

## New Church Marketing & Resources Group Aim & Objectives

### Aim

We aim to support & encourage people in their spirituality through the application of our teachings.

### Objectives

To achieve this aim we will :

1. Assess the needs of spiritual seekers for resources including those for whom church and the Bible are, and are not, a barrier.
2. Produce, commission, sponsor or encourage the production of resources that:
  - Communicate our teachings in ways that match the needs of identified audiences
  - Facilitate interpersonal engagement in the process of spiritual learning and growth
  - Use a contemporary non-discriminating style of language
3. Promote these resources in appropriate markets :
  - Hoping to stimulate interest
  - Looking forward for an exchange in energy and ideas
  - Having no thought of people outside our church necessarily joining our organisation
  - Being open to feedback and learning from others including those outside our framework of teachings.

Contact person for the Group is **Stephen Russell-Lacy**  
email: russell\_lacy@hotmail.com

### Lifeline

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

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new church

# Lifeline



## Relating to Love - the ground of my being

In a very real sense the love that is the very being of God cannot be directly seen or experienced. It is a love that so transcends our ability to understand experience and relate to it that it must remain directly unknown and unknowable. But when it takes form and is expressed in life - then we know what God's love is and in a very real way we know God.



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

## By your mistakes you will be known

Some of the film clips I enjoy are those from the cutting room floor. They portray amusing mistakes and shatter any illusion created. The actors lose their roles and giggle. With each new 'take' the same mistake occurs.

All humans make mistakes. Fortunately few are filmed. Indeed, it is said that 'a person who has never made a mistake has never made anything!' Hopefully, we learn from them. Mistakes reveal the illusion about all those qualities that we prize in ourselves; infallibility, strength, independence, knowledge or skill. It is only when we make a serious mistake or disaster looms that the illusion is revealed.

Because our wills are so strong, we would rather die than admit our mistakes. The human will is likened to the stubbornness of the donkey. It is driven by self-interest and pride but hides behind the illusion that it is all-wise and infallible. It possesses a strong sense that it is superior to others and is desperate not to lose face. We see easily the farce of the wills of other people. They stubbornly repeat mistakes because they think they are wise. If they are wrong, they will never admit it, like drivers who blithely drive round in circles because to confess they are lost hurts their pride.

Changing our wills is the greatest task which our Lord has. Sometime in our lives we have to be confronted with the truth that we are vulnerable and fallible. Often

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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)

## Writer's Weekend

11th -13th March 2011

Purley Chase Centre - Cost: £50

Swedenborg Open Learning Centre in conjunction with the Marketing & Resources Group are organising this event for all those who have an interest in communicating our teachings in a contemporary way and in a variety of media.

The first part of the weekend will be facilitated by **Tom Evans**;

*Tom was a bored IT consultant in his mid-forties when his first book, 100 Years of Ermintrude, was 'given' to him. As an engineer, he started to research the mysterious way in which it arrived and before he knew it, he ended up being an author's mentor and publishing expert.*

Tom offers us his experience as a writer himself and of working with other writers. This also includes a vision for expressing spiritual ideas in ways which are more accessible to the general public. He also has knowledge of the publishing world and is especially knowledgeable about using new technologies in publishing.

### Who is this workshop for?

- First time authors needing guidance on how to go about writing and publishing their books
- Established authors who are stuck in a rut or going around in circles
- People wanting to get an important message out into the world and who don't seem to have enough time to get around to it or know how to start

### The areas we want to focus on include the following:

- clarifying what we want to say and in what genre
- using the right terminology and language for our market
- comparing in-house styles of writing with those from other sources
- looking at different genres; website, ezine/magazine, blogs, courses, books
- discussing how we can support each other

The weekend would start with the evening meal on Friday 11th.

Please contact **Helen Brown** to book your place:

email [helenbrown7@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:helenbrown7@hotmail.co.uk) tel: 01932 848997

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## Experiential/Personal Reflection

In the Gospels the word Father, as it applies to God, appears many times, especially in John's gospel when Jesus speaks of his relationship to the Father. Now the term Father relates to the very being of God, the I AM WHO I AM, and so to the love that is God. To try and experience this meaning of Father we need to read through John chapter 14 verses 6 to 14 two times.

