



Tonia Jarvis Rev Bruce Jarvis Liz Regan

Seaburn Dene

Presentation

During our Remembrance Day service I presented Liz Regan with her Accredited Worship Leader's medallion and certificate awarded by the Committee for Auxiliary Ministry. Tonia Jarvis received hers at this year's Conference. After I'd made the presentation to Liz, and given her a blessing, Tonia came out so that the congregation of 33 adults and children could see them both wearing their medallions. There was, of course, warm applause from a group who appreciate just how much these two ladies do for our Church here in Seaburn Dene.

Rev Bruce Jarvis

Lifeline

Lifeline is published in the first week of the month by the General Conference of the New Church. Articles and notices should reach the editor by the end of the second week of the month prior to publication.

Editor: Alan Misson,
Tel: 020 8777 5098 Email: alanmisson@btinternet.com

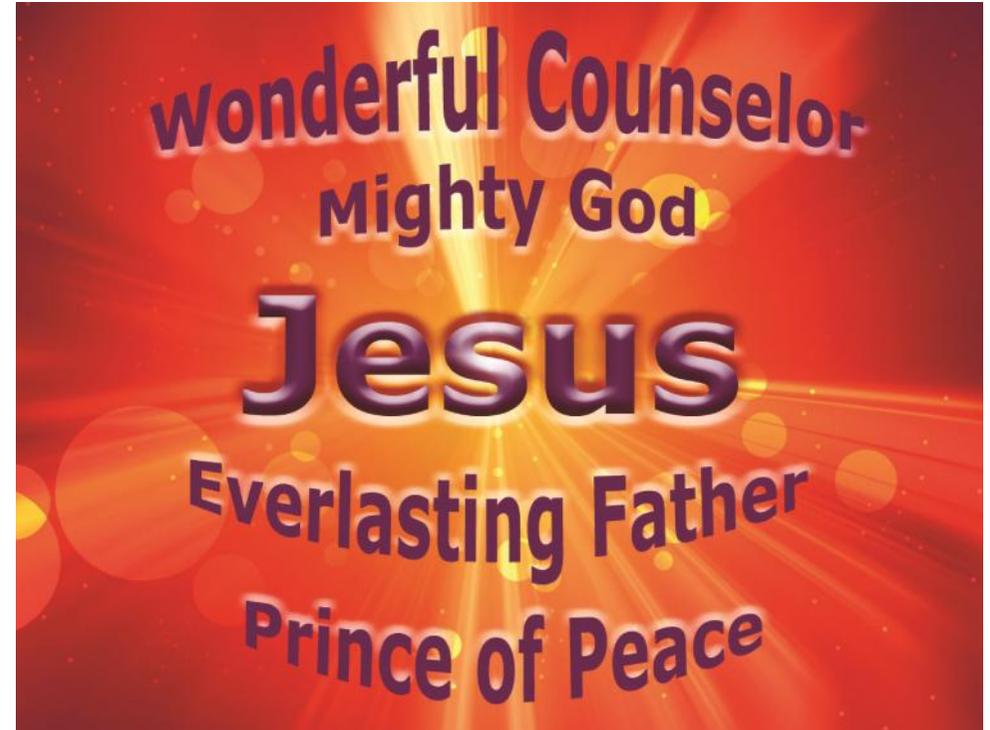
Distributor: Howard Turner,
Tel: 020 7229 9340
Email: howard.turner@generalconference.org.uk

ISSN 0308-3624



new church

Lifeline



December 2012
Number 416

Our mission is to express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God's kingdom.

God Visiting

It says in the early part of the Christmas story, "*for He has visited and redeemed his people*" [Luke 1:68]. It's one way of thinking about God coming into this world here, that He visits us. A helpful idea for us, because we're so used to going on visits and having visits from family and friends. So let's think about God 'visiting' a little bit more.

If someone visits you, then they are your guest while they are with you. You try to make them feel at home and appreciated. You put them in a special category and treat them very kindly. You're glad to see them and put yourself out for them, and talk about each other's news of family and mutual friends. And, yes, at Christmas, we're likely to do that with each other a bit more than we do at other times of the year.

