

Some quotations from the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg:

...Baptism means introduction into the Church and into the things that belong to the Church, and so into regeneration and the things that belong to regeneration. Not that anyone is regenerated by baptism; rather it is the sign of it, which one should call to mind. And because the things which constitute the Church are meant by baptism, and baptism is meant by 'the Jordan', as mentioned above, it was the Jordan therefore in which people were baptized by John....

Arcana Celestia #4255

It can be established ... that 'washing' with the sons of Israel represented spiritual washing, which is a cleansing from evils and untruths, and the resulting reformation and regeneration. ...It is also plain what was signified by baptism in the Jordan ... and what was signified by these words of John concerning the Lord: "That He would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke iii 16) and concerning himself ... "That he would baptise with water...." The meaning of this is that the Lord washes or purifies people by Divine Truth and Divine Good, and that John by his baptism represented this; for the 'Holy Spirit' is Divine Truth, 'fire' is Divine Good, and 'water' is a representative of them; for 'water' signifies the Truth of the Word, which becomes good by a life in accordance with it (n. 50).

Apocalypse Revealed #378.3

Unless this representation had preceded, the Lord could not have manifested Himself and taught and lived in Judea and Jerusalem, since He was God of heaven and God of earth under a human form, and could not have been in the midst of a nation which was in mere falsities as to doctrine, and in mere evils as to life. Unless therefore that nation had been prepared for the reception of the Lord by a representative of purification from falsities and evils by baptism, it would have been destroyed by diseases of every kind at the presence of the Divine Itself.

The baptism of John was able to produce such an effect, because the Jewish church was a representative church, and with them all conjunction of heaven was effected by representatives, as is also evident from the washings commanded therein.... Washing and baptism did not themselves purify them from falsities and evils, but they only represented, and thus signified, purification from these; nevertheless this was received in heaven, as though they themselves had been purified. It was in this way that heaven was conjoined with the people of that church through the baptism of John; and when heaven was thus conjoined to them, the Lord, who was the God of heaven, could manifest Himself to them, teach them, and dwell among them.

It may be concluded from these things what is signified by turning the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to the fathers, namely, that it means to induce a representation of the conjunction of spiritual goods with truths, and of truths with goods, thus of regeneration by the Lord by means of the Word. For regeneration is the conjunction of goods with truths, and of truths with goods, and it is the Lord who regenerates, and the Word which teaches.

Apocalypse Explained #724.7, -8

SUNDAY MORNING FORUM
BIBLE STUDY & SWEDENBORGIAN IDEAS
ADVENT 3: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SELF-EXAMINATION

Luke's narrative of John's extended interaction with the people being baptized includes the exchange of "What shall we do then?" and John's reply. This episode adds further insight into the process of repentance and reformation; namely, to see evils in oneself as sins and then to desist from them with the Lord's help.

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Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." "I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, who are among you, to whom its reproach is a burden. Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, And gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will bring you back, Even at the time I gather you; For I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes," says the Lord.

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Then John said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.

Luke 3:7-18