Firstly read it just as it is written and reflect on how Jesus is talking about the Father.

Secondly read it again, but this time, carefully substituting the word 'Love' for 'the Father' and 'my Father' and also 'him'. Here is an example from verses 6 and 7:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to **Love** except through me. If you had known me, you would have known **Love** also. From now on you do know **Love** and have seen **Love**."

Reflect on what you have read and feel how changing 'Father' to 'Love' transforms an already beautifully passage to one that takes us to the heart of what Jesus is saying about himself and his relationship to the Love that is I AM WHO I AM - the Love that is being itself and the ground of our being.

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Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving - a focus for the Church  
2nd Essential: Part 1: Relating to Love - the ground of my being  
Published by The General Conference of the New Church.  
Downloadable from [www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk](http://www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk)

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This is the first part of the second series of guidance notes for personal and group exploration of Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving. The first series looked at 'Being loved' and the second series continues by considering how we relate to God's love or more simply - 'Relating to Love'.

Although each set of notes is being published in Lifeline they are also available for downloading from the Lifeline web site. In fact copies from the web site include pictures not included in the printed version.

To access these notes go to [www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk](http://www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk) click on Resources and then Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving. You will then be able to select the leaflets you require.

it is only when we fear for life that we are willing to acknowledge these things.

The story of Peter's attempt to walk to the Lord on the water during a storm, represents this challenge. Until we are faced with the experience of our fallibility, we will not change our wills. Like Peter, we have to step into the unknown.

We may have been taught to believe that the Lord is present and will support us. But our old will invokes fears and doubts about trusting in this unseen presence. Like Peter, it feels as though we are being overwhelmed. It is at this point that the illusion of the strength of the old will is revealed. We are then open to really receiving help from the Lord who is the source of true human strength.

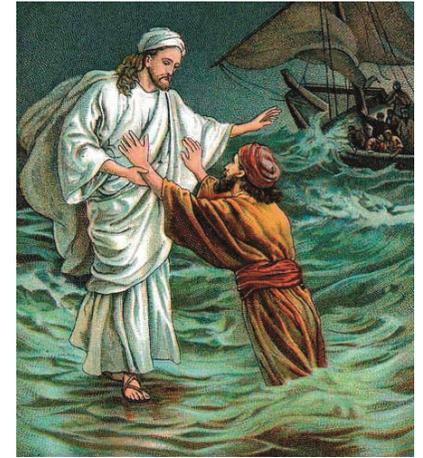
Was it a mistake for Peter to want to walk on the water, or to climb over the side of the boat? The Lord actually encouraged him. They were necessary steps in the wonderful process of Peter becoming a wiser and more compassionate disciple.

During the coming year we are going to make and meet mistakes. They are part of the way our Lord leads us to become wiser and more compassionate people. One day, they will have become like film cuttings on the floor. We will look back at them and laugh at our foolishness. May you find our Lord present with you, even in your mistakes.

## Rev John Sutton

*The Lord's presence is relative to the state of love towards the neighbour and of faith present in a person. It is in love towards the neighbour that the Lord is present, for He is present in all good, and not so much in so-called faith that is devoid of love. Faith devoid of love and charity is something severed or disjointed. Wherever conjunction exists there has to be a conjoining agency, which is exclusively love and charity. This may become clear to anyone from the fact that the Lord has compassion on everybody, loves everyone, and wishes to make everyone eternally happy. A person therefore who is devoid of the kind of love that leads him to have compassion on others, to love them, and to wish to make them happy, cannot be joined to the Lord because he is not at all like Him, and is in no sense the image of Him.*

**Arcana Coelestia 904:2**



## Vision Team

### We need your urgent input

Do you want to help decide how Conference should move into the future, helping us build on our strengths (our Societies, our many enthusiastic volunteers, Purley Chase etc) while changing to meet the challenges of different approaches to spirituality and of new technology?

