

## The Apocalypse of John

Illustrated in twenty-five paintings by G Roland Smith



### The Apocalypse of John

The purpose of this site is to present an online version of a printed catalogue of an Exhibition of Original Designs by G Roland Smith on The Apocalypse of John. The exhibition was first displayed at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, in July 2010. All the pictures and text are © 2010 The General Conference of the New Church. Please use the links below to navigate the site.

#### Contents

Foreword

The Apocalypse Study Group

Emanuel Swedenborg

G Roland Smith

Introduction

The Pictures

Presented by the Apocalypse Study Group of The General Conference of the New Church

## The Apocalypse of John - A New Web Site

For the exhibition of G Roland Smith's twenty-five paintings of the Apocalypse of John at this year's Conference a beautiful printed catalogue was produced and made available for purchase. But now work has commenced on transferring all the text and images from the catalogue to a new web site to help make this visual and textual interpretation of the Apocalypse better known throughout the world. The picture above shows a screen-shot of the proposed 'home' page for the new site. Further details will be provided when the work has been completed.

### 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.

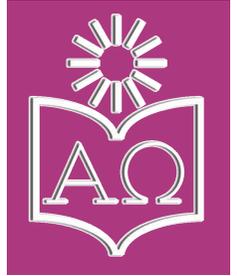
Editor: Alan Misson, 27 Woodland Way, Shirley, Croydon, CR0 7UB  
Tel: 020 8777 5098 Email: alanmisson@btinternet.com

Distributor: Howard Turner, Kensington New Church, 5 Pembridge Villas, Kensington, London, W11 3EN Tel: 020 7229 9340  
Email: howard.turner@generalconference.org.uk

ISSN 0308-3624

new church

# Lifeline



Bas-relief by Lee Lawrie 1937  
Rockefeller Centre New York

And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 2:4



November 2010

Number 391

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

## The Bible and its Power

How often do you read something in the Bible and find that it touches you deeply, even moves you to tears? Maybe something in a very well-known passage strikes a chord, something you never saw before. We could say that this is the 'power' of the Bible, the effect of the Lord speaking through the Word. And I might add that to come into contact with this power we have to do some Bible reading ourselves!

A great deal of New Church teaching is based on the Bible as the Lord's Word. For example, we're told that the very first people didn't have a written-down Word but had it in their hearts, but, as people lost the connection with spiritual life, a written Word became necessary. And we're told that the Word exists in the spiritual world, so it is not only for this world but for us for ever. And, most beautifully, we're told that when people read the Word - and especially children - the angels are thrilled with the meaning of what is being read and communicate some of their delight to the people reading it. If you have a love for the Word, then surely, you are getting some of that angelic delight in it.

But there is one particular teaching about the Word that I'd like to emphasise here. Its amazing power. Its power to affect us and bring us closer to the Lord, and Him to us. In our teachings there's a description of a piece of paper with writing on it floating down from heaven and coming to land on the earth. As it touches the ground it explodes ... with power. The paper is like the Word, or the

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Contents

The Bible and its Power	2	From the Churches ...	12
Being loved, not abandoned ...	4	In Memory	14
Regeneration	7	The Apocalypse of John - A New Web Site	16
From the Writings ...	11		

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

[www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk](http://www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk)

Guy was perhaps one of those quiet people who prefer not to get involved in the running of church affairs. But what the church had given him in his formative years, and continued to give him as an adult member, influenced him in his daily life and work, as did the education he had received at the Royal College in Curepipe. His friend's eulogy instances something that points to a social and religious conscience –

*Guy sent a memorandum to the then Minister of Works (Sir Harold Walter)\*\* recommending the de-rocking of sugar cane fields and the reclamation of ... for infrastructural development, using the huge pool of unemployed labour on productive work instead of letting them lose their dignity ... The memorandum was accepted.*

Our next-door-but-one Mauritian neighbour here in London once told us that his own older brother and Guy were in the same year at Royal College and that they competed against each other in athletics. Guy's athleticism went with him into most of his adult life; he played squash and was still playing tennis till he was nearly 80. He was a founder member, Philippe his friend tells us, of Le Racing Club de Maurice, for which at one time or another he designed squash and tennis courts, and a boat house, and he re-designed the club house after it had been wrecked by a cyclone.

