His hope and expectation are that we will take these gifts and use them to orient ourselves toward Him and toward others around us. He wants us to consider the role we can best play in any given situation, and then pour our energy in that direction.

This theme shows itself throughout the Christmas story. There, each person or group of people has a part to play in the divine narrative: Zacharias and Elizabeth walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; Mary and Joseph trust

the Lord's leadership, and they devoutly do what is required of them; the shepherds and wise men come with haste to see the newborn babe, they present gifts to Him, and they fall down and worship Him; Simeon waits patiently for the Lord's coming, and Anna the prophetess speaks of Him to all who seek redemption. Each of these characters symbolizes a different part of us—and a different part that we have to play—in the birth of the Lord's love and wisdom in our lives.

What is there for us to learn from the different characters in this story? In what way can their lives, and the example they set, help us do our part in making loving and wise choices, doing useful things, and contributing to the goodness of any situation that we are in this Christmas season?

Each daily email in this program features a scriptural passage from the Christmas story followed by readings from the [Writings given for the New Church](http://www.newchurch.org/about/news/christmas-readings-2011.html). Each reading touches on some part that we have to play in our walk with the Lord. At the end of each reading a reflection is offered, along with a few questions or a simple task. There are twenty-five readings in all—one for each day of December up through Christmas day at the address below.

<http://www.newchurch.org/about/news/christmas-readings-2011.html>

News

Farewell to Dr Tony Phan

On the 8th November Tony passed into the spiritual world after a long three years of a sad and debilitating illness: MND. The journey by the family was intermingled with the joy of the birth of a son and the raising of these little angels amidst the decline of Tony's earthly body. Tony continued to work at UWA until only a few months ago, valiantly continuing the international research that he undertook.

Excerpt from Jason's address at the Memorial Service

"We all know what an amazing man Tony was. Not only was he a brilliant scientist and captivating speaker; not only was he a devoted husband and father, but he was a man who after being robbed of 50 years of his life, continued with a smile to contribute in every way he could. To the scientific community, against every obstacle he courageously found ways to continue his research projects and lectures long after he was told it was impossible. We know he had great courage and didn't deserve any of what he went through.

Something not all of you may know about Tony (or TNT-Tony as he was known). He was also 3x world champion at Galactic Civilization – an online real time strategy game tournament held every year. But Tony was a champion in so many ways: when he could no longer compete, he continued to offer advice and was the moderator on the game forums although it was still frustratingly difficult for him to interact with his computer.

About two years ago, Tony's symptoms were already quite severe: he could only walk a few paces at a time and could no longer lift his arms. So I accompanied Tony to Byron Bay when he was invited to give a series of presentations over a few days to an exclusive group of dental specialists known as MDA (multi-disciplinary association) that were interested in Tony's dental research. This group was so exclusive, membership was strictly invitation only, and even then, only the most successful, highly regarded, best of their field dental specialists were invited. I was astounded by the reception they gave Tony. It was nothing short of rock star. After arriving at the dinner in the limo, a kind of buzz went around the place: "Dr Phan is here!" So here were all these best of breed dental specialists wanting to get just a bit of time chatting with our Tony. Asking questions about things I couldn't even pronounce let alone understand. I was so proud to see our modest and unassuming Tony suddenly transformed into a celebrity right before my eyes.

Tony knew this would probably be the last opportunity of this kind. But even at this career high whenever he was asked if could stay an extra day or two (and he was asked by many of them) his face would light up with pride as he'd announce that he has a new born son (and 3 old daughter) and he just couldn't wait to get back to be with his wife and kids. And that was the real Tony: above all else, he loved his family. And his great love gave him great courage. As his condition worsened, never complaining, he continued to think of this family first before himself right up to his last breath."

Our prayers are with the family as they start a new era in their lives without him. And two year old Michael can be heard to say happily....."Daddy has a new body! He is happy!"



Visit of Glenn Alden We were fortunate to have the presence of Glenn at Tony's Memorial Service and we are very grateful to the Hurstville Society for making this possible. Glenn arrived on Friday 11th November, led the Memorial Service of Tony on Saturday and then joined the family and friends at Verity's home afterwards before flying back to Hurstville for their Sunday service.

It is lovely to have Ros with us as she stays with family in Perth.

We welcome James who has become a regular at our services

The Frosts will again be holidaying in South Africa over Christmas and New Year, and **James** will be flying over to see family and friends after his business trip to China in early December.

December/January Calendar 2011

<i>Sun 4th Dec</i>	Worship 5pm <i>followed by a shared meal</i>	10 Broome Street South Perth (off Douglas St)
<i>Sun 11th Dec</i>	Worship 10.30am <i>followed by a shared meal</i>	10 Broome Street South Perth (off Douglas St.)
<i>Sun 18thst</i>	Worship 10.30am <i>followed by a shared meal</i>	10 Broome Street South Perth (off Douglas St.)
<u><i>Sunday 15th Jan</i></u>	Rev Peter Buss 5pm HOLY SUPPER service <i>followed by a shared meal</i>	10 Broome street South Perth (off Douglas St.)
<i>All other Sundays in January</i>	Worship followed by a shared meal	TBA

Worship Services are held weekly at

*10 Broome Street, South Perth (off Douglas Street)
the first Sunday's services at 5pm
the rest at 10.30am*



General Church of the New Jerusalem in Perth

10 Broome St. South Perth (off Douglas St)

www.newchurch.org

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Lay Leader In Perth :

John Frost tel: 0415 232 420.

C/o 57 Boronia St. Innaloo, 6018

Editor: Mary