If so, we are holding an Open Meeting for anyone interested at Purley Chase on Saturday, 12th February from 11.00 until about 15.00. We particularly invite families and all those involved in working with children and young people. Lunch will be provided but donations will be welcomed.

The Governing Council and the Ministry have set up a Vision Team (Catherine Lauber, Kathie Brooks, David Gaffney, David Haseler) to come up with recommendations, and we are keen that you should be able to influence these while our ideas are still developing. We will start the meeting by explaining our vision and we will throw the meeting open for suggestions and comments.

If you would like further information or if you would like to come, please book before 5th February 2011 with:

**David Haseler** Phone: 0121 440 8070  
david.haseler@generalconference.org.uk

## New Church Youth Association

### All Age Conference Day - Derby Saturday 14th May

Starting with Worship at 10:30am  
Practical and Spiritual Activities for all ages: 1-91  
The format will be similar to the all age worship days  
The Conference Business will be the final item of the day  
Welcome Gwendolen Rowe as our new President  
More information in Sunrise and Contact

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:7,8,16

### Teaching Focus

Jehovah God is Being in itself, because He is I am, the very, sole and prime source, from eternity to eternity, of everything in existence, which allows it to exist. In this and no other sense He is the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, Alpha and Omega. True Christian Religion 21

God only, thus the Lord, is love itself, because he is life itself, and angels and people are recipients of life ... because the Lord is Uncreate and Infinite, He is Being Itself which is called Jehovah, and Life Itself or Life in Himself. Now because life and love are one ... it follows that the Lord, because He is Life Itself, is Love Itself. Divine Love and Wisdom 4 extracts

He with whom there is Divine love, which was with the Lord alone, is God; thus His Human was made Divine when He received in the Human the love of His Father, which was the being of His life. Arcana Caelestia 6872:2

### Meditation

In 1664 Samuel Crossman, a minister to both Puritan and Anglican congregations, wrote the words to a hymn which has remained very popular to this day. It is traditionally sung in Holy Week and seeks to describe the love - an unknown love - that can be known in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Here is the first verse.

**My song is love unknown, my Saviour's love to me;  
love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be.  
O who am I, that for my sake my Lord should take, frail flesh and die?**

Take time to read and re-read these words connecting with the idea that the love that is shown to us in Jesus is itself unknowable and indescribable. And if you have Songs for Worship available read the whole of hymn 278.

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and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey”

But God’s love needed Moses to express itself through the task given to him of leading the people out of Egypt. And how did Moses relate and react to that expression of love? Well, he completely doubted his ability to do anything about it - But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” His doubt and his protestations continued until God said - I AM WHO I AM and then said to Moses - “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

At this point Moses realised he would not be acting alone - it would be God’s love, the very being of God, that would be working through him and supporting him in his great task of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. And yet much later on Moses would be reminded of God’s love with a warning - “And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

In a very real sense the love that is the very being of God cannot be directly seen or experienced. It is a love that so transcends our ability to understand experience and relate to it that it must remain directly unknown and unknowable. But when it takes form and is expressed in life - then we know what God’s love is and in a very real way we know God.

### **Bible focus**

Read through Exodus chapter 3 and Exodus 33:12-23 and then reflect on the following passages from John’s gospel and the first epistle of John.

For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen ... John 5:36,37

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me - not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. John 6:45,46

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? John 14:8,9

## **We’re all going on a Summer Holiday ...**

Going on a summer holiday! One of the happy memories that I have of the nineteen sixties is of queuing all round the block with a group of friends from the church youth club to see this film. The idea of a group of young people driving a bus for a holiday in the sun was very appealing. As I’m sure most of you will remember it starred Cliff Richard who is still going strong and wearing well; but even in these days, when we are told that a large proportion of the population will survive to be a hundred, many of his contemporaries will be far less physically, if not mentally fit, and active.

In the early sixties I used to love going on holiday ‘Schools’ with groups of young people from church, usually to Kildwick, but on occasion to Purley Chase. It was a glorious opportunity to get away from parents, to go to a different place, to be introduced to a world of practical jokes and pranks, and to be with a group of other young people. At the time I didn’t realise it but it was a wonderful way of discovering the teachings of the New Church and being thrilled and inspired by those teachings. I don’t suppose then that I ever appreciated what the organisers and leaders of those holidays (known then by the un PC term of ‘schools’ but now ‘camps’) actually did for young people and what they gave up to ensure that these events took place.

