

ADDRESS

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A D D R E S S .

The day on which we have met together, is certainly the most remarkable and prominent in the history of the country. It is the anniversary of the declaration of American Independence; an independence, which was achieved, after a long and tedious war, and not without much loss, both of blood and treasure. But the final success was complete; and the day has ever since been a day of festivity and rejoicing. It has lost, perhaps, something of its noise and boisterousness; but enough is still left, to remind us of the character of the spirit by which it has been filled. The prophecy of one who had much to do with ushering into the world the original declaration,—that the day would thereafter be celebrated by the firing of cannon, the ringing of bells, by bonfires and other similar demonstrations of joy, has long been in a course of most rigid and literal fulfilment.

But a change may soon be expected. This furious noise, which has so long stunned the ear, is already beginning to be left to the young and thoughtless; while the more sober and intelligent part of the community, instead of thinking merely about the emancipation of the nation from subjection to a foreign power, will soon be turning their thoughts to its present

condition, and its probable future course. And instead of assembling on this day, for the mere purpose of flattering and glorifying ourselves, because we are free and independent, may we not hope that it will soon become an occasion for serious thought and self-examination; for inquiry into the nature of the duties which this freedom and independence impose upon us. But in the mean time, let us not anticipate too great and sudden a change in the general feeling of the country; nor allow ourselves to be too much disgusted by the rude show of liberty in the great mass of the community. This state of things has been permitted for purposes, which are not the less important, because we cannot now fully understand them. What is required of us is, that, as far as we can see what is wrong, and what order requires to be done, we should give ourselves to the work;—that we should neither expect to accomplish every thing in a moment, nor despair of being able to effect any thing; but simply that we should devote the powers we have, to their true end.

I shall offer no apology for thus entering upon topics, which have hitherto been but little discussed in the New Church; for the occasion seemed to me, not only to justify, but to demand, such a course. I hope, however, that I shall not forget to whom I am addressing myself, nor from what I ought to speak. I trust, also, that none will feel alarmed, lest church and state should be brought into too close an alliance on this occasion. I trust that we have not so learned the doctrines and truths of the New Church, as to regard them as being entitled to govern only a part of our conduct and lives, while as to all else, we are left where we should have been without them. These doctrines are applicable, equally and alike, to all times and places and circumstances; for they are revealed from heaven, where time and space are not. The New Church is to be an internal church; and by this is not to be understood, that she will occupy herself merely or altogether in the thought and contemplation of internal things, to the exclusion or neglect of any of the ordinary duties, which pertain to a life in the world; but that internal things will be always primary, and will rule and govern in externals. Mindful of her own origin, she will also be mindful of the scene of her present duties; and when she goes forth in the discharge of them, she will neither cast off, nor leave behind, her true internal character. But she will enter into the daily work of her hands, with her whole heart and soul.

It will not be understood, however, that I would propose a formal alliance between the rulers in church and those in state, by which each should enter into stipulations in regard to the support and defence of the other. I would have something much closer and more intimate than all this could be made ;—more like the alliance between the soul and the body. I would have every magistrate and ruler in civil affairs, penetrated and filled with the doctrines and truths of the church, so as to be constantly under their influence, in the discharge of his official duties. Instead of an alliance between church and state, as of two powers standing on the same plane, I would have the union of the internal with the external ; so that the one might have its just and legitimate influence within and over the other.

Taking this view of the relation between church and state, it will be evident that the New Church owes to the country and to the world, duties of a civil and political nature. And, may we not add, that the season is fast approaching, when serious and earnest efforts must be made, to understand and perform these duties. It may not often be necessary or becoming for her to descend into the common arena of party conflicts, in regard to the ordinary controversies of the day ; but standing in her appropriate place, she should, as opportunities are presented, hold up to those who are willing to receive them, such truths and principles of order, as may from time to time be given her.

There can be no doubt but that the people, in various parts of the world, have been long and grievously oppressed by their rulers. They have seen that their governments were corrupt, and did not exercise their powers for the common good ; and on this they have grounded just claims to reform, and perhaps not unfrequently, have made out their case and established the right of revolution. But then these changes have not been effected without introducing a train of attendant evils from the other extreme. From being so long accustomed to oppose the abuses of power, we have almost come to deny that it can be exercised for good. We have been contriving the means by which the powers of government may be limited and restricted and balanced, till the very institution itself is in danger of being regarded only as a kind of necessary evil. But a better state of things will some day arise, when the eyes of the people will be turned towards the *best* form of government, rather than towards the *weakest*.

It is evident, however, that much needs to be done, before

this change can be effected. So long as the people claim to be the rightful source of all the powers of the government, it is plain that they will allow no powers which they cannot control. Thus the government becomes only the agent or organ of the people—the mere mouth-piece, through which the public voice is uttered, and the public will expressed.

