

Series on Worship, Week 3

Baptism

and

Confession of Faith



Then Jesus, being baptized, came up straightaway out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him.

(Matthew 3:16)

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1. The Sacrament of Baptism

John answered, saying to all, I indeed baptize you with water, but there comes One stronger than I, the strap of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16)

AE 475:20 This (Luke 3:16) means that John only inaugurated them into knowledges from the Word respecting the Lord, and thus prepared them to receive Him, but that the Lord Himself regenerates man by means of Divine truth and Divine good proceeding from Him. For John represented the like as Elijah, namely, the Word. “The waters” with which John baptized signified introductory truths, which are knowledges from the Word respecting the Lord. “The Holy Spirit” signifies Divine truth proceeding from the Lord, and “fire” signifies Divine good proceeding from Him; and “baptism” signifies regeneration by the Lord by means of Divine truths from the Word.

AR 378 The meaning [of these words] is, that the Lord washes or purifies man by the Divine truth and the Divine good, and that John represented this by his baptism; for the “Holy Spirit” is the Divine truth, “fire” is the Divine good, and “water” is the representative of both; for “water” signifies the truth of the Word, which becomes good by a life according to it.

TCR 144 “To baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire” means to regenerate by the Divine truth that belongs to faith and the Divine good that belongs to charity. The same is meant by these words of the Lord:

Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

“Water,” here as elsewhere in the Word, signifies truth in the natural or external man, and “spirit” signifies truth from good in the spiritual or internal man.

AC 9818 ... “To be born of water” denotes by means of truth; and “to be born of the spirit” denotes the consequent life from the Lord, which is called spiritual life.

NJHD 202 Baptism was instituted to be a sign that a man is of the church, and as a memorial that he is to be regenerated; for the washing of baptism is nothing else than spiritual washing, which is regeneration.

NJHD 203 All regeneration is effected by the Lord, through the truths of faith, and a life according to them. Baptism therefore testifies that the man is of the church, and that he can be regenerated: for in the church the Lord is acknowledged, who alone regenerates, and there also is the Word, which contains the truths of faith, by which regeneration is effected.

NJHD 207 Let those therefore who are baptized know, that baptism itself does not give faith nor salvation, but it testifies that they may receive faith and be saved, if they are regenerated.

INVITATION TO THE NEW CHURCH 45 The correspondences by which the Word as to each and all of its parts has been written, possess such power and strength that it may be called the power and strength of the Divine Omnipotence. For through these correspondences, the natural acts conjointly with the spiritual, and the spiritual with the natural—thus the all of heaven with the all of the world. Thence it is that the two sacraments are correspondences of spiritual with natural things; thence is their strength and power.

Questions

1. How might the words of John the Baptist be related to the baptism of an infant by a minister in the New Church today? How might this be different for an adult baptism?
2. The Lord said that a man must be born of water and the spirit to enter into the kingdom of God. How does this relate to what the Heavenly Doctrine teaches about the salvation of gentiles, those not baptized?
3. Notice that NJHD says, “Let those therefore who are baptized know that baptism itself does not give faith nor salvation.” What might the inclusion of the words “who are baptized” imply?
4. Just how powerful is the sacrament of baptism, and why?
5. Can man regenerate in this world without being baptized? The question is not whether he can be saved, but whether he can be regenerated. We are taught in TCR 571 that if a man enters into reformation in this world he can be regenerated after he dies.

2. The First Use of Baptism

And Jesus, coming, spoke to them, saying, All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go forth, therefore; make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all things whatever I have commanded you.

(Matthew 28:18-19)

TCR 677 THE FIRST USE OF BAPTISM IS INTRODUCTION INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AND AT THE SAME TIME INSERTION AMONG CHRISTIANS IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.... Baptism is a sign that those baptized are of the Christian church... and a sign is nothing more than a means of recognition, just as swaddling clothes of different colors are put on the children of two mothers to distinguish them and prevent their being exchanged.