When I became a parent, as my own children were growing up, I did try to repay those leaders by helping at Kildwick and at Purley in my turn. However there comes a time when we all reach our ‘best before date’ if not our actual ‘sell by date’ - if the mind doesn’t know it then the knees certainly do.

This year the New Church Youth Association were hoping to find new leaders to organise and to run Summer Camp 1, as not only Pauline Grimshaw but also Clive Goalen, had decided that it was time to retire. Gentle hints and an article in ‘Contact’ have not so far produced any definite response. We had envisaged 2011 perhaps as a transitional year when we could hand over graciously to someone else, and perhaps persons who might like to help in some way could join in for a day or two and find out what goes on. The purpose then of this article is to try to ensure that 2011 is not a final end of the road year for Summer Camp 1.

It was suggested at our meeting that I break down the role of leader so that people can see what is involved. So this is what I have done in my time as leader but it doesn’t necessarily mean that some person in the future will do it in this way. Perhaps the tasks could be split up and people could volunteer to be responsible for part of the job. So here goes:-

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### Before the Camp

- Be responsible for the planning and organisation of the programme of activities including teaching programmes, outings, evening entertainments and worship sessions.
- Be responsible for the health and safety of the children, particularly being aware of and anticipating 'risks and hazards' involved in all the activities.
- Sending out notification and information to Sunday Schools, Societies, Home Sunday Club members and parents, and sending out medical and permission forms, kit lists and general information as required.
- Meeting or liaising with staff before hand to discuss the programme and the part that each of them will play.
- Liaise with Purley Chase Staff re bookings and costs.

### At the Camp

- Be the 'Head Front of House' - welcoming staff and parents, giving reassurance and information etc.
- Leading or arranging for other to plan worship sessions morning and evening
- Be responsible for the 'discipline' of the camp, for setting boundaries and rules and knowing when to take action and when to turn a blind eye.
- Facilitate the activity programme
- Have a teaching role
- Generally be the chief trouble shooter
- Catch the buck as it always stops with the leader!

I don't know whether the above list is exhaustive, probably not! I think the thing that worries me most but which never did in times past is 'What if something goes terribly wrong?' Perhaps this is an age thing or perhaps it is an awareness that we are living in a more safety conscious society.

As a final comment the NCYA Council as school sponsor will always do its best to help to help out, and of course most importantly the Lord himself.

Our camp this year will be from Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> of August to Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August. If you are interested in helping please contact Pauline Grimshaw on 01204 574047 or [pauline.grimshaw@virgin.net](mailto:pauline.grimshaw@virgin.net) or write to 'The Manse, Church Street, Kearsley, Bolton BL4 9DD. I will be only too happy to talk to you or supply you with further information.

PS I have booked my holiday for August 2012 cruising down the Danube!

**Pauline Grimshaw**

## 2nd Essential: Part 1 - Relating to Love - the ground of my being

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**Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."**

**And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:13,14**

**Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."**

Exodus 33:18-20

The first of the above passages comes from the very well known account of Moses experiencing the presence of God in the 'burning bush'. This took place when Moses was looking after his father-in-law's sheep and had led them through the wilderness to the mountain at Horeb. God speaks to Moses 'out of the bush' and expresses his great love for his people who are suffering in Egypt and promises to deliver them from it to a land "flowing with milk and honey". But God needs Moses to lead the people, something Moses is very reluctant to do. And then come the words above from Exodus 3:13,14 in which God says to Moses: I AM WHO I AM.