Judy and I have happy memories of Danjoux family gatherings at Christmas and Easter that we were privileged to be part of. These were wonderfully hosted by Janice and Guy in their own home. Also I remember sitting alone with Guy or walking with him along the sea-shore, when we talked about matters of belief and life. Clearly he was grateful for the Christian upbringing he'd received through the New Church; and we must be thankful for what he achieved for the church and the world with his God-given talents.

### Rev John Elliott

\*Appreciations of the life and work of Andre appeared in the issue of Lifeline published in June 2007.

\*\* Sir Harold was the husband of Lady Yvette Walter - see the issue of Lifeline published in November 2009

It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

**Isaiah 25:9**

## In Memory Guy Edmond Danjoux 1926-2010

Sometime during the years 1951-3, when I was present at a meeting held in the then north London church in Camden Road, a young man said, My name is Guy Danjoux and I come from Mauritius. He had made the long sea-journey to UK from that lovely island in the Indian Ocean to further his education as an architect. More than 35 years were to go by before I met him again, this time in his own petit pays or 'little country', though I had learned a little more about him before then from his younger brother Andre\*. During our several visits to Mauritius to serve the members of the New Church there Judy and I naturally got to know Guy, and Janice his wife, and we learned something about Guy's professional life as an architect. Yet as I now read the eulogy, delivered at the funeral service led by Clifford Phanjoo, I'm led to see that I've known virtually nothing at all about Guy's service as an architect to the people of Mauritius. The following are just a few of the many things that Philippe Blackburn, a work-colleague of Guy and also long-time friend of the family, says in that eulogy –

*Few know or remember Guy's contribution as Government Architect at the Ministry of Works at the time of the severe cyclones of 1960 (Alix and Carol) and afterwards as Chief Town & Country Planning Officer at the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Town & Country Planning  
Most of the concrete primary schools standing today [ie built since 1960] are Guy's design, yet not a single such school bears his name to date  
In the Government Industrialisation programme ... [Guy] designed the first ever Factory that was built in the first Free Zone of Mauritius ...  
[As] Head of Department of Town & Country Planning Office he motivated and empowered his young colleagues. Guy trained them on the job and recommended the best for professional scholarships abroad ...*

To all that Philippe Blackburn says about Guy - not only about his 'contribution as Government Architect' but also many other aspects of his life - let me add his service to the Mauritian New Church. It was Guy who designed the present manse, and a second house, that now stand on land next to the church in Curepipe. (The earlier manse on this site had been irreparably damaged by one of the 1960 cyclones.) I can testify from experience that the manse is able to withstand the severest batterings by cyclones and tropical storms. At first I wondered how the flat roof could cope with the vast quantities of rain that can come down on it during cyclone or storm, but as Guy once explained to me the whole roof in fact slopes down gently in one direction, allowing all the rain to run away into the gutters and drains on one side of the building. Guy was again the architect when in 1989 Evangeline his sister generously provided a hall for church gatherings in Curepipe.

*(Continued on page 15)*

Lord's revelation to us; the ground is like our mind. When the two come into contact, it ignites, or should I perhaps say that we ignite.

Now here is something important. The real power of the Bible is not in all the different levels of meaning we can discover within it, hidden away and written in symbols and correspondences. No! Those help, certainly; they illuminate and instruct and point things out, but they don't have the 'power'. The real and awesome power of the Bible is right there in the words themselves, in their ability to speak to you and change you or lift you up or fill you with a sense of God's love. I always use an illustration to get the point of this across. Think about your physical body for a moment. That's like the book the Bible is, with its binding and pages, and its many stories in print. But in your body you also have your physical senses, like taste and touch, sight and smell and hearing through which you experience the world you're in. These are not your body, yet they're so very close to it.

