

Roseville New Church Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875

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The Faith of the New Church is summarised as follows:

There is one God in whom is the Divine Trinity. He is the Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Saving faith is to believe in Him. Evil actions are not to be done because they are from hell and of hell. Good actions are to be done because they are from God and of God. These are to be done by a person as though they are done by himself, while believing that they are from the Lord working in him and through him.

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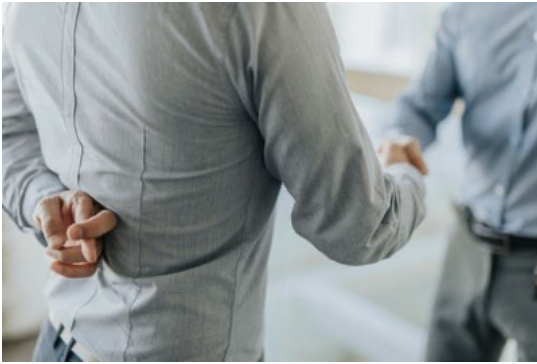
“Falsehood Flies”

In a conversation after church recently talk turned to the topic of spiritual causes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course the Writings note that all human sickness has a correspondence with the spiritual world (Arcana Coelestia 5711).

Another way of saying this is that all human sickness is a reflection of some infection or sickness in the spiritual world. If there is spiritual sickness raging in the spiritual world on the proportionate scale to a pandemic then there must be a massive amount of spiritual energy being directed towards fighting that sickness. That fight, also, must be reflected in the physical world. Now, the interesting thing about this whole concept of correspondence is that it is very difficult to see it truly as a reflection. In other words, we seem to be fighting a disease here but that does not necessarily mean that there is a pandemic raging in the spiritual world, it may be an entirely different kind of disease. This point turned the discussion to see that maybe it is no coincidence (of course it isn't) that at the very time a pandemic is infecting the world, many countries and societies are beginning to address generations-long systemic racism. In last month's RNC Newsletter I addressed the question of what can we, as individuals, do about a topic as large as racism?



In this month's Newsletter I want to turn your attention to a subject that that bears on the issues around both Racism and COVID-19 and that is



the subject of Truth vs. Falsity. These past several months, at the Roseville New Church, we have been journeying through the Ten Commandments. We recently looked at the Eighth Commandment; “*You must not testify falsely against your neighbour*” - don’t lie. Now one might wonder what this Commandment has to do with either of

these subject but as I worked my way through the study of the Commandment I saw that the Commandment had a lot to do with both the pandemic and racism. Both subjects call us to think rationally about very complex scientific and societal subjects. At its most interior sense, the Commandment is about how we lie to ourselves, even worse, how we come to love lying to ourselves in service of our selfish and evil ends.

It is for this reason that I thought I would include in this month’s Newsletter the full text of my sermon;

“Falsehood Lies”

“You must not testify falsely against your neighbour.”

Exodus 20:16

In a continuation of our series on the Ten Commandments, today we look at the Eighth Commandment; “You must not testify falsely against your neighbour” (Exodus 20:16). Our look at this Commandment begins with a favourite quote from Rev. Frank Rose; “If you want to get to heaven, think about the things that are in heaven.”

What is the relevance of this quote to the eighth Commandment? Well, simply, I want to start our look at this topic...at the end. Read carefully this passage from Swedenborg’s work *Apocalypse Revealed* (153) describing the process we will all go through after the death of our bodies:

A newly arrived spirit or new spiritual person is taken about and conveyed into various societies, both good and evil, and he is examined to see whether he is affected by truths, and in what way, or whether he is affected by falsities, and in what way.

If the person is affected by truths, he is led away from evil societies and introduced into good ones, and into various good ones, until he comes to a society corresponding to his natural affection, and there he experiences a goodness in harmony with that natural affection. This continues until he sheds the natural affection and takes on a

spiritual one, at which point he is raised into heaven. But this is what happens in the case of people who in the world lived a life of charity and so also a life of faith, which consisted in their believing in the Lord and refraining from evils as sins.

In contrast, people who in both doctrine and life had confirmed themselves in the doctrine of faith alone to the point of believing it alone to be justifying - these, because they are affected not by truths but by falsities, and because they have dismissed goods of charity or good works from being means of salvation, are led away from good societies and introduced into evil ones, and into various evil ones, until they come to a society corresponding to the lusts of their self-love. For anyone who loves falsities cannot help but love evils.

Reflecting on this passage I hope you find yourself asking the question; how does a person find him or herself at this end? In our look at the 7th Commandment, “do not steal,” we looked at the story of Adam and Eve, in the Garden, taking from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The meaning contained within the story (in its spiritual sense) is not so much about physically stealing as it is about taking for ourselves the belief that we, on our own, can know good and evil.



