

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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“To Mask or Not To Mask”

In last month's newsletter I opened the main article referencing a recent after-church conversation on the correspondence of the pandemic sweeping the world and what must be happening in the spiritual world. The short conclusion of this discussion was that, while it is very difficult for us to actually know what is happening in the spiritual world based on what we see happening in the natural world, it is probably not a coincidence that at the very time a pandemic is infecting the world many countries and societies are beginning to address generations-long systemic racism.

I then shared in the Newsletter a recent sermon touching on the subject of truth vs. falsity, a subject which is extremely important in the conversations we're having these days.

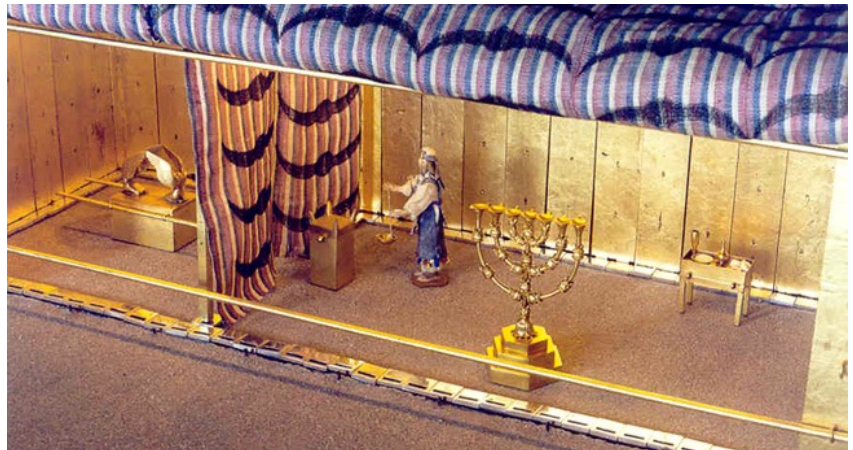
This month I thought I would turn my attention to another pandemic-related subject. The inspiration for these thoughts goes back a few months when I saw a video clip of a very impassioned woman addressing a meeting of her local government. This woman wanted the assembled local representatives to know that she apposed governmental requirements for mask wearing on the basis that the masks represent the “mark of the beast.”

While I may feel that statement is



sprinkled with more than a little hyperbole, the zeal with which the woman made the statement suggests she feels it is anything but hyperbole, it is true. So, though I may disagree with her conclusion I have been putting some thought to the subject of masks, face coverings and veils in the Bible and what the use of face masks may represent in our current struggle.

Searching the Word for incidents of mask wearing I began focusing on the word “veil” which, at least in my mind, was the closest thing to a “mask” that I would find in the Word. There are, as you may know, numerous incidents of the word “veil” and



Tabernacle Model, Glencairn Museum

several uses for it. Obviously there are several references to women wearing veils but the curtains used to separate the divisions of the Tabernacle are also referred to veils. There are also many symbolic references to things being veiled as in obscured. In each of these incidents the purpose of the veil, almost universally, was about protection. This is seen most notably in the wearing of a veil by a woman as symbolic of the protection of her innocence. But Swedenborg's Writings also speak of spirits being veiled in order to protect them from evils.

While I can see the representative meaning of the word “veil” could be useful I did not feel that focusing on that specific word was giving me the insight and inspiration I was looking for. So I expanded my search to include incidents where people seemed to be wearing a veil/mask, specifically over the face as apposed to the larger covering usually



represented by a veil. That is when I had my little “aha! moment.” Two incidents of people wearing what we would more readily recognise as a mask came to the fore; Exodus 34:33 and Leviticus 13:45.

In the Exodus account of the giving of the Ten Commandments we are told that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai his face shone

and when he spoke to the people he had to veil his face (Exodus 34:33). This incident of someone veiling their face did not come up in my initial search, interestingly, because the Hebrew word used is not the same as the Hebrew word for “veil.” The Hebrew word used is מִסְוֶה (macveh) which is pronounced mas*veh’, a very similar sound to our word “mask” just without the hard “k.” I also

noted that this is the only incidence of this particular word in the entirety of the Word. In his work *Apocalypse Explained* Swedenborg notes that ‘The shining of the face’ signified the internal of the law, for that is in the light of heaven. He veiled his face when he spoke with the people because the internal of the Word was covered and thus obscured to that people **to protect them** from anything of its light (AE 937.4).



In the listing of the laws concerning leprosy (Leviticus 13) we are given this instruction, again, one involving covering at least a portion of the face but not specifically referencing a veil: “Those who suffer from a serious skin disease [leprosy] must tear their clothes and leave their hair uncombed. **They must cover their mouth and call out, ‘Unclean!’**”

Unclean!”