It may be stretching the analogy a bit but if God has visited us then he has certainly left His visiting card. This tells us someone has been (often when we weren't there to welcome them (!) and their contact details are on the visiting card for us to be able to get in touch. So God's visiting card perhaps is the gospels - the account of His visit, with a fair amount of contact details given there of course. Or perhaps it is Christianity and the knowledge and feeling among people that Someone has been here with us and for us. Or the church, which celebrates Jesus as Lord. Here, perhaps, the visiting cards are so many to choose from, with every style from bright contemporary through to the classy professional look. But hopefully the message on the card is common to them all.

(Continued on page 3)

Contents

God Visiting	2	Human Sexuality - Online Library	14
The Two Sacraments - where is the joy?	4	Notices	15
A Perspective on Life	7	Seaburn Dene Presentation	16
5th Essential - Loving the Lord - part 3	11		

For the current issue of Lifeline, back issues and other resources visit:

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

Volunteer Part-Time Insurance Co-ordinator

The churches, houses and other buildings owned by General Conference are a valuable asset and need insurance cover, as do those who organise activities within them. Please consider if you can help provide their insurances by organising the payment of premiums and claims. The work involves only:

- Being in contact with the insurance brokers
- Being in contact with groups' local contacts, and collecting the premiums
- Dealing with claims from submission to settlement
- Up to two weeks in February and March to agree overall premium and set-up a spread-sheet of properties, groups, etc.
- Up to two days for each claim, with about ten claims per year
- Annual meeting at the offices of the brokers (London area)
- Use of computers (e-mail, spread-sheets, etc)
- Knowledge of commercial insurance (or willingness to learn: this is a combination of common sense and a willingness to take in what the insurers are saying.)

The present co-ordinator will be available to assist during the hand-over to the new co-ordinator. For more details please contact David Friend at drafriend@aol.com 020 8904 3433 or write to him at 98 Abbots Drive, Wembley, Middx HA0 3SQ

Youth Leader

We are looking for a Youth Leader
and are offering a salaried, permanent post for 16 hours weekly

Might you be the person we are looking for?
Do you feel called to work with children, youth and families?
Would you like more details?

Please contact Judith Wilson on 01425 279408
or at judith.wilson@generalconference.org.uk
The job description is available on www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

Human Sexuality - Online Library

Below you will find a list of the current articles available in the online library on Human Sexuality at www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

1. Report of the Homosexuality Study Group
This report was instigated by the Committee of Ministers at their AGM in April 2005.
2. Minority Report of the Homosexuality Study Group
This is a minority report by one of the members of the study group.
3. Discussion Paper on Homosexuality
This paper also arose from the Committee of Ministers AGM in April 2005.
4. Human Sexuality and Religion
Letter to Lifeline from Guy de Moubray, May 2012.
5. Gay Pride or Straight Talk
An article by Stephen Russell-Lacy, submitted to Lifeline October 2011.
6. Spiritual Origin and Nature of the Sexes
A paper by Rev Michael Stanley.
7. Spirituality and Morality
A paper by Rev Michael Stanley.
8. Dialogue on Homosexuality and Marriage
A dialogue discussion by Rev John Sutton.
9. God Bless You
A booklet by Karl Birjukov on the subject of blessing.
10. Old Testament Laws
A short study by Alan Misson on the different sorts of laws in the Old Testament.
11. According to, or Contrary to, Divine Order?
A short article by Ian Johnson on 'Order'.
12. Homosexuality and the Ministry
A paper, written in 2004, by Alan Bowie.

The word that's used for 'visit' actually means 'to inspect' or 'look over'. That sound sobering, that God comes on an inspection or to look us over. We know how that feels in human terms when you inspect a house you might buy or look over a possible school for your children. We hope everything comes up to expectations!

But I don't really think we can apply that kind of feeling to a visit from God. We might feel unsettled, but God (who already knows that we fall short of the ideal and He isn't trying to make us feel bad about that ...) is basically wanting to help us do it better than we have been. I once accompanied a Year 12 music student who played trombone. He was pretty average but did his best. His teacher came before the exam and we ran a lesson through. The boy made mistakes and seemed nervous. The teacher told him, "Tim, do realise that the examiners actually want you to do well. They're not watching for mistakes." I could have hugged him for saying that. And Tim got a pretty good rating and he relaxed during the 'exam'. Through the teacher, God visited him and gave him what he needed.

