

Some quotations from the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg:

... Every one must prepare the way for God, that is, must prepare for reception; and this is done by means of knowledges.... For, in acquiring knowledges, one exercises freedom of choice. And, as one acquires knowledges from the Word by means of the understanding, one prepares the way by which God comes down and raises up. The knowledges by means of which the human understanding rises, God holding it in His hand and leading it, may be likened to the steps of the ladder seen by Jacob, which was set upon the earth with the top of it reaching to heaven, by which the angels ascended while Jehovah stood above it.

True Christian Religion #24

In the Word there are many who represent the Lord in respect to truth Divine, or in respect to the Word; but chief among them are Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist. By the wilderness of Judea, in which John was, is signified the state of the Word when the Lord came into the World; namely, that it was 'in the wilderness.' That is, it was in obscurity so great that the Lord was not at all acknowledged, neither was anything known about his heavenly kingdom; when yet all the prophets prophesied about him, and about his kingdom, that it was to endure forever.

For this reason the Word is compared to a 'reed shaken by the wind' when it is explained at pleasure; for in the internal sense 'a reed' denotes truth in the ultimate. That the Word in the ultimate, or in the letter, is crude and obscure in the sight of men; but that in the internal sense it is soft and shining, is signified by their 'not seeing a man clothed in soft raiment, for behold those who wear soft things are in kings' houses....'

The Word in the ultimate, or such as it is in the external form in which it appears before man in the world (that is, in the literal sense), is described by the 'clothing' and 'food' of John.... By camel's hair are signified memory-truths such as appear before one in the world; by leather girdle is signified the external bond connecting and keeping in order all the interior truths. By locusts are signified ultimate or most general truths; and, by wild honey their pleasantness.

Arcana Coelestia #9372

One who is living a life of faith daily does the work of repentance, for one reflects upon the evils that are within and acknowledges them, guards against them, and prays to the Lord for aid. For of oneself, one is unceasingly lapsing, and is unceasingly raised up by the Lord. Of oneself, one lapses when in thought one wills evil; and one is raised up by the Lord when one resists evil and consequently does not do it.

Arcana Coelestia #8391

Actual repentance is to examine oneself, to know and acknowledge one's sins, to hold oneself guilty, to confess one's sins before the Lord, to implore help and power to resist them, and thus to refrain from them, and lead a new life; and to do all this as if of oneself. Do so once or twice in a year, when you come to the Holy Communion; and afterwards, when the sins of which you have found yourselves guilty recur, say to yourselves, 'We do not will these, because they are sins against God.' This is actual repentance.

Apocalypse Revealed # 531

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SUNDAY MORNING FORUM
BIBLE STUDY & SWEDENBORGIAN IDEAS
ADVENT 2: PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

The wilderness in which John the Baptist preached represents every one's life before the coming of the Lord: barren of heavenly beauty and fruitfulness. The wilderness also represents that part of us not yet subject to the Lord's rule. The baptism of John represents the universal process of preparing a way for the Lord by learning plain, uncomplicated truths from the Word and using them a principles to cleanse our outer lives of evils with the Lord's help.

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“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the Lord of hosts. “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord An offering in righteousness. “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the Lord, As in the days of old, As in former years.

Malachi 3:1-4

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:3-6, 8-11

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

Luke 3:1-6