That it is merely a sign of introduction into the church is made clear by the baptizing of infants, who are wholly destitute of reason and are no more able to receive anything pertaining to faith than the young branches of a tree.

Not only are infants baptized but so are all foreign proselytes who are converted to the Christian religion, both the young and the old, and this before they have been instructed, solely because they confess a wish to embrace Christianity, into which they are introduced by baptism. This is what was done by the apostles, according to the Lord's command,

That the disciples should make disciples of all nations, and baptize them (Matt. 28:19).

All this, however, is what takes place on earth. But in the heavens infants are introduced by baptism into the Christian heaven, and angels are there assigned them by the Lord, to take care of them. Therefore, as soon as infants are baptized, angels are appointed over them, by whom they are kept in a state to receive faith in the Lord. But as they grow up, and begin to exercise self-control and be governed by their own reason, these guardian angels leave them, and they draw into association with themselves such spirits as make one with their life and faith. From all this it is clear that baptism is insertion among Christians in the spiritual world also.

TCR 678. The reason why by baptism, not only infants but all others are inserted among Christians in the spiritual world, is that it is by their religions that peoples and nations in that world are distinguished from each other.... Moreover, all who are of the same religion are arranged in societies in heaven in accordance with their affections of love to God and love toward the neighbor.... In the spiritual world... all things, both as a whole and in every part, or in general and in every particular, are most distinctly arranged. Upon this distinct arrangement there, the preservation of the whole universe depends; and such distinguishing is impossible unless everyone after he is born can be recognized by some sign showing to what religious body he belongs. For without the Christian sign, which is baptism, some Mohammedan or some idolatrous spirit might attach himself to newly-born Christian children, or even to youths, and breathe into them an inclination towards his religion, and thus draw away their minds and alienate them from Christianity, which would be a distortion and destruction of spiritual order.

TCR 679. Everyone who traces effects back to their causes may know that the firm establishment of all things depends on order; and that there are many kinds of order, general and particular; and that there is one order that is the most universal of all, and on which depends the general and particular kinds in connected series; also that this most universal order enters into all the others as the essence itself into its forms, and that thus and not otherwise they make one. It is this unity that effects the preservation of the whole, which would otherwise fall asunder, and relapse not only into primal chaos, but into nothing. How would it be with man if each thing and all things in his body were not most distinctly arranged and this community of parts made dependent on one heart and one pair of lungs? Otherwise, what would follow but confusion?

Questions

1. We are taught that baptism is merely a sign because infants who are baptized cannot yet receive anything of faith. And yet this section goes on to teach how important this sign is. Why is something that is merely a sign so important?
2. We are also taught that gentiles are baptized “before they have been instructed.” How much instruction is needed before an adult is baptized into the New Church? How much instruction do parents need before baptizing their children?
3. What is it that should inspire people to seek baptism for themselves or for their children?
4. We are taught that all infants have celestial angels around them caring for them. What changes for an infant when he or she is baptized into the New Church?
5. The teaching about Mohammedan or idolatrous spirits attaching themselves to newly-born children or youths is pretty scary. How much danger is there for the little child or youth if not baptized? Or is the danger more for the general state of the church and the world?

3. The Second Use of Baptism

I have come a Light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me should not remain in darkness. (John 12:46)

TCR 681. THE SECOND USE OF BAPTISM IS THAT THE CHRISTIAN MAY KNOW AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE REDEEMER AND SAVIOR, AND FOLLOW HIM. This second use of baptism, which is to know and acknowledge the Lord, the Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ, inseparably follows the first, which is introduction into the Christian Church and insertion among Christians in the spiritual world. And what is this first use but a mere name unless the second follows? Is it not really like a subject who attaches himself to a king, and yet repudiates the king’s laws or those of the country, and yields allegiance to a foreign king and serves him? ...In a word, to have the name of being a Christian, that is, of belonging to Christ, and yet not acknowledging and following Him, that is, living according to His commandments, is a thing as empty as a shadow, as smoke, or as a blackened picture; for the Lord says:

Why do you call Me Lord, and do not do the things that I say? (Luke 6:46, seq.).