In exactly the same way as this, the power of the Word isn't the book or the words in print or the stories and commands. It's their effect which is powerful: it's what you get from coming into contact with them, like smelling the roses or hearing Bach played well. No wonder Psalm 34 says "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

And because almost every verse in the Bible mentions God and people (I, you, we, they, my, our ... and so on) the effect is so much more powerful than in any other book ever written. To read that "*the Lord is my shepherd*" is to have a statement of great confidence and trust in the Lord's protection and care over us. We can discuss shepherds till the cows come home (!) but that's not the point. The point is the feeling that the Lord is there, and we are moved by words that speak about our own experience. Therein lies the power, which is so strong that it can lift our soul and change our state.

### Rev Julian Duckworth

From this it may be evident that the Word is the Word itself in its sense of the Letter, for within this there reside spirit and life; the spiritual sense is its spirit, and the celestial sense is its life. This is meant by what the Lord says:

*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* John 6:63

The Lord spoke His words before the world, and in the natural sense. The spiritual and celestial senses are not the Word, without the natural sense, which is the sense of the Letter; for they are like spirit and life without a body; and they are like a palace which has no foundation.

### Doctrine of Sacred Scripture 39

# 1st Essential: Part 2 - Being loved - not abandoned, lost, but accompanied

---

**‘And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’**  
Matthew 28:20

**‘The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.’**  
Deuteronomy 23:37

Life is often difficult, people often let us down or demand more from us than we can deliver. Sometimes we feel that all we hold dear and is familiar to us is ending. What we based our life on and seemed secure is no longer safe. This could be in the sphere of work, or family life and relationships and perhaps most of all this relates to our belief structures. It feels like ‘the end of the world’.

But is it the end? Possibly it is also a new beginning as well, which can only come about if we let go of the things we have valued in the past. Maybe we valued them more than the love that we receive unceasingly from God.

The Lord loves us and is present with us no matter the circumstances.

**Repeat** the phrase ‘I am with you always’ silently to your self. Let it sink into your heart and mind.

If we look back on our lives we can often see that the most difficult periods in our life brought change and a softening of our hard edges. We became more compassionate, less ready to write other people off because of their mistakes. The testing times crack the hard shell of indifference and judgement towards others and ourselves.

A new shoot of life-giving understanding and love begins to grow.

Often in life, a loving God seems distant and uncaring, but this is only our limited perception, because we have turned away from him and become isolated in our self-regard. He is indeed there with us, supporting, leading, loving each one of us.

Perhaps what life has provided seems harsh and cold – how can this be from a loving God? I think sometimes God has to shake our foundations in order to give us an opportunity to leave behind our smug complacency and self-sufficiency.

Elijah’s experience of God was not in the earthquake, wind or fire but in the ‘still

## Seaburn Dene

This Harvest Festival Family Service we enjoyed learning more about the meaning of the parable of the farmer sowing seed, led by Rev Bruce Jarvis and Mrs Tonia Osborne. A full congregation was joined by Brownies and Guides, who had taken part in a sleep-over at the Church the night before. However, no-one was allowed a rest as we all took a part in the service. The Guides helped by reading the parable in two parts. Also, the congregation helped to act out the parable - half of us were the thorny ground stopping the seeds from flourishing; the Brownies helped to create stony ground and the rest of us were the fertile ground. Farmer Callum Nicholls scattered seed around the Church and up from the fertile ground came stalks of corns for us to wave. Many generous donations of food were brought to the service and the young people came forward to present their gifts of food at the beginning. For the rest of the service the front of the Church was full of the donations, which will be distributed to those in need by the Salvation Army. Our singing was aided by the tuneful accompaniment of the Music Group and organist Geoff Turner. Many thanks to all those who helped on the day and those who worked hard behind the scenes to make it run smoothly. At the end of the service, to the delight of the whole congregation, it was announced that Tonia and Bruce are to be married next year. We wish them both many happy times together! We were given a chance to congratulate them both after the service as refreshments were served.

