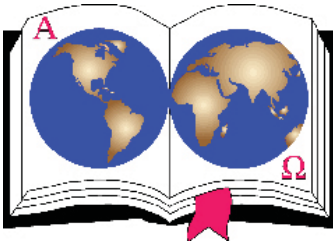


A collection of various Venetian-style masks hanging on a display rack. The masks are ornate, featuring gold leaf, blue, red, and white colors, and some have elaborate headpieces. The text "UNMASKING SIN" is overlaid in the center.

UNMASKING SIN

August 2006



Reformation Christian Ministries

Unmasking Sin

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...Moses...put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. [2 Corinthians 3:13-17]

Moses wore a veil over his face after meeting with God because Israel feared the light of God's glory. Even though in the light of God's law the glory of God is brought forth, yet to this day, most religions remain as did the Israelites with blinded minds. Moses' veil was designed to allow the glory of God on his face to be seen only in a shadow like much of the Old Testament ceremonial law which foreshadowed Christ. Yet in their minds, this veil quickly was transformed into the outward righteousness of ceremonialism whereby if the right rituals are done, then their righteousness is established by their doing (*of course, with the help of God*). This led to a self-righteousness by ritualism which is the foundation of virtually every "religion" under the sun including popularized "Christianity".

This idea of doing the right things and appearing in the right way was captured in a rather comical way by John Fischer (New Covenant, 1975 [www.fishtank.com](http://www.fischtank.com)) in a song for young people entitled *Evangelical Veil Productions*. Consider the lyrics:

*Evangelical Veil Productions, pick one up now at quite a reduction
got all types of shapes and sizes, introductory bonus prizes.*

*Special quality one-way see through,
you can see them but they can't see you,
never have to show yourself again.*

*Just released--a Moses model; Comes with shine in a plastic bottle,
It makes you look like you've just seen the Lord!
Just one daily application, And you'll fool the congregation,
Guaranteed to last a whole week through.*

*Got a Back-from-the-Summer-Camp veil,
With a Mountain-top look that'll never fail,
As long as you renew it every year.
Lots of special Jesus-freak files,
every one comes with a permanent smile,
One-way button, and a sticker for your car.*

After conversion, many Christians do not cater for the power of sin within them to excuse, justify, rationalize and reason its way back into their lives under Christian guises. The ritualism of Roman Catholicism can be quickly replaced by charismatic/Pentacostal type emotionalism or the more stoic "right confessionism" of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Sin is like the Muslim's jihadist mentality: adapt to your enemy's weakness (Hezbollah's performance in the

recent Middle East war being a prime example). Man's sin nature, even that of a converted Christian, like any good enemy, adapts to its new environment. Remember, Satan used Scripture with Christ (Mat. 4:6).

Sin does not like to be known as sin. It much prefers terms like "imperfections", "mistakes", "errors in judgment" instead of "selfishness", "foolishness", or "deception". Evangelicals and Reformed alike are susceptible to the wearing of Christian masks. While Moses wore a veil in the wilderness in legitimate humility, most today wear them to protect on-lookers from seeing them as they really are: wicked sinners. Unfortunately, this can turn into a whole culture of playing Christian games that not only infects individuals, but churches and even whole denominations. Masked with near perfection, sin hides itself beneath the surface of true churches, good confessions, good works, good intentions, etc. Everyone really knows that something is wrong, but because of all the good rituals, works and confessions, sin is not seen for its exceeding sinfulness (Rom. 7:13).

Okay, our confessions say we are still all sinners, and after all no one is perfect, so what is the problem? The problem is this: **the glory of Christ can only truly be seen in contrast to the wretchedness of our own sinfulness.** As we begin to lose a heart-felt awareness of our own wretchedness as Christians, we begin to lose the full significance of Christ's work on the cross for His people. **His glory is seen only against the horribleness of our sin.** Pretty soon, our light is no longer His, but darkness masquerading behind all the rituals (i.e. right things we do/confess). We live with a new sense of our darkness somehow being less dark and our flesh somehow being improved and *praise be to God, He has helped me make myself a better person*; or us a better church or a better denomination. In this veiled language, we create these masks which return us to bondage and keep us from being as fully convinced of our sinfulness now as we were when Christ showed us the exceeding sinfulness of our own sin at conversion (Rom. 7:13). The veil/mask remains and there is no liberty.

So what does this have to do with missions? This culture of masks is being spread abroad with a sanctified form of self-righteousness and self-deception that makes us hardly different from the Orthodox, the Roman Catholics, the Muslims, and the Jews—all of whom are steeped in ritual cooperation with God to be made worthy of salvation. **Instead of really seeing ourselves as hopeless and wretched sinners whose only hope is in Christ's work alone, we see ourselves as cooperating with Him in this process of salvation, even while claiming a confession of being saved by grace through faith alone apart from works.** Our words are right though redefined slightly, and our heart is far from the truth.

At RCM, we are extremely aware of this problem. The Gospel we teach and preach is one that exposes these masks and truly sets forth the biblical faith that stands in contrast to all religions, including false gospel Christianity masquerading as truth that is so prevalent in our society today. Please pray that God will be pleased to enable us to stand without fear in His strength to shine forth His light in the midst of such darkness, even that darkness that still remains within each of us and our churches.

 **Geoffrey Donnan**

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