Now, in the spiritual sense leprosy represents profanation or the mixing of what is Holy with what is unholy. And by profanation I am not speaking of the ‘mixing’ suggested by our conflicting motives. By profanation I am speaking of the twisting of what is taught by the Lord to serve purely selfish and evil ends. In tangible terms a priest who incites his congregation to massacre members of a different faith as their religious duty is likely guilty of profanation. There can be no more dire evil for the church than true profanation. Like the natural leprosy, profanation is something to be avoided as all costs, **something to be protected from.**

Unique from many references to veils in the Word these two incidents seem to have a particular relevance to our current situation. Aside from those masks being worn by healthcare professionals who are wearing specific masks to protect themselves most of us today are being asked to wear masks intended to protect others from our own unintended transmission of disease. Moses wore his “macveh” to protect the people from the overwhelming power of Divine Truth because, quite frankly, they couldn’t handle the truth. An interesting element to consider given the way truth seems to have become a weapon in this fight against the pandemic. And the lepers wore their mouth coverings to protect people from their disease of profanation.

Of course you may be wondering what, from my study of this subject, I would recommend you do with respect to wearing a mask. Well, I’m sorry to disappoint you. I’m not going to tell you. I want to protect you from my own possible profanation. I encourage you to learn as much as you can about the challenges we are facing, I want you to obey the laws of your State and your Country. And, having done that, I want you to exercise your own discernment and make a decision you feel is best. You see, I am far less interested in telling you **what** to think than I am interested in guiding you in **how** to think.

Rev. Howard Thompson

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Monthly News From The Swedenborg Centre

So, this month’s topics have ranged from providence, politics and gun laws, providence and the nature of the subatomic world, all the way to providence in creation and the appearance of the self. So if you want to get your two cent’s worth in, or your sixty-four million dollar question, then the Swedenborg Centre is the right place for you to visit. Join the conversations. As always, all our activities, online or otherwise, have their dates and times always published on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au Below are reminders for the upcoming Zoom meeting dates and meeting ID numbers (password is always Roseville postcode, i.e. 2069).

We have the following busy month of activities coming up (and that is not all we do, to request more of what is on offer, give me a call):

- **Bible Study** with Howard Thompson, Tuesday 25th August, 11am (each fortnight). Attend live at the Centre or Zoom using: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86388119164?pwd=ME9rSmRkdFp5QVFHdohlbDZmNXhRQTog> (Meeting ID: 863 8811 9164)

- **Fourth Friday SAA meeting**, 28th August, 7:45pm with **Roshanak Vahdani on the mysticism of Rumi**, using Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89832027177?pwd=L1NDZytIb2MrUopHMKJ4SVJBdG5EQTo9> (Meeting ID: 898 3202 7177)
- Read and reflect on the work of **Dr Philip Groves**, on Friday 4th September, 11am and 2pm and 7pm using Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/320544045?pwd=QjZtbUxvVk81b2dweUtZZTE3ZE9lZz09> (Meeting ID: 320 544 045)
- **Celebrate and explore Swedenborg's life, ideas and writings** on Saturday 5th September, 10am-noon (1st and 3rd Saturday each month). Attend live or via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/476372484?pwd=WmNpdHRLdotwSmZDMENQRit3aE8zZz09> (Meeting ID: 476 372 484)
- **Bible Study** with Howard Thompson, Tuesday 8th September, 11am (each fortnight). Attend live at the Centre or Zoom using: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86388119164?pwd=ME9rSmdkdFp5QVFHdohIbDZmNXhRQTo9> (Meeting ID: 863 8811 9164)
- Swedenborg Centre **Open Discussion** (second Tuesday every month), Tuesday 8th September 2020, starting 2pm and 6pm. Attend live or on Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/124469612?pwd=NjlOZ3RpU2NWV1g1a2Zmb29ZL3ZsQT09> (Meeting ID: 124 469 612)
- Read and reflect on the work of **Dr Philip Groves**, on Friday 18th September, 11am and 2pm and 7pm using Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/320544045?pwd=QjZtbUxvVk81b2dweUtZZTE3ZE9lZz09> (Meeting ID: 320 544 045)
- **Celebrate and explore Swedenborg's life, ideas and writings** on Saturday 19th September, 10am-noon (1st and 3rd Saturday each month). Attend live or via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/476372484?pwd=WmNpdHRLdotwSmZDMENQRit3aE8zZz09> (Meeting ID: 476 372 484)
- **Bible Study** with Howard Thompson, Tuesday 22nd September, 11am (each fortnight). Attend live at the Centre or Zoom using: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86388119164?pwd=ME9rSmdkdFp5QVFHdohIbDZmNXhRQTo9> (Meeting ID: 863 8811 9164)
- And finally, the **fourth Friday's SAA meeting** on 25th September at 7:45pm is the **Annual General Meeting** on Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89832027177?pwd=L1NDZytIb2MrUopHMKJ4SVJBdG5EQTo9> (Meeting ID: 898 3202 7177)

7177). We would love you to join in to celebrate the nearly 30 years that the SAA has existed.

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

Have a wonderful month.

Joe

Spring Women's Weekend

Ladies, you are invited to participate in our low-scale and/or virtual women's weekend gathering next month, October 16-18. While details have yet to be hammered out, we hope to have small, regional get-togethers as well as Zoom-facilitated online interactions. Please let Jenn know if you'd like to join in on the fun! (jenn@beiswenger.net)

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Friendships We Make and Have

People, of course, are social beings who meet and mix and enjoy being together in all kinds of ways spontaneous or planned. Little children romp, teens hang out, adults meet up and the elderly like someone with them at times on the park bench or there on the nursing home lounge.