Footnote:

Farmer Callum's 'seeds' were small fragments of folded paper which he scattered in true professional style over the whole congregation. From the rear of the church we observed two small children who were 'harvesting' these scraps from the floor and using them to create their own shower of paper. It was amazing to see how much enjoyment came from so little material.

From the Seaburn Dene Newsletter

---

## Bradford

A happy band of adults and young people from Bradford and Keighley had a wonderful weekend at Purley Chase from 3rd - 5th September. There were lots of fun and games, entertainment, country dancing and even a pantomime. The theme for the weekend was 'The Parable of the Good Samaritan' and the story was retold, during the service of worship on Sunday morning, by the young people using puppets they had made and, together with some adults, performing a modern Samaritan Rap. Everyone can't wait for next year's event!

From the Bradford Newsletter

# News from the Churches ...

---

## Derby

Many thanks to the 5 people who painted wood preserver on the shed and side gates; who applied teak oil to the Large Hall and Church doors and the south facing window frames; who painted darker green the vestry corridor back door and lower hall double doors; and painted the upstairs kitchen walls below the picture rail magnolia; the short corridor from the upstairs kitchen to the vestry corridor brilliant white and resealed the wooden seat in the courtyard.

From the Derby Newsletter

---

## Bournemouth

A reminder that the Assessment meeting will take place in the church lounge on Wednesday November 17th at 2pm. All members and friends are invited so please make every effort to attend. The meeting will focus on the New Year ahead and what we must plan for, hopefully having generated some new ideas for Outreach, We will also look back on this year and reflect upon our past efforts.

From the Bournemouth Newsletter

---

## West Wickham

A new display facility is now available in the porch at the front of the church on the left side as you face it. Several years ago I built a display unit out of two hardboard faced doors and a large piece of wood to make a shelf in front of the angled doors. Stimulated by recent discussion between Karl Birjukov and David Conway I got the equipment out of the store but found to my dismay that a lot of paint had peeled off the surface of the doors and they needed repair. Eventually I settled on sticking some special thick dark colour polystyrene on the front of the doors and re-assembling the unit in the porch, where it is currently providing a display on the subject of harvest. But, looking forward, I am hopeful that others will appreciate the value of the large space available for posters and related displays and come up with all sorts of new ideas on how to get the teachings of the church across simply to the public passing-by.

From the West Wickham Newsletter

small voice' which literally means 'a thin voice of silence'. We cannot hear the whisper of divine love in our limited belief structures and our focus on a superficial life. Often we only experience the outward catastrophes and upheavals of our daily life, not realising that these can lead us to turn and hear and experience God's compassionate love.

**The following are ideas of different ways you can explore and experience being loved always.**

**Bible focus:** (you may want to do this on a separate piece of paper.)

God's compassionate love is demonstrated many times in the stories of the Word, here are a few examples; finding the lost sheep; Daniel in the lion's den; Jesus and the disciples in a boat in a storm; Children of Israel in the wilderness; Elijah being fed ( - by ravens and by the widow's cruise of oil and jar of flour)

As you read these passages from the Word write next to each one the quality of the Divine love which is demonstrated - e.g. for the lost sheep I felt it was the constant regard and care of Divine love that comes to us no matter how far we wander away and how lost we are in life.

Are there any other stories that come to mind that speak to you of God's constant love? You might like to add them to the list.

## Teaching focus

The Lord never turns his face from us –  
"The **face** of the Lord is mercy, peace and everything good. The Lord never looks at anyone except with mercy and never turns his face from anyone. It is we, when we are wrapped up in ourselves, who turn our face away. As a blessing the Lord is said to lift his face on us, meaning that the Lord gives us the capacity to love others."  
(paraphrased from *Secrets of Heaven* 223 & 358)

**Mercy** is love that is grieving. -  
"God's love for the human race is all encompassing. The Divine is not distant, indifferent, detached. God is human, a Divine Human, and even as his love rejoices in our own joy, his mercy grieves with us in our times of grief and pain. We are never alone."  
(*Way of Wisdom, Meditations on Love and Service, Emanuel Swedenborg.*)

If you wish to explore further in the writings of Swedenborg, here are a few suggestions:

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

still small voice - Arcana Caelestia 8823, 6971  
face - Arcana Caelestia 5585, 5608:5  
lost sheep - Apocalypse Explained 405:33  
mercy - Arcana Caelestia 223, 358, 5480

### Experiential

As you go about your every day routines, consciously recall the presence of the Lord with you by using a very short phrase like 'the Lord is always with me' or 'the Lord is my shepherd'.