TCR 721 These two sacraments, baptism and the holy supper, are like two gates to eternal life. By baptism, which is the first gate, every Christian is let into and introduced into what the church

teaches from the Word respecting the other life. All of this teaching forms the means whereby man can be prepared for and led to heaven. The second gate is the holy supper, by which every man who allows himself to be prepared and led by the Lord is admitted and introduced into heaven. There are no other universal gates.

These two sacraments may be likened to... building a house, and dwelling in it; also to the course of a man's instruction from childhood until the period when he becomes independent and exercises his own judgment, and his subsequent rational and spiritual life. One period must precede, that the second may be attained; for without the former the latter is impossible.

These illustrations make clear that baptism and the holy supper are like two gates through which man is introduced to eternal life; and that beyond the first gate there is a plain which he must pass over; and that the second is the goal where lies the prize to which he has directed his course.

TCR 1 THE FAITH OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND OF THE NEW CHURCH.... Let it be known that in the New Heaven, which the Lord is now establishing, this faith is its preface, gate, and summary.

TCR 2 THE FAITH OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND OF THE NEW CHURCH IN ITS UNIVERSAL FORM is as follows: The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human; and without this no mortal could have been saved; and those are saved who believe in Him.

This is called the faith in its universal form, because this is the universal principle of faith; and the universal principle of faith must be in each thing and in all things of it. It is a universal principle of faith that God is one, in essence and in person, in whom is a Divine trinity, and that He is the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ.... To believe in the Lord is to have confidence that He saves; and as only those who live rightly can have this confidence, this, too, is meant by believing in Him.

TCR 3 THE SINGULARS OF FAITH ON MAN'S PART are:

- (1) God is one, in whom is a Divine trinity, and the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ is that one.
- (2) Saving faith is to believe in Him.
- (3) Evils should not be done, because they are of the devil and from the devil.
- (4) Goods should be done, because they are of God and from God.
- (5) These should be done by man as if by himself; but it should be believed that they are done by the Lord in man and through man.

Questions

1. How does the sacrament of baptism help someone acknowledge the Lord and follow Him, especially if the baptism took place in infancy?
2. What part does faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God of the universe play in helping someone believe in what the Word teaches and do what the Word teaches?
3. The sacrament of baptism is said to be the first gate into the Church, and Holy Supper the second gate into heaven. How does the space between these two gates relate to this second use of baptism?
4. Temptation is said to be signified by the waters of baptism (AC 10389). How does this relate to the second use of baptism? It should be noted that as soon as the Lord was baptized He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil forty days (Luke 4:1,2).
5. Can someone enter into spiritual temptation without first being baptized and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as God?
6. Why do we use the singulars of the faith of the New Church as questions to those being baptized or baptizing their children? Notice the use of the word devil instead of hell in the third singular of faith, and in the Lord's temptations after baptism.

4. The Third Use of Baptism

He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

TCR 684 The third use of baptism, which is the final use, is that man may be regenerated. This is the essential use for the sake of which baptism exists, and thus the final one. This is because the true Christian knows and acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. He, being the Redeemer, is also the Regenerator. (That redemption and regeneration make one may be seen in the third section of the chapter on Reformation and Regeneration.) This is also because a Christian possesses the Word, in which the means of regeneration are plainly described, those means being faith in the Lord and charity toward the neighbor. This is identical with what is said of the Lord, that:

He baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8-11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33).

“The Holy Spirit” means the Divine truth of faith, and “fire” the Divine good of love or charity, both proceeding from the Lord.... By means of these two, all regeneration is effected by the Lord.