I think one of the most important things about visiting is that people actually meet up and get together. Imagine being used to someone on the phone you've never met and then one day they come and visit you. "So that's what you look like!" Now you can put a face to the name. I think this is a good way of describing Christmas. When we think about Christmas we shouldn't carry the idea that God came into the world as if He wasn't already there (because He always is!) but so that we can now put the face to the name. We can now personally picture what the voice of all that truth - those commandments, laws, statutes and precepts ... looks like, because He's paid us a visit.

And when we live it and show it out there in life we're helping to put the face to the name, and people recognise something of God through something of us. So perhaps we could say that God doesn't really want to only visit, but become a permanent resident.

I hope that you all have a very special Christmas.

Rev Julian Duckworth

*And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace. [Luke 1:76-79]*

The Two Sacraments - where is the joy?

In the New Church, we often hear the word “sacrament” talked about. What does it actually mean? According to the Oxford Online Dictionary, it is “a thing of mysterious and sacred significance; a religious symbol”, or “baptism and the Eucharist”. In the Catholic Church, there are seven sacraments. In the Protestant Church, and also in the New Church, we recognise two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Supper.

What is so special about these two ceremonies that make them stand out above the rest? One is that they were both commanded by Jesus Himself in the Gospels. Another is that they are the only two religious ceremonies where physical things are used - water, fermented wine and unleavened bread. The teachings of the New Church tell us that these two sacraments are the gates to the Lord and to heaven [TCR 721], and it is through these that we can achieve eternal happiness.

There’s a thought – happiness. Baptism is certainly a happy occasion. Most frequently, we welcome a new baby into the world, and into the family of the church. Older children are also baptised at times, and adult baptism is welcome, too. Surely this is also a time of celebration, because the adult has made a choice to follow the Lord, rather than the parents promising this on their child’s behalf?

We are taught that there are three reasons to baptise. The first is an introduction to the Christian church, giving a direct link to Christian angels, who will help them along their journey. The second is that we can know and learn about the Lord and walk in His way. Thirdly, we are put on the path towards regeneration. If we follow this path, we will become one with the Lord, as He will help us to know and conquer our shortcomings.

I feel that happiness and joy are a big part of baptism. Whether it be a baby, child, or an adult being baptised, they are welcomed by the church and by the Lord. The ultimate end to baptism is a life with the Lord, and baptism is only the means to the end. We have to be taught about spiritual things and try and implement them as we grow and develop. Through this we will be on the path to heaven.

The other sacrament is the Holy Supper. Most of my experience of the Holy Supper is that it is a solemn occasion, taken in a quiet, reverential way in a warm, loving sphere. There is no doubt that part of the Baptism service is solemn too - when the parents make their promises to teach the child about the Lord.

... when anyone looks with charity on someone in distress ... a feeling of compassion is aroused. And since the feeling is stirred by the Lord, it is an alerting by Him. Indeed when people who are perceptive have feelings of compassion they know that they are being alerted by the Lord to offer help. AC 6737

Can you think of ways?

Staying aware of the depth of suffering in the world is an extremely demanding process. It is easy to ignore all except our own comforts and to feel separate from others. We have crucial work to do in detaching ourselves from that which considers itself alone, separate and uninvolved. We were created with a natural capacity for love. Our task is to discover, sustain, expand and develop this capacity until it becomes the ruling force of our whole being ... What opportunity for love is presenting itself to you at this time?

It may help to pause here and to take some time in the stillness.

We are reading about love. The moment we start to open our heart and feel an affection for what is good, the Lord is present with us. He is Love. To the extent that we can uncover and develop the sacred heart force of our true nature, the Divine is with us. And to the extent that the Divine is present, the Divine can speak to us. Try saying these words aloud ...

“I am willing to be stirred into compassion and opened up to the power of love.”

Allow a quiet space for the Lord to speak to you now.

