

# Notes from Swedenborg –Having doubts

Transcripts of YouTube clip [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghQkiGI\\_sTw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghQkiGI_sTw)  
based on the insights Emanuel Swedenborg experienced as recorded in his writings.  
Produced by the Swedenborg Association of Australia (SAA) [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au)  
June 2023

Everyone gets doubts. Should I take an umbrella or not? Is this movie suitable for my kids who are watching it? Is this the person I want to spend the rest of my life with? Doubts put us in two minds which is why doubt sounds a bit like double, but doubts make us think, which is no bad thing, and somehow we cope and move on.

But when we come to the basic fact of our existence and things we have come to believe are true, then of course it gets more serious. To have doubts about our life having any purpose, or whether there's a God or not, or am I really going to live on after I die seems to be saying that my faith isn't strong enough. It can also be quite devastating for us, having big doubts.

So we end up worrying that having doubts is somehow my fault. I look around and most people seem to be sure about everything... but maybe they're having doubts and thinking I have got it all sorted out. And it seems that there are some people who never have any doubts about the basic truths of life. Do they refuse to have them, I wonder? Maybe they just don't doubt, but I'm doubting that...

Swedenborg keeps on telling us that while we live in this world we live in a world full of appearances, of how things seem to us to be rather than how they really are. This is because our physical senses pass messages back to us that are often wrong. The sky is blue. No it isn't; it looks blue to us. The obvious one is that the sun crosses the sky. But of course it's the world turning round. We know that one but it still looks like the sun's travelling. Try this one... it's a bit more subtle...two people will have a gap or a space between them, but if they agree on something, if they fall in love, if they would trust each other with their life, there's still that gap but on another level there isn't. You can't see that the gap's gone but you can certainly feel there isn't one any more, and yet they are still two people. Perhaps we hug to show the true reality.

One thing Swedenborg says over and over again is that it seems to us that our life is our very own. We're self-existing, autonomous. Swedenborg says that it has to be like that, and it has to feel like that so we are free to choose and decide. But he says the reality is that God is giving us our life every moment but we don't feel that happening, and we mustn't.

That's huge. That turns everything inside out. Physical things work one way and non-physical things work another very different way. So when someone dies, their physical body dies and as far as we can tell, everything's over, finished. But who they are and what they're like is not their body, it's them, the person we knew, loved, admired, and that doesn't keep to physical rules.

All this can help us when we get our doubts because it asks us to look at things differently, and more deeply. But it's important to realise that having doubts is actually a good sign. It means we are on the ball, thinking, exploring, processing how it is going with us. We are more alert when we are being challenged than when everything's fine (although that has its place and purpose too). The one thing we should dread is apathy.

Swedenborg points out that having doubts - and let's add having fears and bad feelings - are times and states that hell quickly latches onto and will infuse more and more of the same stuff to bring us down. So we need to manage ourselves when we're doubting things which a moment ago we said is a good sign. See it as an opportunity to find out more, go further, become stronger, and tell ourselves we're now more equipped for the next phase of our life. I get doubts, well, so what! It's

good for me. I'm seeing more than I was. And hell can't then touch us or feed on our feelings. And we turn ourselves towards the source of life, which is God, and rest in just being there.

Let's end with a very interesting passage from Swedenborg. "No one should be immediately persuaded that something is true, or that a truth is so confirmed that there's no longer any doubt. The reason is that a truth impressed like this becomes fixed and final, with no adding to it and no giving way about it. It becomes hardened and nothing of good can be joined with it which would then allow it to be applied and lived. So, in heaven, when any true idea is put before good spirits, something of the opposite also comes up which brings doubt. In this way they are able to think and consider it and use their own reasoning, and this gives their spiritual sight a fuller grasp of this truth, even as far as seeing and understanding the opposite of it." (Emanuel Swedenborg, Arcana Celestia #7298)