The Lord Himself was baptized by John (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:21, 22). He did this not only that He might institute baptism for the future, Himself setting the example, but also because He glorified His Human and made it Divine, as He regenerates man and renders him spiritual.

TCR 685 From what has been said now and before it can be seen that the three uses of baptism cohere as a unit, like first cause, mediate cause (which is the efficient cause), and last cause, which is the effect and the end itself, for the sake of which the former exist. For the first use is that the man may be called a Christian; the second, following from this, is that he may know and acknowledge the Lord the Redeemer, Regenerator and Savior; and the third is that he may be regenerated by Him; and when this is done man is redeemed and saved.

As these three uses follow in order, and are conjoined in the last, and consequently in the conception of the angels they cohere as a unit, so when a baptism is performed, or read of in the Word, or mentioned, the angels who are present do not understand baptism, but regeneration. Therefore, by these words of the Lord: “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16), the angels in heaven understand that he who acknowledges the Lord and is regenerated will be saved. And for this reason baptism is called by the Christian churches on earth the laver of regeneration.

Let every Christian know, then, that he who does not believe in the Lord, even though he has been baptized, cannot be regenerated. Also, that baptism without faith in the Lord has no effect whatever, may be seen above, in the second section of this chapter (n. 673).

Every Christian is well aware that baptism involves purification from evils and thus regeneration, for when he is baptized in infancy, the priest with his finger makes the sign of the cross, as a memorial of the Lord, on his forehead and breast, and afterwards turns to his sponsors and asks whether he renounces the devil and all his works, and accepts the faith; to which the sponsors, in the place of the infant, answer, “Yes.” The renunciation of the devil, that is, of the evils that are from hell, and faith in the Lord, are what effect regeneration.

TCR 686 It is said in the Word that the Lord God our Redeemer baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire, which means that the Lord regenerates man by the Divine truth of faith and the Divine good of love or charity.... Those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, that is, by the Divine truth of faith, are distinct in the heavens from those who are regenerated by fire, that is, by the Divine good of love. Those who have been regenerated by the Divine truth of faith walk in heaven in raiment of white linen, and are called spiritual angels; but those who have been regenerated by the Divine good of love walk in crimson raiment, and are called celestial angels.

Questions

1. How are the three uses of baptism similar to the three baptisms by water, by the Holy Spirit, and by fire? How are these three baptisms different?
2. Some have taken the Lord's words in Mark 16:16 to mean that those not baptized are condemned. Notice that the Lord does not say this. But how should we in the New Church understand these words?
3. Baptism is called a sacrament of repentance (AR 573). How do the states of repentance, reformation and regeneration relate to the three uses of baptism, especially the baptism of an adult?
4. Does the baptism of an infant also involve repentance? Notice the questions the parents are asked.
5. Notice that the word devil is also used in the questions in the baptism service described. Why might it be useful to say devil instead of hell in general?
6. Why is the third use of baptism called the final use, and how is this present in the sacrament itself, even of an infant?

5. The Use of Baptism as Entrance into the New Church

And Naaman came with his horses and chariot, and stood at the entrance of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent him a message, saying, Go and bathe seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall return to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

And Naaman was enraged and went away, and said, Behold, I said, Going out he will go out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand towards the place, and heal the leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not bathe in them and be clean? And he turned and went away in fury.

And his servants approached and spoke to him and said, My father, if the prophet had spoken to thee of a great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? And yes, when he says to thee, Bathe and be clean? And he went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh returned as the flesh of a little lad, and he was clean.

And he returned to the man of God, he and all his camp, and came and stood before him; and he said, Behold, now, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in

Israel.... Please let ground be given to thy servant, the burden of a pair of mules; for thy servant will not any more make a burnt offering and a sacrifice to other gods, but to Jehovah.

