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Zoom: *The Parables*

with Rev. Robert McCluskey

Thursdays, September 10 and 17, 6 PM CST

With many such parables he spoke the Word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples. —Mark 4:34

In this two part course, we will take a close look at parables. Parables lie very much at the center of the Gospels, but can be found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures as well. We all know about parables – or do we? Outwardly, they seem to refer to a series of mundane and familiar objects and events: to vineyards and fields, to householders and stewards, to sheep, coins and spendthrift sons, to oil, water and wine, to seeds and sowers and soil, and many other things. For the most part, the literal sense of parables appear to be both memorable and entertaining – and in some cases, a bit threatening. We know what they say, but what do they mean?

Rev. Robert McCluskey holds a B.A. and M.A. in philosophy, with a focus on Greek philosophy, modern idealism, existentialism, and hermeneutics. He is a graduate of the Swedenborg School of Religion and was ordained into the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 1984. He has pastored churches in Portland ME and NYC, and served on the denomination's Social Justice Committee, and as a representative to the National Council of Churches for 18 years.



Zoom: *Qobeleth Among the Philosophers: A Critical Reading of Ecclesiastes*, with Dell J. Rose

Starting Thursday, September 17, 6 PM CST

Part 2: Thursday, September 24, 6 PM CST

Part 3: Thursday, October 1, 6 PM CST

In the first course in our series focusing on the origins and importance of the book of Ecclesiastes, we will look at the historical background of the book and the intellectual concerns which drive the text. Ecclesiastes, as a wisdom text, is arguing

for a specific response to the ethical concerns of the day, and this course helps us to understand some of the background which grounds these discussions.

Zoom: *The Long Shadow of World War I*, with Dell J. Rose

Thursdays, October 15–November 5, 6 PM CST

In the fifty years before 1914, Europe manufactured far more reasons than any crisis could possibly consume. It produced philosophies of violence, aesthetics of violence, theologies and hygienes of violence. It learned, in its culture wars over schools and cemeteries, to speak of a struggle to the knife, and it learned this in perfect safety, where the words cost nothing. By August 1914 the continent was not looking for a war. It had spent two generations imagining the meaning of one it had not yet had.

These four evenings ask what happened in the human soul during that reckoning. Apocalypse, in the older sense, does not mean the catastrophe; it means the unveiling, and the catastrophe is merely its occasion. The war invented almost nothing it revealed. It took the lid off, and Europeans discovered at once that human beings could, and had wanted to do this.

15 October- War and the Soul. What is war? We'll discuss Carl von Clausewitz, for whom war was an instrument subordinate to policy, and the Romantic conviction that a nation has a soul that war can test, purify and reveal. We'll explore how war

stopped being something a state uses and became something a people undergoes.

22 October- The March to the Apocalypse. What constitutes a people? We'll discuss Pan-Germanism, the missionary fury of imperial expansion, and the esoteric and religious movements that supplied the nation with a priesthood, a scripture and a promised catastrophe.

29 October- Humanity after Conflict. What is man? The war destroyed the social and political units within which people had understood themselves. What remained of the person, as an individual, and as a unit of society, when the categories gave way?

5 November- The Long Shadow. What of the future? What of now? WWI and D'Annunzio's Fiume, the League of Nations, and the unresolved antithesis of the individual and the social, running down to our own moment of disintegration will be discussed.

Dell J. Rose develops and hosts programs for the Swedenborg Library in Chicago. Dell holds the position of Swedenborg Doctoral Fellow with the Swedenborg Society in the United Kingdom, and he is a doctoral candidate at the Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the Universities van Amsterdam. His research focuses on the intersection of Western esotericism and political reform, particularly with Swedenborgianism in 19th century Britain.