### Personal reflection

When you are feeling lost, confused, fearful and anxious, ask yourself where your inner 'face' or gaze is focused. Become aware of what it is, look at it. Then consciously turn your gaze towards your fellow human being or on your loving Creator. Do this with a loving regard towards yourself - 'Oh look, I have strayed from my connection with the Lord.' There is no need for judgment; this is all part of our spiritual journey.

Repeat the words - **I am with you always**, or any other biblical verse that comes to mind.

### Meditation - Walking to Emmaus

Imagine you are walking along a dusty road from Jerusalem to Emmaus; a stranger who is also walking on the road approaches - you don't recognise him ... What stops you from recognising the presence of the Lord with you? ...

Speak to him now and tell him what lies on your heart ...

The Lord speaks to you ... listen to what he has to say at this moment in your life ... You find you have reached Emmaus ... the words just come out ... asking him to stay awhile. You go into the house ... sit down at the table ... he takes the loaf of bread, blesses and breaks it ... and in that instant you know him ... it is your loving Lord.

In the simple act of breaking bread ... in the simple every day things we find his presence ... the reality of his love ...

Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving - a focus for the Church  
1st Essential: Part 2: Being loved not abandoned, lost, but accompanied  
Published by The General Conference of the New Church.  
Downloadable from [www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk](http://www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk)

## From the Writings ...



I have talked with angels about peace as well, and have told them that on earth they call it peace when wars and conflicts between nations are over, or enmities and disagreements between individuals, and that they think inner peace is simply the peace of mind we have when anxieties are banished, or especially the relief and delight when things turn out well for us. The angels have responded, though, that this peace of mind, this relief and delight when anxieties are banished and things turn out well for us, may look like effects of peace; but they do not come from real peace except in people who are focused on heavenly good. This is because peace occurs only in that good. Peace actually flows in from the Lord into the very core of such individuals, and from that core comes down and spreads into their lower natures, causing peace of mind, relief of the spirit, and a consequent joy.

### Heaven and Hell 290

Everything bad, especially trust in self, takes away the state of peace. People think that someone bad is at peace when he is calm and cheerful because everything is going right for him. But this is not peace, it is the calm and delight belonging to evil desires that merely simulates the state of peace. This delight, being the opposite of the delight belonging to peace, turns to undelight in the next life, for that is what lies hidden within it. In the next life outward things are rolled away one layer after another through to inmost things at the centre. Peace is at the centre of all delight, even of the undelight of a person governed by good. So far therefore as he casts off what is external the state of peace is revealed and he is filled with bliss, blessedness, and happiness, the source of which is the Lord Himself.

### Arcana Caelestia 8455:2

'Rest, each of you in his place' means a state of peace. This is clear from the meaning of 'resting' as a state of peace. The requirement for them to rest on the sabbath day, when they were not to do any work, not even kindle a fire or prepare for themselves what they were going to eat, was representative of the state of peace in which the joining together of goodness and truth is accomplished by the Lord; for all joining together of goodness and truth is accomplished in that state. When a person is in a state of peace he is also led by the Lord through good. If at that time the person were to be his own guide, even though he were guided by truth, he would dispel the state of peace, and as a consequence there would be no joining together.