Prayer

Dear Lord,
We bring to you our own sense of separation. We know that you can transform our illusion of being separate from you and from each other. Stir us and arouse our compassion. Alert us to offer what help we can.
We know that you can enable us to take a step forward and realise our innate generosity.
May a deep understanding of our interconnections always inspire our thoughts and actions. May we act knowing that everything we do, even the smallest service, can have infinite and powerful consequences.
Help us to love you, by expanding our circle of love. Amen

.....
Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving - a focus for the Church
5th Essential: Part 3: Loving the Lord - through loving others
Published by The General Conference of the New Church.
Downloadable from www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

asks us not to restrict ourselves in our thinking, by only considering these good works in their outward form, but also to consider the deeper truth which lies concealed in the internal sense of the Word.

Each action that is described contains some deeper reality, which is of a Divine nature because it has its origin in the Lord.

In AC 4958 we can read what Swedenborg suggests is really meant by giving food to the hungry and these other acts of charity.

The Lord is present in those who hunger and thirst; He is present in that affection and longing for good and truth which we find in ourselves and others.



We are to recognise that part of ourselves and others which is aware of a lack of goodness and truth and which is longing for the bread of life, the water of life, wholeness and freedom. A caring response to this longing involves seeing what is needed, and how we can meet that need by giving what we have received from the Lord.

By loving the goodness and truth which we find in ourselves and in others [*charity towards the neighbour*] we love the Lord Himself, and He is with us.

All our loving is from the Lord, and all our loving flows back to the Lord.

How can we put this love into practice?

For people of many faiths, the ultimate aim is not ecstasy, power or reward, but to be a humble selfless servant of Divine Love, dedicated to Divine Will and putting compassion into practice. It might be said that the proof of awakening to spirit is in works of profound loving service.

We love the Lord by bringing the whole of our human existence into living harmony with Divine Love.

This pathway asks us to place our whole being into service of the Divine plan. In practical terms this means firstly seeing the people we meet as potential angels who deserve the utmost tenderness, respect and compassion.



The overall feeling, for me, is of joy. Are we missing some of this joy when it comes to the Holy Supper?

The Last Supper was the first Holy Supper. We read of this Last Supper between Jesus and His disciples in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and it is implied in different ways throughout John's Gospel. The feeling there is of a solemn, sad occasion because Jesus was predicting His death, and was telling the disciples that one would betray Him.



Historical writers tell us that, the Holy Supper was shared throughout the new Christian groups that began to spread. In these groups, a different 'meal' from the one we are used to was shared. These were called 'agape' meals, and the translation from the Greek is 'love feasts'. People shared meals in family homes, and they would have teaching and thanksgiving for the Lord. As time went on, these meals became impractical for large worshipping communities, and so rich families continued with agape meals as social occasions, and a service of the eucharist began.

The eucharist service was more like the one we know today, and more like the Last Supper - a bread and wine service. However, 'eucharist' means 'thanksgiving'. I wonder if there is any way that we can combine the two - the thanksgiving, joyous element with the solemnity that we are used to?

The Holy Supper is the second gate into heaven, and through this spiritual feeding we can be one with the Lord. It has to be taken in the right spirit, or there is no purpose in it. One way of looking at it is to choose one fault within us that we know we need to change. It may be that we are not always sympathetic to others, or that we feel we always know best. If we go to the Lord's table with a desire inside us to change, and ask for His help, then we are one step closer to eternal happiness.

I feel that there is a time needed in a Holy Supper service for this solemn reflection, and for praying to the Lord to help us in our quest. Perhaps after this, though, the 'thanksgiving' part might come to the fore? We are thanking the Lord for being with us all of the time, and for helping us to change. Can we bring this to the table?

People have very strong feelings about how they like the Holy Supper to be conducted, and I appreciate that this might not be the way they wish to

commune with the Lord. Perhaps we could have more of an 'agape' service occasionally, and if there are children at church, help them to celebrate?

I have been studying the SOLCe Sacraments module with Liz Regan under the tutelage of Rev Bruce Jarvis, and we have had discussions on the issue of how we could introduce elements of celebration without spoiling the sphere for those who prefer a more meditative approach. One idea that we came up with was having a 'praise chant' for the children that the adults could join in with after a more traditional thanksgiving. We could also have an up-beat chorus as the hymn after the administration.

We were hoping that the readership of Lifeline may have other suggestions, or may perhaps be prepared to share their opinions? If so, we would be delighted if they would write to the editor so that we can all consider how to incorporate more joy into our Holy Supper services without taking away the beauty of the sphere that is created.

