

## **NUNC LICET: NOW IT IS PERMITTED**

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

One day there appeared to me a magnificent temple.... When I drew near, I saw this writing above the door—Nunc Licet—which means that now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith. In the New Church it is permitted to enter with understanding into all her secrets, and to confirm them by the Word because her doctrines are continuous doctrines laid open from the Lord by means of His Word (from *True Christian Religion* 508).

There is a game that most kids play from time to time, and parents are very familiar with it too. You are seated at the dining room table and food is being served. You, the child, say, “do I have to eat my peas?”

Of course the answer is, “yes.”

“Why?”

“Because it is good for you.”

“Why is it good for me?”

“Because it helps your body grow.”

“Why should my body grow?”

“The Lord wants your body to grow.”

“Why does He want that?”

“So that you can grow up to be useful.”

There are two fundamental truths about this game. One is, you can ask questions like that forever and never run out of questions, right? The second truth is that at some point your parents are going to say, “That is enough, no more questions,” because they get tired of answering them all.

Imagine what would happen in your family if the first time you asked a question, any question at all, you were told, “Nope, I am not going to tell you that. You do not need to know, just do what I tell you.” What would it be like if you could not ask any questions at all?

Think of what school would be like if you didn’t quite understand something and raised your hand to ask a question, but the teacher said, “No questions, just do what you are told.” What would that be like? That would be boring wouldn’t it?

What if you went to the Lord and said, “Lord, what happens after we die? Why do bad things happen?” or any other question you could think of. What if the answer was, “You are not supposed to think about that, there are no answers for you. Just do your job.” Life would be pretty horrible wouldn’t it? A life like this would turn us into robots, or machines that are here to do a job and that is it.

But think of the Memorable Relation that we just read. In it, Emanuel Swedenborg describes a wonderful temple that he saw in the spiritual world, in heaven. Over the doorway were two Latin words: *Nunc Licet*. Translated into English these words mean “Now it is permitted.”

The Memorable Relation goes on to explain what is meant by that. It means that the temple is a vision of a church where a person is *allowed* to ask questions. Now it is *allowed* to enter into things people did not know before, to ask about everything that was a mystery of faith before.

There is so much that people did not know before the New Church. They did not know what happened to them after they died. They didn’t know why bad things happened in this world. There was so much they didn’t know.

The Lord wanted to change that with His Second Coming. He wanted to open things up, to provide the information so that you could ask questions and get answers that made sense. And so the Lord gave us the Heavenly Doctrine (or teachings) for the New Church.

There are many books that make up the Heavenly Doctrine—35 of them! Do you know what is in these books? They contain a huge, treasure trove of information. These books talk about deeper levels of meaning of the Old and New Testament. They have teachings about life after death—a full description of what that life is going to be like for each of us, how friends meet and families come together again. There is a whole book on Divine providence, on how the Lord leads us. There is a whole book on marriage, on what it is for one man and one woman to come together and try to become one person. There are uncountable truths in there, and that is what the Lord provided for us.

There are all these books, and you *can* ask questions! Anyone can open them, read them, and see what is there. When we read these books we are really talking to the Lord Himself. This is because these books are from the Lord, just like the Old and New Testament. He gave them to us that we might hear from Him directly, and have all of our important questions answered.

Does that mean we will understand everything right away? No, because often these books are talking about spiritual things, and we don’t always understand them as quickly or easily as we might like.

There is always more to explore, to see, and to understand. That is why, in the New Church, we use this phrase, *Nunc Licet*, as a motto. We are now permitted, and encouraged, to enter into all these truths—to see who the Lord is and how He operates, to see what we need to do to respond to Him and to love Him and others.

The *Nunc Licet* temple is a vision of what the New Church is supposed to be like. It represents all that the Lord has given us, and all that we can now do in response to Him.

Amen.