### Arcana Caelestia 8517 (referring to Exodus 16:29)

*(Continued from page 9)*

more widely into existing Christian bodies? Have the teachings given through Swedenborg become 'institutionalised' within certain sectarian bodies so that they have ceased to have appeal to anyone else? These are hard questions and I know that they may be hurtful to many who have spent their lives within the organised New Church. This is not just a problem for us. It affects the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and all the mainstream Protestant churches. A few years ago an Anglican clergyman put it like this:

'Church leaders today have a fearfully difficult job. Managing a declining organisation is very tough at the best of times but the public expectation is that they should be reviving the institution when secretly many of them must realise that this is not possible and that the present dying institution has become a barrier to building the kingdom of God'.

In his very wise sermon, this clergyman went on to say that it takes courage and faith and confidence in the Holy Spirit to embrace the death of an institution in which one has been nurtured without any clear idea of the shape of what will take its place. These words seem eminently applicable to our own situation. Do we have the courage, the faith and the confidence to let go of cherished institutions and practices that may no longer serve any useful purpose? Do we have the courage, the faith and the vision to let go of those things that are an encumbrance rather than a help today?

The same clergyman's interesting suggestion was that what he called 'a new look church' will require 'the maximum of trained and articulate laity and non-stipendiary priests, who are successful in their secular employment, and the minimum of paid clergy, organisations and buildings'. I think that we have already moved some distance in that direction ourselves. My plea is that we should not try to centralise our efforts too much. It is more important, in my view, to harness the talents of lay people in local church centres than to concentrate too much on new salaried officials who are expected to cover the whole country. Perhaps the main work of the church will be done through small groups of people meeting in their own homes and places of work for communion and mutual support in working out how best they can serve society through the secular structures. These are thoughts we should ponder.

*The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit. John 3:8*

**Richard Lines**

## Regeneration

In the Epilogue to his excellent short history of the General Conference of the New Church, *A Branching Tree*, Rev Dennis Duckworth wrote:

'It is the teaching of the New Church that it is impossible to foretell the future. We can have no concept of the workings of Divine Providence in future times, beyond the conviction that whatever God's Providence decrees and performs will be benign and for the sake of the eternal good of all mankind'.

Dennis continued:

'One of the great satisfactions in the study of history is that we may look back and see how Providence has operated in the past, and in this way confirm our faith in a wise and loving Creator who cares at all times for what he has created'.

Our church has never been numerous. The peak of membership, just under 7,000 people throughout the country, was reached shortly before the First World War. The numbers have declined ever since, at first gradually, but much more rapidly in recent years. Michael Hindley told me the other day that our numbers are down to something over 700. We are only too aware of the financial and other implications of this drastic decline in numbers and it is easy to become depressed about this, even though I think there is vibrant life and witness in our local congregations.

But it is not only our small church that has these problems. The Church of England, in the words of Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, faces a future which 'looks more than usually chaotic and uncertain'. In sermon preached on All Saints' Day (1<sup>st</sup> November 2009) he said:

'God knows what the future holds for any of us, for any of our ecclesiastical institutions, but we can at least begin with what we can be sure of - that God has graced us with the lives of saints, that God has been credible in this fellowship with these people'.

We might want to give the term 'saints' an extended meaning to include all those good Christian folk from the past who served our own church in so many different ways. Clearly, our own church, and all the Christian churches in our country, are in need of renewal, or 'regeneration'

I want to link this theme with that of the regeneration or spiritual rebirth of individuals which we read about in the story about the visit of Nicodemus to

*(Continued on page 8)*

(Continued from page 7)

Jesus in Chapter 3 of John's Gospel, for without the renewal or regeneration of individual people there can be no renewal of an institution, and the whole purpose of institutional renewal is to assist in the regeneration of individuals, or the saving of souls, if we want to use somewhat old fashioned language. I am sure that all of us would like to see many more people attending our own churches on a regular basis, many more people reading the Bible with the guidance of the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg which show us the deeper or spiritual meaning within the letter of the Word. The purpose of any spiritual revival, however, should not be to swell the numbers of churchgoers of any particular denomination, but to assist in the regeneration of individual men and women, to help to form that real 'New Church' which transcends the multiplicity of different religious forms and traditions. 'The Lord's church is scattered all over the whole terrestrial globe, and thus is universal. All are in it who live in the goodness of charity according to their religious belief' (*Heaven and Hell*, No.328). The 'New Church' in the highest and most universal sense is a new spiritual consciousness through which the presence of the Divine is seen to be in all things and to pervade every moment of a person's existence. To achieve this new spiritual consciousness a process of regeneration or rebirth is necessary and (this is something of crucial importance) no one can become regenerated without co-operating spiritually in the regeneration of others. This co-operation can take many forms, but I think especially of those everyday acts of kindness inspired indirectly, if not directly, by divine love.