One of the things which 2020 has brought about is the hardship over the inability to get together with friends, felt by an incredibly large number of people. There's the phone for sure, and some still write letters and others meet online, but if we are not allowed to actually meet up, there's a sense of loss and an ache for normal human company. We are social beings! So, looking on the bright side, hopefully one of the outcomes from recent restrictions (or possibly still current) will be to value our friendships more than ever.



The whole area of forming friendships and having friends is a fascinating one which covers a lot of ground. Why exactly do any two (or more) people feel they want to become friends? Is it that there is a lot to be shared or is it an attraction in having differences? Maybe both are

needed. Some might say that you just make friends with the people who happen to be there. If I can mention cruise ships in current times, there'd be a lot of people who swap contacts and promise to stay in touch after several weeks on board.

Then there are those people with whom you know you definitely would not be making friends. I wonder if they feel the same about you too? And there's the end of a friendship when one of two friends moves away, or dies, leaving a big hole hard to fill. This can also happen from some awkwardness that comes about and the friendship changes or simply fades. It served a real purpose but some things in life can't stay the same for ever.

Marriage is an interesting area from which to look at friendship. A married couple can also be each other's best friends or they may need others for friends to balance the relationship.

One teaching we have says that in real marriage love the joining of minds increases and so does friendship, so that friendship becomes as it were the face of that love and its outer garment. It says that friendship brings stability into marriage. (Have a look at Conjugal Love 214)

I have always deeply felt that when we are blessed with children who of course grow up for years in our home and receive parental care and direction, even discipline, that there is a time around a certain age where the parent-child relationship best changes into a friend-friend one. I suspect that this is how it is well likely to be in the spiritual world too, so let's start that here, but still honour our parents too.

The purest friendship in the Bible was the love of David and Jonathan who felt affinity and who exchanged possessions, and Jonathan sought to save David's life from the attacks of King Saul, Jonathan's father. Full of meaning of course, but a picture of close loyalty and unswerving friendship. Still with the Bible, there is the tragic picture in Psalm 55 where it says that "It is not one who hates me who exalts himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng." (55:12-14) What on earth would have been happening to bring such a friendship to the point of betrayal?

In one of our teachings we are advised by Swedenborg to take care at the deeper level of our being about whom we make bosom friends with. The reason for this is not so much about this world but the spiritual world where people's true natures and states become more open. Many friendships will no doubt be kept to eternity, but suppose there is a one-way friendship, an over-dependency or a simulated friendship, then

after death, such associations can be incredibly hard to disengage from, and be distressing. (True Christian Religion 446-449)

We have the delight of having friends and meeting up or keeping in good touch with them because we love each other. Something 'works' between us. And we also need to be wise for everyone's sake and realise that friendship is precious, a gift from the Lord, and to be handled well.

Julian Duckworth

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Marriage Moats from Lori Odhner
"A Reflection on Intentions"

I was more angry than I have been in a while. The circumstances that congealed were subtle enough, but when I saw the effect I was miffed.

More than likely you have a relationship with your own temper so I will spare you the details. Except for two passing comments that fell in my lap in the last week.

"It's a lot of work to hate." The person speaking was describing her own path to acceptance, and why she had not kicked up a fuss over someone's behaviour.

The second was from a friend who is navigating choppy waters, as she decides how to respond to the choices of someone she cares for.

"What I realise is how much I don't want to hurt him."

That brief sentence renders me silent, which is a relief after the incessant nagging that plagues me when I succumb to anger.

After the storm of my fury, it became obvious how exhausting it is. It helped no one... not me, nor the target of my tirade. And I faced, with grief, the fact that I had wanted to cause them pain.

The next morning the gnashing thoughts were gone. I considered those two sentiments, and made a commitment to let this day be one in which I try not to injure the people I love.

For my yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11

Love,

Lori



** “Marriage Moats,” a daily reflection on marriage from someone who could be legitimately called an “expert” on marriage. Lori Odhner is a wife and mother of 9 children who, along with her minister husband John began a marriage ministry in 1988. Together they manage the www.caringformarriage.org website, organise an annual marriage conference and put out a monthly newsletter. Lori writes daily e-mails called Marriage Moats intended to support people who value marriage. Debra and I enjoy reading these daily reflections and hope our Newsletter readers do as well.

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Words of Healing from the Psalms

O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak;
O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.

Psalm 6:1,2

Blessed is he who considers the poor;
The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.
The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive,
And he will be blessed on the earth;
You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.
The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness;
You will sustain him on his sickbed.

Psalm 41:1-3

Fools, because of their transgression,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.
Their soul abhorred all manner of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.
Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
And He saved them out of their distresses.

He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered them from their destructions.

Psalm 107:17-20

The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.
He heals the brokenhearted
And binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:2,3

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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Pulpit Humour

(One for our modern age)