No arguments will be needed, I trust, with those who receive the doctrines of the New Church, to show that such views as these are essentially defective and erroneous. For in the New Church the idea of government is not a fiction,—a mere mockery, but a living reality. The idea of a governor is not that of one who obeys the public will, but of one who guides and directs it. It will be noticed that I am not now speaking of the form of government, but of the thing itself. It may doubtless exist under a variety of forms, which may be variously adapted to different people. But the danger seems to be, that under a pretence of searching out the least objectionable form, we should adopt principles which are essentially subversive of the whole substance of the thing itself, and literally convert it into a mere servant of the public will.

Now the light of the New Church shows us where all this fallacy lies; and enables us to reconcile the seeming contradictions between the powers of the government and the freedom of the people. It shows us that freedom does not consist in leading one's self, but in being led of the Lord—that it does not consist in exemption from the obligations and duties which pertain to members of the social body, but in the full acknowledgment and performance of these obligations and duties. And to apply these remarks directly to the subject under consideration, this light shows us, that a people are not free, in proportion as they can instruct and influence their government, and direct its operations; but in proportion as these operations are guided in the fear of the Lord, and by a higher wisdom than they possess. What the people have a right to claim is, that all the powers of the government should be exercised for the common good. But then that this may be so, it is essential that the government and the people should each be occupied with the things which belong to their own appropriate sphere and function. It is certainly no better, that the people should make servants of the government, than that the government should make servants of the people. In either case, both people and government are equally removed from true order and true freedom.

But these are hard lessons for us to reduce to practice. The New Church itself is of so recent establishment in the world, that it partakes but too largely of the revolutionary character. We have, as it were, but yesterday come out in opposition to the established forms of doctrine, and declared our independence of the religious institutions and teachings of our fathers. It is not in the nature of the case, that we can have any great respect for established forms and authority. Public opinion has, in a great degree, lost its power over us; and so far as the social relations are concerned, we have almost every thing to learn. In the first manifestations of the New Church, little perhaps could be expected, beyond the denial and rejection of the falsities of the Old, and a vindication of its own personal independence. But wherever it has within itself the true life and spirit, it will soon begin to clothe itself in forms of order, and to show its respect for the decent proprieties of social life.

I have already referred to Swedenborg's definition of freedom—that it consists in being led of the Lord. In yielding our assent to this, it will be well for us to understand, as fully as we can, all that it implies. And if we inquire into the manner in which He leads men, we shall find, that it is by means of mediate, as well as of immediate influx. That we might know something of the operation of his government in his kingdom, that is, wherever it is yielded to, or wherever the freedom of being led by him is enjoyed, Swedenborg was permitted to visit the spiritual world, and describe its general appearance and economy. And perhaps no fact contained in this description is more striking, than the arrangement of all into societies. The truth that the Lord does not govern individuals merely by immediate influx from himself, but also by mediate influx through others, there stands forth with great clearness and prominence. For as all there live in societies, so they love, think, and act in society. The social relations are carried out and perfected, till the society itself becomes individualized, and stands forth,—a larger man.

But then in order to understand how it is that so much depends upon this arrangement into societies, we must remember that all these societies exist in the human form. For if we lose sight of this form, and merely think of them as so many collections of individuals into bodies or masses without form, the idea will lose all its power with us. But if we think of them as existing in the human form, we shall be able to form some idea of the various relations existing between the differ-

ent members, and of their mutual operation and influence upon each other. We shall understand, at least, that every society which exists in this form, has a head as well as a body; and that the latter is led and governed by the Lord, through the medium of the former. And in all this we shall see nothing arbitrary on the one side, nor servile on the other; but only an example of the order and perfect mutuality, which it is the effort of the divine operation every where to produce.

As has been already intimated, we are in no danger of attributing too much to the effect of this divine arrangement. It is by means of it, that the heavens themselves, and all the individuals of which they are composed, are connected together and operate upon each other. Upon it, their order and beauty, harmony and government essentially depend. Without it, they would cease to be. And as the knowledge and the life of it shall descend upon the earth, the whole condition of the world will be changed and renovated. Questions concerning the powers of rulers and the rights of the people will then cease to agitate the community. For every member of society, whatever may be his office or station, will have the *power* of the whole, while engaged in the performance of his own specific use; and he will cease to claim, or think of, the *right* to be engaged in any thing else.

It may be difficult to see how these principles are to be brought down and manifested amongst men in the natural world. But in the system of the division of labor, we have a kind of image of their effect and operation. By this system, individuals limit themselves to the performance of distinct and specific uses for others. No one works for himself; but all for society. And though each one may be under the influence of the love of self, and so not internally at work for others, yet the mere adoption of the external form of working for others, has been sufficient to change the whole external face of society, and fill the world with abundance. Now this principle has as much power in internals as it has in externals. If men will really undertake to work for each other, from true neighborly love, it will be found that the division of labor has the same power to change the internal character of the will and understanding, and fill them with every thing good and true, which it has in regard to the goods and the riches of the natural world. And when men begin to work for society from the affections of the heart, as well as with the hands, society itself will begin to assume new forms. New relations will be developed and man-

ifested ; old relations will be revived, and filled with new life and power, and perfected to a degree altogether beyond our present conceptions. And amongst the most obvious and prominent of these, will be that existing between the rulers and the people. For this is nothing less than one of the universal and necessary relations in society, without which, there can be neither system, nor order, nor progress.