The second passage comes just before the people, under Moses' leadership, are about to leave Sinai. Moses has received the Ten Commandments whilst on Mount Sinai but the people have become so fed up with his absence that they make a golden calf. When Moses sees the calf he breaks the two tablets of the Ten Commandments and tells the people they have sinned. And in a long further conversation between Moses and the Lord Moses is told - "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

These two passages and the surrounding verses in which they appear in Exodus tell us a great deal about the nature of the very being of God - the 'I AM WHO I AM'. They show us that Moses' first real experience of God happened because God wanted to show him his great love for his people - "I know their sufferings,

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respond to the truth of those teachings and realise to what extent Swedenborg has (or even *is*) the answer. I wonder if instead the focus has to be on what these answers enable us to do, individually and collectively - what difference do they make to the lives we live?

I don't want to finish without mentioning Karen Armstrong's book again. *The Case for God* demands quite a lot of the reader. Even one of the recommendations on the back of the paperback version, which the publisher has included, states "it isn't an easy read". You may not agree with all that she has to say; but she will certainly make you think. I don't personally think *The Case for God* is the right title - it was perhaps chosen to indicate a relationship with the books written by Richard Dawkins and other militantly atheist authors, not to mention the ripostes to them. However, it comes at matters from a very different viewpoint. I think a more descriptive, if long-winded, title might be *The Case for Depth When Talking About God*.

More than anything else, perhaps we in the church need to make sure what we do is grounded in some form of depth. That depth may be in grappling with what it means to speak about us relating to Infinity through the Finite (as, for example, in our use of the term "Divine Human"); it may be in searching within ourselves for what connects us with God; it may be in digging for the true meaning of love, as the Five Essentials material being shared in *Lifeline* is encouraging us to do; it may be in facing the suffering we find in our lives or of the world at large and remaining undaunted, drawing from a source that goes deeper. Any such depth needs to have a sense of what is at its heart, because its heart is by definition beyond the neatness of reason. Some of that may revolve around paradox, needing to hold in tension aspects which threaten to fly in different directions. It may also involve a profound sense of the experiences, even the mundane ones, which can bring us close to God; it may even be in a sense of wonder at how God can continue to unfold, whether to us individually or to us as a human race, more of what is at the heart of creation.

**Rev David Lomax**

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*Heaven consists in a heartfelt desire that things shall be better for others than for oneself and a desire to serve others and further their happiness, doing so with no selfish intention but out of love.*

**Arcana Caelestia 452**

## The Case for Depth

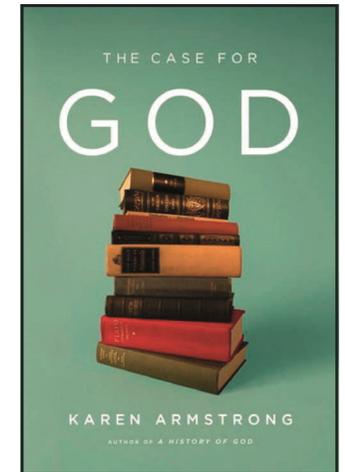
### *The Case for God*

I want to share something of a book I have recently been reading, although this is not a book review as such. The book in question is *The Case for God* by Karen Armstrong. Armstrong is a prolific commentator on religion, writing in depth on the Jewish, Islamic and Christian traditions. In this book, she takes the broadest possible scope, looking at how religion and the way human beings talk about God (or transcendent reality) have changed over the centuries and indeed millennia (she begins in prehistory!).

One of Karen Armstrong's main reasons for writing this book is that she feels that so many contemporary discussions about God or religious faith miss the point. As part of this, she looks in some detail at how the "church (es)" (this part of the book focuses chiefly on Christianity) of the modern era, which she dates from 1500 CE, began and continue to respond to the questions which arise from looking at the world from a scientific viewpoint.

One of her main points is that what was meant by "faith" and "belief" to our ancestors has taken on a completely different hue in the world we know. This is because, over the last few centuries, science has insisted on being able not just to explain something in rational terms but even to substantiate claims to any form of knowledge with a particular type of proof. The first people involved in this scientific endeavour were of a religious persuasion and were convinced that gaining greater understanding of the natural world would show something of God. This process therefore became an integral part of the ways that churches talked about God. Over time, however, those engaging with the world in this way have generally felt less and less need or indeed possibility for God to "come into the equation". "Faith" has thus become more and more identified with statements of belief to which people either give assent or which they deny as "truth". In this way, "belief" has been seen, by some of the scientific community at least, as antithetical to what they do and how they express this.