(2 Kings 5:9-15, 17)

AE 475:18 “Naaman, a leper of Syria” represented and signified those who falsify the knowledges of truth and good from the Word, for “leprosy” signifies falsifications, and “Syria” the knowledges of truth and good. “The waters of Jordan” signified the truths that introduce into the church, which are the knowledges of truth and good from the Word, for the river Jordan was the first boundary across which the land of Canaan was entered, and “the land of Canaan” signified the church. This is why “the waters of Jordan” signified introductory truths, which are the first knowledges of truth and good from the Word. Because of this signification of “the waters of Jordan,” Naaman was commanded to wash himself in them seven times, which signified purification from falsified truths. “Seven times” signifies fully, and is predicated of things holy, such as truths Divine are. Because “seven times” has this signification, it is said that “his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little lad,” the flesh coming again signifying spiritual life such as those have who are regenerated through Divine truths.

AC 4255:5 Naaman’s being healed of his leprosy by washing himself seven times in the Jordan according to the command of Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-14), represented baptism; for baptism signifies initiation into the church and into those things which are of the church, thus regeneration and the things of regeneration.... And as the things of the church are signified by baptism, and the same by the Jordan, as stated above, the people were therefore baptized in the Jordan by John (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5). And the Lord also willed to be Himself baptized in it by John (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9).

TCR 680 What is order without distinction, and what is distinction without its evidences, and what are evidences without signs by which qualities are recognized? ...For example, in armies. What power would they have if they were not distinctly organized into regiments, these into battalions, and these again into companies, with subordinate officers over each, and over all one commander in chief? And what would those arrangements amount to without the signs called standards, which indicate the proper station for each? By such means in battle all act as a one, while without them they would rush upon the enemy merely like a pack of hounds with open mouths, yells, and empty fury; and then, with their courage gone, they would be ingloriously cut in pieces by the enemy formed in well-ordered ranks; for what can those who are divided do against those who are united?

Hereby is illustrated this first use of baptism, which is, to serve as a sign in the spiritual world that the one baptized belongs to Christians, for in that world everyone is inserted into societies and congregations according to the quality of the Christianity in him or outside of him.

Questions

1. Naaman said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not bathe in them and be clean?" How do these words describe a possible first reaction to the idea of having to be baptized into New Church when someone has already been baptized a Christian?
2. Do the words of Naaman's servants describe a possible answer to this kind of reaction? Should the entrance into the New Church involve something more than just baptism? Does this relate to becoming a formal member of the Kempton New Church Society?
3. Is there a reason that Elisha only sent a messenger to Naaman the first time, while the second time Naaman and the man of God actually speak to each other?
4. Does the last teaching about the first use of baptism show that different baptisms into different churches with different beliefs serve to distinguish the Lord's church into an orderly arrangement from a spiritual perspective? Does a Catholic baptism do something different than a Lutheran or Methodist baptism?
5. Is there a generic Christian baptism, or only specific baptisms into different faiths? Does this also speak to the spiritual responsibility of parents when they baptize their children?

6. Confession of Faith or Confirmation of Baptism

I will confess Thee with uprightness of heart, when I learn the judgments of Thy justice.
(Psalm 119:7)

TCR 677:5 Infants are introduced by baptism into the Christian heaven, and angels are there assigned them by the Lord, to take care of them. Therefore, as soon as infants are baptized, angels are appointed over them, by whom they are kept in a state to receive faith in the Lord. But as they grow up, and begin to exercise self-control and be governed by their own reason, these guardian angels leave them, and they draw into association with themselves such spirits as make one with their life and faith.

AC 6047 The start must be made from truths of faith, in this way. First there must be learned the doctrinal things of the church, and then the Word must be examined to see whether these are true; for they are not true because the heads of the church have said so and their followers confirm it, because in this way the doctrinal things of all churches and religions would have to be called true, merely because they exist in the country, and men hold them from their birth; and in this

way not only would the doctrinal things of Papists and also of Quakers be true, but also those of Jews and even of Mohammedans, because their leaders have said so and their followers confirm it.