You may be saying to yourself ‘but I know a lot of things and I know the difference between good and evil, even children know the difference.’ The problem with this type of thinking is that on our own we can’t truly know the difference and we will, inevitably, confound the two, resulting in our calling evil good and good evil.

Reflecting on the Commandment against stealing, I’m sure that most of us can see that stealing and lying are very closely tied together. It could even be said that, at its core, stealing is pregnant with lies. But how many of us intentionally lie?

Of course, thinking about that process described earlier, obviously some people wind up immersed in evils and find themselves in evil societies. But who sets out to be evil? And, if no one sets out to be evil, how do we wind up there?

On the other hand, maybe I’m wrong - reflecting on your actions and the motivations behind them, are you trying to become nothing but evil? Ok,

that's unlikely, what about a little evil, have you tried to be a little evil? Ok, so it's unlikely that you have even tried to be a little evil.

Now I want to shift the self-reflection. have you ever told a lie? Well, it is a safe assumption that the vast majority of those reading this, have told a lie at some point in their lives. And, acknowledging that, it is useful to spend some time reflecting on how lies work. In order to do that, I am going to lie to you. Of course I tell you in advance as I fear telling the lie and then revealing that I lied to you afterwards, could leave the reader feeling manipulated. So, here we go, here is the lie:

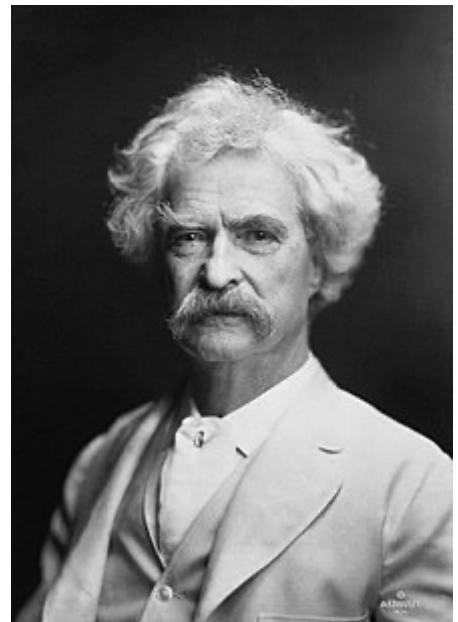
The American writer Mark Twain once said:

“A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.”

OK, lie done. Did you see how I lied to you? I lied to you because Mark Twain never said this. But isn't it interesting that, even with my warning, that I was about to lie to you, it is very possible that you still believed the lie? And that, I think, is worth taking a look at. Why did you believe my lie?

One reason a person may have believed my lie was because it was appealing? You believed my lie because you know Mark Twain had a unique way of capturing and sharing truth through skilful application of his literary talents. You may also have believed my lie because the sentiment rang true. In fact, the sentiment is true, but that it is a quote from Mark Twain, is a lie. At this point you may be thinking 'so Mark Twain was a talented writer and the quote captures a truth, so what harm is in the lie?' Probably not much. In fact on facebook and other social media platforms people share this quote often, one person shares it, another reads it, it resonates with someone who reads it and that person then shares it further, usually without checking to see if Mark Twain ever actually said it. Some would point to modern day social media's ability to blur the lines between truth and falsity as a new phenomenon but I would suggest, in light of the lesson of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that blurring the lines between good and truth and falsity is as old as anything human.

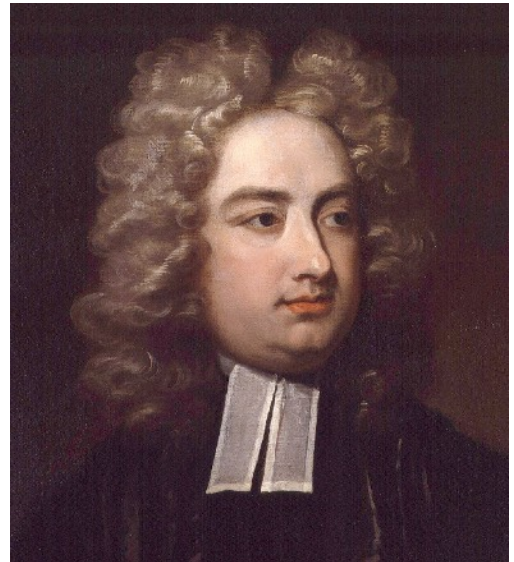
But, what if you knew it was not Mark Twain, what harm then? Well, it may have harmed my credibility with you. And, what if I know it was a lie and attributed the quote to Mark Twain anyway, assuming that he



was more familiar to most people than the likely author? Would there be harm to me?