But questions will rise as to the practical bearing and tendency of these things. What is to be done? What are the present duties which they impose? It being granted to be orderly and right to have a government, is every government to be supported and sustained, whether good or bad—whether its powers are exercised for the common benefit, or prostituted to party purposes? And if it is right to oppose the views and operations of the government in some cases, how is this to be done? How is a bad government to be changed by the people for a good one?

These, and similar questions, which naturally occur, demand a serious consideration ; and I wish that I were better able to give a suitable and satisfactory reply. As it is, I shall attempt only to state a few very general principles, which perhaps may be of some service in aiding us to determine on particular cases as they may arise.

It certainly seems reasonable and right, that all our presumptions should be in favor of sustaining the authority of the powers that be. This is the rule ; opposition and resistance, the exception. We should have recourse to the latter, therefore, only where the cases are strong, and clearly made out. It is impossible to point out what these are, or to state the only contingencies in which they may exist. As they are not under the general rule, but by their own nature, exceptions to all rule, they must be left, each to work out its own justification, and establish its own laws. But at best they are only temporarily permitted by the Divine Providence, to prevent the greater excesses which would otherwise necessarily take place.

As to the part which it is our duty to take in opposing a bad government, and in establishing a good one in its place, I can see little beyond what may be termed the mere negative side of the case. But there is here certainly much to be done ; both in putting away from ourselves the evils and falsities which make a bad government necessary, and in cherishing the goods and truths which will at some day, render a good gov-

ernment possible. I have called this a mere negative rule, because, it may perhaps have little to do with creating, or forming, or by any active and direct means procuring, the institution of the government. But however this may be, we certainly ought to cherish the faith that a good government will somehow be provided, when we are prepared to receive it, and disposed to live under it. And whatever direct and immediate action may finally devolve upon us, in regard to its institution, it still seems clear that our chief work will consist in preparation. It is here that our six days of labor must all be spent.

From what has already been said, it will have been observed, that I regard it as one important step towards this preparation, to get rid of the idea that we create or can create a government over ourselves;—and what is still worse, the wish to have it so. We may indeed enter into compacts, and form constitutions and rules, by which all this shall be stipulated and provided for. But just in proportion as the idea is actually realized, and the notion is cherished by the people, that they are sovereign, and that all the powers of the government are, and of right ought to be, derived from them as their legitimate source,—in the same degree the machinery which the will of the majority may set up, whatever else it may be, is not, and cannot be a government, in any just and true meaning of the word. I am well aware of the strong tendency to the abuse of power, wherever it is possessed, and that the apprehensions of the people on this point are, in a good degree at least, reasonable and salutary; but this should not prevent our calling things by their right names, and seeing them as they really are. It is unnecessary to argue these points. Their simple statement is sufficient, while we have the human form of society before the mind. The idea of the members of a body creating or electing their own head for instance, when a real body and a real head are thought of, is too monstrous for the most absurd imagination. And so, too, is that other kindred freak of fancy, the doctrine of rotation in office; a doctrine which would keep the whole community in everlasting turmoil, that every individual might in turn have the chance of trying his own crude experiments upon it.

As another step, then, in the way of our duty in this regard, let us cherish the idea of the *real*, that is, of whatever exists in the human form, in opposition to the merely *imaginary*. As we do this, our thoughts will be turned to the performance of uses to others; and the love of performing these, will grad-

ually lead us, if it be genuine, into the place and station to which we are adapted. Not that we have nothing to do in mutually aiding, and being aided by each other, in this respect also. For a genuine love of doing uses to others is always accompanied by a corresponding love of receiving uses from them in return. So that those who may be called to fill the more exalted stations in a society, will not be left to assume their high places on their own responsibility; but they will be elevated and borne into them, by the love which their brethren will feel, of being led by the wisdom of which they are the recipients and mediums. And those who remain in lower stations will be equally at home and equally contented. For the common object and end of all will be use; and not the ambition of rising above others. And uses are as various, and at the same time as real, as the various organs and functions existing in the human body.

I feel free to confess, then, that I see no other way for society to come into the true human form, but to grow into it from its internal life. If this be genuine, true, human life, it will produce this form in society, as naturally as in the individual. Why need we suppose that a society in the heavens has any plan or design of coming into this form collectively, any more than each particular member has, individually. But as the true social man is cultivated and developed, the society takes on this form as a matter of course; and its perfection and beauty, like that of the individual, always grow with its increasing love and capacity of performing true uses.

It must not be inferred, however, that, because the particular form of society is actually determined by its internal life and affections, it has therefore no concern with the observance of the rules and principles of external order. On the contrary this observance is as needful to society, as it is in the case of the individual. Both with individuals and societies, the external, literal law, filled indeed, and seen to be filled with the Divine spirit and life, while it is equally obligatory upon all, is at the same time the broad foundation on which all must stand. Here is the great original and pattern, from which alone every thing truly human is derived, and to which all must be ultimately referred.