Becky Jarratt

The chapter on baptism showed that it was an introduction to the church; and what has been said so far, if grasped, proves that the Holy Supper is an introduction to heaven. The two sacraments, baptism and the Holy Supper, are as it were two gates leading to everlasting life. Every Christian is by baptism, the first gate, admitted and introduced to the church's teachings drawn from the Word about the other life. All of these are the means by which a person is prepared and can be guided to heaven. The second gate is the Holy Supper. By it everyone, who has allowed himself to be prepared and guided by the Lord, is admitted and introduced into heaven. There are no other universal gates.

[True Christian Religion 721]

Joy is present within every joining together of good and truth, for that joining together is the heavenly marriage, in which the Divine is present.

[Arcana Caelestia 4572:2]

*I come with joy to meet my Lord,
Forgiven, loved and free,
In awe and wonder to recall
His life laid down for me.*

[Brian Arthur Wren - Hymn 173 in Songs for Worship]

5th Essential: Part 3 - Loving the Lord - through loving others

'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'...

'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:34-36,40

*By thinking intensely of the good of others,
by devoting yourself to their service, you will purify your heart
by that work and through it you will arrive at the vision of Self which
penetrates all living things.*

Swami Vivekananda

Personal reflection on what it means

When you reflect on this passage from the Word, do you tend to consider what is required of you through these good actions in an outward and practical way for other people; or do you tend to consider what is required of you through these good actions on an inner level within your own spirit?

We are all unique. Do you have your own unique way of loving the Lord, through loving others? Do you allow apathy or a sense of helplessness to destroy your good intentions and overwhelm that which could be done?

Can you really serve the risen Lord Jesus Christ by serving your friends and family, your community and the world with all your gifts and energy and strength?

Teaching focus

Compassion is at the core of the gospel message. This passage from Matthew's gospel is about charity and compassion. In Arcana Caelestia 4955 Swedenborg

I see that there is a fifth matter which clouds our view.

Whilst struggling to come to terms with the subject of Homosexuality I eventually realised that I was conflating what are really two separate questions into one. The two questions, stated so that they may be applied to any issue, are:-

How am I to view this issue?

How am I to respond to a person or persons involved in this issue?

When we conflate two types of question we will become confused and remain so.

Conclusions

By keeping in mind the above way in which the clarity of our vision is clouded we can improve the rigour with which we evaluate our own statements as well as those of others. This should lead to an improvement of our understanding of where we are coming from on any issue. It should also lead to a better understanding and acceptance of the beliefs and opinions of others.

An appreciation of the affects of these matters should lead to better dialogue: perhaps even to more agreement.

These matters also affect translation and the reading of translated works. Authors of works are affected by these matters as much as everybody else. When works are translated there is the additional effect of these matters on the translator. This is rendered even more complex when earlier translations are used as a guide.

Ray Kennion



And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 1:14,18 ESV

A Perspective on Life

I have spent time, on and off over the last year, pondering on the question 'Why do people so often seem to arrive at different conclusions when using the same sources?' This question arose because I was acutely aware of having different views from others. The different and differing New Church organisations are a very visible example of this. These are the results of my deliberations, so far.

In order to have a clear perspective on many issues in life I must become aware of where I stand. I must also endeavour to become aware of where those other people stand who see things differently from how I see them. When I see where they stand I can endeavour to see things from their perspective and also gain a broader perspective on the issue(s) under consideration.

There are a number of matters which cloud and obscure the vision from all perspectives. I shall talk about the ones that I see. There may well be others that I am currently unaware of.

The first matter that I see is the difficulties we have in identifying sources of influx. Perhaps even more basic than this is the need we have for timely recall of the fact that there is inflow both from heaven and from hell into all our thoughts and affections. Swedenborg tells us about this several times. This suggests to me that he really wants us to sit up and take notice of it.

Experience extending over many years now has allowed me to know about the existence of influx from the spiritual world by way of angels and spirits into people's affections and thoughts, to know it so plainly that nothing could be plainer. I have been made aware of it as an inflowing not merely into thoughts but also into affections. Whenever evil and falsity have flowed in I have been allowed to know which hells they came from, and whenever goodness and truth have flowed in to know which angels they came from. Experience has made me so familiar with all this that at last I have been able to know where every specific aspect of my thoughts and affections originated. Yet my thoughts have been just like those I had before.