All this may seem far removed from our contemporary scene where churches of all denominations are losing members fast and are struggling to make their voices heard. The situation throughout Europe has led one American religious sociologist to describe our continent as "a religious catastrophe" and to claim that Europe was "the most godless quarter on earth".

Even allowing for an element of exaggeration, this paints a very gloomy picture indeed and it is one that we need to bear in mind when we contemplate the situation in our own church. While there are still many intellectuals, like the scientist Richard Dawkins, who dismiss all religion with the disdain of an eighteenth century French *philosophe* or a nineteenth century scientific positivist, I wonder if they have a great influence on the bulk of ordinary people. Most of us at some time in our lives ask searching questions about the fundamental questions of existence. What is humanity? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is the origin of suffering and what end does it serve? What happens when we die? Some scientists say that science has, or will soon, provide all the answers to these questions, but science, even at its most sophisticated, can only tell us "how" things happen. For answers to the "why" questions people still look to religion. Cardinal Koenig, the former Archbishop of Vienna, has said that 'people generally find a religious vacuum intolerable for any length of time'. Religion, in its broadest sense, is something that belongs to the essence of what

makes us human. Although religion without rationality lacks both depth and force (and we in the New Church with our tradition of studying the works of one of the greatest of the scientists and philosophers of the eighteenth century Enlightenment ought to be well aware of this), religion appeals to something much more than the intellect. It appeals above all to the heart. "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of", as Blaise Pascal, the great French scientist and religious philosopher of the seventeenth century put it.

What brought you to the New Church? Don't tell me that it was because your mum and dad brought you along or there is a New Church tradition in the family, or because you sat down one day and read *True Christian Religion* and were convinced intellectually. I think we would all affirm, although we might not be able to express it very clearly, that we were moved emotionally (just as we are moved by a beautiful piece of music or a poem), that we intuited that the teachings of the New Church are 'true', even though they cannot be 'proved' like a mathematical theorem.

Of course, there are dangers in a religion that is based almost wholly on emotion. The 'happy clappy' Evangelical movement, which requires its followers to leave their brains at the church door, may only be a temporary phenomenon. Remember the parable of the sower and the seeds that were sown in stony ground. They shot up quickly, but withered and died because the soil could not give them the necessary nourishment. There is a great spiritual hunger in our world today, a great searching after ultimate things, but the irony is that this hunger rarely brings new people into established church institutions. Is it the Gospel that they are rejecting (incidentally very often a gospel of which they are almost wholly ignorant) or is it church institutions? Sometimes it seems to those outside that church people are more committed to the church as an institution than to the Gospel it preaches. That they are concerned with things like sexual orientation, which many people today consider irrelevant, that they are concerned with issues of organisation to the exclusion of the message that the church is there to preach. Then there is the 'silo' mentality. The Christian church seems to consist of so many different denominations, each of which thinks that it is the nearer to the truth than all the others. Even today, we still talk about people outside our membership as 'outsiders', as though they are aliens to be worked on and brought into the fold, rather than as fellow men and women who are our brothers and sisters. We need to recognise that there are, even within Christianity itself, many different ways to God, that one way is not more 'right' than another.

Many New Church people believe that this church is a special dispensation, even though the history of the past two hundred years has shown that numbers of adherents have never been very large. Would the New Church (in its proper sense) have grown more quickly if the teachings of Swedenborg had penetrated

(Continued on page 10)