This shows that the Word must be searched, and there it must be seen whether the doctrinal things are true. When this is done from the affection of truth, then the man is enlightened by the Lord so as to perceive, without knowing whence, what is true; and he is confirmed in it in accordance with the good in which he is. If these truths disagree with the doctrinal things [of his church], let him take heed not to disturb the church.

[3] Afterward, when he has been confirmed, and is thus in the affirmative from the Word that the doctrinal things are truths of faith, it is then allowable for him to confirm them by all the memory knowledges he possesses, of whatever name and nature. For then, because what is affirmative reigns universally, he accepts the memory-knowledges which agree, and rejects those which disagree, by reason of the fallacies they contain. For faith is strengthened by means of memory-knowledges, and therefore no one is forbidden to search the Scriptures from the affection of knowing whether the doctrinal things of the church within which he was born are true, for in no other way can he be enlightened. After doing this, no one is forbidden to fortify himself by means of memory-knowledges; but he may not do so before. This is the way, and the only way, of conjoining the truths of faith with memory-knowledges, not only with the memory-knowledges of the church, but also with any memory-knowledges whatever.

SD 3977 CONCERNING THINGS CONFIRMATORY OF THE KNOWLEDGES OF FAITH. It was perceived that at first, the knowledges of faith cannot be confirmed in any other way than by sensual and natural truths, for man cannot believe without confirmations. But afterwards, when such knowledges are confirmed, then the Lord bestows upon him the gift of conscience, by which he is enabled to believe without further confirmations; he then rejects all ratiocinations. This sphere is angelic, in which evil spirits cannot be. But as long as one is in the state of their confirmation, and reasons with them in order to convince them of truth, then [such evil] spirits can be present.

SD 2955 Now while in the street and talking with spirits, it was given to perceive that there are five kinds of reception [of the Heavenly Doctrine]: First, [those] who wholly reject, who are in another persuasion, and who are enemies of the faith. These reject; for it cannot be received by them, since it [can] not penetrate their minds. Another class, who can receive these things as scientifics, and are delighted with them as scientifics, and as curious things. A third class, which receives intellectually, so that they receive with sufficient alacrity, but still remain [in respect to] life as before. A fourth class [receives] persuasively, so that it penetrates to the improvement of their lives; they recur to these in certain states, and make use of them. A fifth class, who receive with joy, and are confirmed.

Questions

1. While there is no mention of a ritual of confession of faith or of confirmation of one's baptism in the Heavenly Doctrine, we do find many places in the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, of confessing the power and goodness of the Lord. In fact, our familiar blessing before meals is rendered in the Heavenly Doctrine as "Confess the LORD, for He is good."
2. Should the New Church have the ritual of confession of faith as a confirmation of one's baptism?
3. If so, should this be a private or public service? Many of the Psalms indicate this confession is public. "I will confess Thee among the nations" (Ps 18:49), "to make the voice of confession to be heard" (Ps 26:7). "I will confess Thee in an assembly of many" (Ps 35:18). Or are these referring more to singing and praying together in church?
4. As Holy Supper is called the second gate after baptism, should one's confirmation in the Heavenly Doctrine be conjoined with the first taking of the Holy Supper, or is this first communion actually the confirmation itself?
5. Does the teaching from the Arcana Coelestia 6047 mean that the Heavenly Doctrine should be compared to the Letter of the Word to see if it is true, or should a person affirm the Heavenly Doctrine as "doctrine drawn from the Word from the mouth of the Lord" (Invitation to the New Church 38), and question what his ministers and teachers say in this light?
6. Does the teaching in Spiritual Diary 3977 seem to indicate that being confirmed, or taking on the promises of our baptism as our own, coincides with the beginning of a true conscience?
7. When we look at the various ways the Heavenly Doctrine will be received, is it possible to progress from one level of acceptance to the next, as we read and gain a greater and greater understanding of these truths from heaven?