I did do a little research on the origins of the quote and it appears, from my research, that the first literary expression of this truth can be attributed to Jonathan Swift from the early 18th century:

“...as the vilest Writer has his Readers, so the greatest Liar has his Believers; and it often happens, that if a Lie be believed only for an Hour, it has done its Work, and there is no farther occasion for it. Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it; so that when Men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the Jest is over, and the Tale has had its Effect.”



“Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it.” In its context

isn't this so far more powerful a quote? “...the vilest Writer has his Readers...the greatest Liar has his Believers...if a Lie be believed only for an Hour, it has done its Work.”

Now that we have seen how lies can take root, we turn our attention to the most important place to look to in rooting out lies. You see, there are some really skilled liars in this world, maybe you have met some. When someone calls your telephone and says that they are calling about the accident you have been in, that person is lying. Even if you had recently been in an accident, the caller doesn't know this, and they are lying. That their lie lines up with the truth does not make it any less of a lie.

Sure we can focus on the lying of others; in business, in our personal lives or in politics, but we need to root out the lies within our own minds. At one level this is what the Lord was speaking to when He said: “And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?” (Matthew 7:5) You see, the most talented liars on earth are nothing compared with the skilled liars that are the evil spirits who seek to destroy us constantly. Spiritually speaking, the most destructive lies are the ones we tell ourselves. The Rolling Stones may have said; “You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you might find, you get what you need.” But the spiritual reality of lying is quite the opposite. ‘Lying can get what you want, but you'll never get what you need.’ In other words, lying may get you want you want in the natural

world but but it will definitely not get you what you want in the spiritual world.

Our greatest defence against these evil spirits is to cultivate an affection for truth. An affection for truth from the Word and affection for this truth within ourselves and in others. We do this be regularly reading and meditating on the Word. And, importantly, trying (with humility) to apply rightly the Lord's Word in our lives. Specifically, the honest, just and faithful execution of our daily use.

Matthew 5:33-37

"You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not [swear falsely]; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.' But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

AMEN

Lessons: Matthew 15:1-20, Apocalypse Explained 1020

Rev. Howard Thompson

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Monthly News From The Swedenborg Centre

This month topics at the Centre have ranged from creation and the nature of self to learning to detect evils in us by taking a closer look at cognitive biases (errors of judgment and deciding) which fits in well with Howard's recent Spiritual Shorts episode on not testifying falsely against the neighbour, against that which is good. Today we took a look at the "careers" of our habits, especially the habit of disliking another person, which fitted the theme too.

"Career" has a dictionary meaning of "running along very quickly," which relates to the speed with which we judge someone based on a previous encounter with them, having formed a rapid some assessment of them. Quick assessments in a first impression often seem to stick in the mind (i.e. feelings). Here is an example: a study on the psychology of job interviews showed that 5% of interviewers decided within the first minute of the interview whether they



would hire the applicant or not. Which is very fast indeed! Nearly 30% decided within five minutes. While most interviewers reported making their hiring decision after five minutes or longer. 22.5% said they hadn't made up their mind about a candidate at the end of the interview, and decided later (so there is hope!). The largest block, 52% of interviewers decided about a candidate in five to fifteen minutes of the interview. We cannot grow spiritually unless we actively examine all our tendencies for lies, falsities, wrong judgments, and impulses against that which is good. This does not mean that we should not assess what we see and draw conclusions and to act on them:

“... there [is not] any prohibition of judging one's companion or neighbour as regards their natural life, for this is in society's interest; but the prohibition is on judging them as regards their spiritual life, for this is known to none but the Lord.” – De Verbo #15

But we should take on as our responsibility to learn to see clearly and truthfully, which is actually very difficult, since our own perceptions, prejudices, stereotypes, habits, views of self, and biases get in the way quickly, easily, stubbornly and often. So we ought to make our priority to thorough examine ourselves, and let the all-loving, all-wise and all-merciful Lord be the final judge of all things.

Anyhow, do come and join in the conversations. You're welcome to drop in for a visit to the Centre. Apart from that, all our activities, dates and times are as usual always published on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au Online meeting are continuing and are well attended. Below are reminders for the upcoming Zoom meeting dates and meeting ID numbers (password is always Roseville postcode, i.e. 2069).

