

Some quotations from the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg:

...Divine order prescribes that a person should prepare oneself to receive God; and as one prepares oneself, so God enters ... as into His dwelling and home. That preparation is accomplished by acquiring knowledge about God and the spiritual matters which concern the church, thus by means of intelligence and wisdom. For it is a law of order that in so far as a person approaches and comes near to God, which one should do entirely as if of oneself, so far does God approach and come near..., and link Himself to the person in their midst.

True Christian Religion #89

Everyone, while ... led by any love, and while following whithersoever it carries them, supposes oneself to be free, whereas it is the diabolical spirits in whose company ... one is, that are carrying them away. This one supposes to be the greatest freedom, so much so that one believes that the loss of this state would bring them into a life most wretched.... But that this impression is false has been given me to know by much experience, of which by the Lord's Divine mercy hereafter.

One never comes into a state of freedom until one has been regenerated, and is led by the Lord through love for what is good and true. When one is in this state, then for the first time one can know and perceive what freedom is, because one then knows what life is, and what the true delight of life is, and what happiness is.

Arcana Celestia #892

One who is ruled by conscience, or who acts according to conscience, acts freely. Nothing is more repugnant to them than to act against conscience. To act against conscience is hell to them, but to act according to conscience is heaven to them; and from this anyone may see that acting according to conscience is freedom. The Lord rules the spiritual person through a conscience of what is good and true; and this conscience is formed, as already said, in one's understanding, and is thus separated from what is of their will. And because it is wholly separated from what is of the will, it is very evident that one never does anything good of oneself; and since all the truth of faith is from the good of faith, it is evident that one never thinks anything true from oneself, but that this is from the Lord alone. That one seems to do these things from oneself is only an appearance; and because it is so, the really spiritual person acknowledges and believes it.

Arcana Celestia #918

[The reciprocal conjunction of the Lord and man] is a mutual conjunction, which is effected not by action and reaction, but by cooperation. For the Lord acts, and from Him one receives action, and operates as if of oneself, even by the Lord from himself. This operation ... is imputed to an individual as their own, because they are held constantly by the Lord in freedom of choice. The freedom of choice resulting from this is the ability to will and to think from the Lord, that is, from the Word, and also the ability to will and to think from the devil, that is, contrary to the Lord and the Word. This freedom the Lord gives to humankind to enable one to conjoin oneself reciprocally with the Lord, and by conjunction be gifted with eternal life and blessedness, since this, without reciprocal conjunction, would not be possible.

True Christian Religion #371.6

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SUNDAY MORNING FORUM
BIBLE STUDY & SWEDENBORGIAN IDEAS

EPIPHANY 3: Spiritual Liberation / “The Acceptable Year of the Lord”

The gospel passage for this week, occurring only in Luke immediately following Jesus’ temptation, suggests God’s presence can be more powerfully felt during states of humility and obedience. We need to prepare ourselves to receive God’s love and wisdom and develop an awareness of our need for Divine assistance in overcoming evils toward which we are inclined.

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Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep.” For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Remember not, O Lord, the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners, in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

Psalms 25:7-9

Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4:14-21