I want to begin now to transfer my attention to the main focus of this article. Reading this book has made me think about how the ways in which we as a church might have been influenced by some of the currents of thought that she describes.



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## Swimming Against the Tide?

Swedenborg grew up in and lived through a time of huge scientific development. This was less about technology (which is largely how we tend to experience science today) and more about ways of gaining and talking about knowledge. The following is Armstrong's description of the arguments of a book published a couple of years before Swedenborg's death:

"Its central belief is that the natural, material world is the only reality; it needs no external Cause because it is self-originating. There is no God, no soul and no afterlife, and although human beings can live purposeful and creative lives, the world itself has neither point nor purpose of its own. It just *is*. Science alone can give us a reliable understanding of all reality, including human intelligence and behaviour. Because there can be no evidence for God's existence, all rational, educated individuals must repudiate religion altogether."

Her following sentence explains the impact of this type of thinking on organised religion:

"In relying so heavily on modern science, the churches had made themselves vulnerable to exactly this type of attack, which undermined the very scientists who had been the champions of religion."

This made me start to wonder if Swedenborg and those influenced by him haven't been "swimming against the tide" for around the last two hundred and fifty years. Swedenborg himself, for all that some of the ideas in his religious writing can be linked back to his scientific work, had something of a change of direction in mid-life. In an article written to help mark the three-hundredth anniversary of Swedenborg's birth, Robert Kirven talks about a shift in the way Swedenborg approached knowledge. He describes this as follows:

"He continued to rely on empirical data as he had in earlier deistic-oriented scientific [i.e. in keeping with a religious-minded science] works, but he expanded his conception of knowledge in two significant respects. For one thing, he made room for affection as well as perception in the process of knowing, linking perception and reason to value and intention. For another, he gave data from his own psychic experiences equal significance with data from experiments and other experiences."

He also talks about the importance of "revelation" to Swedenborg in this position.

## On the Way Up or the Way Down?

Swedenborg had adopted a very different trajectory from the scientific world of his day. We are very familiar with ideas of the decline of organised religion in our era. It is striking to think that this may have begun hundreds of years ago. I wonder if it's possible that the whole of the history of the organised New Church has been affected by this. It may even be that there is a need for this which is part of the Last Judgment (and therefore the Second Coming) described by Swedenborg. Another quotation from Karen Armstrong may relate to this. She talks about the development of science having "caused human beings to focus so intently on the physical world that they would soon be constitutionally unable to take God seriously". That focus was initially thought to be "a good thing". That leaves me asking the question as to whether there are any aspects of our own church which were initially seen in a similar way which have actually been a distraction from or even a block to our true function.

One area where I think this is possible links with one of the themes of *The Case for God*. A very strong part of New Church tradition has been to talk about what we believe, not to mention distinguishing this from what other Christians may believe. Robert Gill wrote an article in *Lifeline* a few months ago in which he laid down a challenge to members of churches to focus less on how to talk about their Christian faith in our world and more about how that faith could express itself in what they do. What does that mean for us in the New Church when doctrinal propositions have been such a key part of our identity, not to mention propagating these propositions being a key part of our function? Karen Armstrong explains this way of understanding "belief" to be very much part of a relatively recent way of understanding faith, rather than faith being more about how life is lived and thus a call to or indeed demand for action. She concludes that religion is about changing something in us and religious teaching only makes sense in the context of spiritual practice and a life lived in a way that embodies this practice and the teaching (with the degree of selflessness this demands!).

## So What?

What are the practical implications for this philosophy for the New Church? My reason for sharing all of this within *Lifeline* is because I think there are profound implications for the way that we "do church". Perhaps we know some of this already. We are only too well aware that what has worked in the past fails to do so for the majority of our population in Britain today. I can't help feeling also that the organised New Church has been led up a blind alley by believing in the past that its role was to grow large and even dominate the religious scene in this country; equally, we have approached much of what we do in terms of getting our teachings out to the world in the hope and even belief that people would

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