The activities coming up are:

The future activity schedule includes:

- **Insights from Dr Groves** (reading and discussing, repeated three times on each date): held on **31st July** and **14th August** starting at **11am and 2pm and 7pm**. Zoom meeting ID is **320 544 045** and the Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/320544045?pwd=QjZtbUxvVk81b2dweUtZZTE3ZEgIZzo9>
- **Swedenborg Saturdays** (discussing topics from Swedenborg's life and writings): held on the **first and third Saturdays of each month**, i.e. on **1st August** and **15th August** from **10am until noon**. Zoom meeting ID is **476 372 484** and the Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/476372484?pwd=WmNpdHRLdotwSmZDMENQRit3aE8zZzo9>
- **Second Tuesday Discussion Day** (discussing anything of spiritual interest relating to life): held on the **second Tuesday of each month**, i.e. on **11th August** at **2pm and 6pm**. Zoom meeting ID is **124 469**

612 and the Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/124469612?pwd=NjlOZ3RpU2NWV1g1a2Zmb29ZL3ZsQTo9>

- **Tuesday Bible Study** (with Rev Howard Thompson): held on a **Tuesday every fortnight**, i.e. on **11th August** and **25th August** at **11am**. Zoom meeting ID is **863 8811 9164** and the Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86388119164?pwd=ME9rSmdkdFp5QVFHdohIbDZmNXhRQTo9>
- **Special SAA Event** on **Friday, 28th August** starting **7:45pm**, at Sydney psychologist **Roshanak Vahdani** will present an evening on **The Mysticism of Rumi**. Zoom meeting ID is **898 3202 7177** and the Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89832027177?pwd=L1NDZytIb2MrUOpHMkJ4SVJBdG5EQTo9>

Call me to clarify anything on (02) 9416 28 12 or joe@swedenborg.com.au

Have a wonderful month.

Joe

Spring Women's Weekend

- Update -

You may recall reading an enthusiastic invitation to participate in our upcoming wonderful women's weekend, scheduled for mid-October? We're no less enthusiastic but deciding to be more pragmatic about it: rather than gather en masse to share our thoughts, friendship and germs we will instead work towards possibly having smaller get-togethers and definitely online sharing of thoughts and friendship minus the germs. If you're interested in joining us or learning more about this event, please drop Jenn Beiswenger a line (jenn@beiswenger.net). We hope to 'see' you then!

Watching Out for Each Other

I know it may seem hyperbolic but we really are living through extraordinary times. Extraordinary, especially now as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread after the initial shut-down phase. I think most of us could “shut-down” for a few months, it would be fun, like getting hit with a severe snowstorm where I grew up and having to pause work, school and going out for a few days while the local government cleared 2 metres of snow from the roads and paths. But with a several month shut-down and partially into a re-opening, considering the

possibility of going back into shut-down is more than any of us really want to consider. It has, for many of us, taken a stressful situation and made it much worse.

And yet, like most people, when we are out and engaging with our few friends and neighbours we might get asked, or ask them; “how are you doing?” The responsive is often a quick; “oh, I’m good” or “I’m fine” or, sometimes, a slightly deeper; “I have my struggles but a lot of people have it far worse than me.”

In the face of an extraordinary crisis that shows no sign of easing soon, I suspect many of us are getting good at minimising our own experiences of the pandemic.

But what if a different question was asked. Maybe a question like: What are you missing most right now? What has COVID-19 and the response to it taken away from you?

I’m thinking each of us can think of at least a short list of things that this situation have taken away from us.

In a study recently done here in Australia physiologists asked respondent to list three negative things that they have experience related to COVID-19 and the reaction to it. One theme that was prominent in the responses to the survey was grief. Many people reported losing a loved one and not being able to attend the normal funeral service and social gatherings that typically honour one who has passed. Some reported not being able to say goodbye to a close family member who died alone. And many people reported feeling shame at the loss of a job and not feeling valued and useful.

Even if you have not directly experience any of these we have all experienced some change in our lives, our routines and even our freedom of movement.

It sounds like a small thing but I know that I hate the new dance I do when walking the isles of my grocery store, trying to both social distance and get what I need from the shelves. And I hate that little step back I get when I am out in public and I lean in a little to close to ask a question or simply say hello.

If you are feeling a sense of loss, but haven't found the words or the moment to acknowledge it, you may be experiencing disenfranchised grief.

Physiologists define disenfranchised grief as experiences of loss which might not be recognised, either by the person or by others.

If you identify it, you can start looking for what might replace your loss, including in an altered way.

There might be a substitute for it or a way of postponing it. Solutions are generally easier to find when you discuss it with someone who can be empathic and suggest ideas.

So, if you are feeling low right now — or if you want to support somebody else — try discussing what you're both missing. It might help us all get through this extraordinarily difficult year.

If you or anyone you know needs help:

Lifeline on 13 11 14

Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800

MensLine Australia on 1300 789 978

Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467

Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636

Headspace on 1800 650 890

ReachOut at au.reachout.com

Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) on 1800 008 774

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Online Giving

Some people have asked if there is a way to continue to make offerings to the church in the absence of weekly church attendance. For some who may not be effected economically by the current situation we do have a “donor box” online:

<https://donorbox.org/roseville-new-church>



Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours

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