Arcana Caelestia 6307

That influx is effected through spirits and angels; and the order in which they flow in is evil spirits first, then angels who dispel what those spirits bring. Not that a person is aware of the existence of such influx, because his thought is preserved in a state of freedom created through its being poised between those two kinds of influx and because he does not pay any attention to such things. . . .

That influx is effected through spirits and angels; and the order in which they flow in is evil spirits first, then angels who dispel what those spirits bring. AC 6308

It is because we are maintained in freedom that we are, unlike ES, unaware of this inflow into our thoughts and affections. And also because we do not pay attention. We therefore need to take steps if we wish to identify the sources of influx. Meditation is one such step that we can take. We can also ask ourselves questions such as - 'Is this thought or feeling in agreement with love to the Lord and the neighbour?' And in the specific case of thoughts - 'What am I assuming in order for this to be true?' We can likewise examine any identified assumptions until a source is seen for what it is.

Yes! We do need to pay attention to these things. And It is also important that we hold back from rushing in with whatever first comes to mind or heart. We need to give ourselves time to respond to angelic inflow.

The second matter that I see which can cloud our view is one of appearances.

But it should be recognized that no truths with man, nor even with an angel, are ever pure, that is, free of appearances. Every single one is an appearance of the truth, but appearances are nevertheless accepted by the Lord as truths if they hold good within them. To the Lord alone do pure truths, being Divine truths, belong - for as the Lord is Good itself, so is He Truth itself. AC3207:3

Just in case you may have missed the import of that, it means you, I, and everybody else, past, present and future, live in a sort of hazy no-mans-land between total illusion and truth.

If this sounds terrible to you, it may help to realise that we all start off immersed in the illusion that the appearances of the natural world are everything. We move slowly towards truth.

So if I know that I am in appearances, why do I tend to think I'm always right?

Well! I've spent the whole of my life thinking about things and getting to where I am now. I've invested my whole life in arriving at my current belief system. So I'm naturally biased towards my own opinions. And you may not be surprised to hear that all people are the same in this respect; try though we may to be otherwise with varying degrees of success. You may have noticed that I have specifically referred to a natural bias. We are capable of higher reasoning.

There are two natural tendencies which work towards keeping me in that same set of beliefs.

The first is a natural tendency to notice the things which agree with my beliefs. The second is a natural tendency to discount whatever disagrees with my beliefs.

Given these tendencies it's a wonder we ever develop at all. Yet we do. And many people get wiser as they get older. This is more likely to happen when, recognising that we are all in appearances, we hold other people's opinions as potentially equal to our own. It is also more likely to happen when we recall what our natural tendencies are.

The third matter that I see as obscuring our view is to do with the things handed down to us from those who have gone before.

It seems to me that many of our greatest difficulties come from the things handed down to us from previous generations. These things are both of the understanding and of the will. They are both the things we remember and the things we feel. They include previous generations' interpretations of the Bible and the fears and concerns that come with those interpretations.

Matthew 15 and Mark 7 both carry the story of the 'Traditions of the Elders' where the Lord warns us against taking the things of man and elevating them above the commandments of God.

[Tradition, in Latin 'traditio' from 'trado' which means I deliver, hand down. This exactly agrees with the Greek original παραδοσις [Strong's G3862], from παραδιδωμι [Strong's G3860], I deliver, transmit.]

That the traditions required washing before the eating of bread indicates those traditions getting in the way of the enactment of charity or love to the neighbour.

The fourth matter that I see as clouding our view is our assumptions.

It is easy for us to assume that the appearances we see are the underlying substance which they represent. When we do so they become illusions which obscure rather than symbols that reveal.

It is easy for us to assume that the things handed down to us from those who have preceded us are the truth. They are rather the appearances that those people saw and how they saw them.

We can deal with these by examining any statement either by ourselves or others in the way I have suggested for the first matter. This is by asking - 'What must I assume in order for this to be true?' We can then examine any assumptions in a cascade until a source is identified.