"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."
- Matthew xxii, 21

Micah vi

Psalm 104, vss. 24 - end
New Book of Worship, Psalm 104, pp. 75, 76
Matthew xxii, 1-22

This week the nation celebrates Memorial Day. The close of the Civil War marked the end of wars between the states. But since that time there have been two world wars. And wars have brought an increasingly heavy burden. It has been roughly estimated that the Civil War cost the nation $30,000,000,00, the First World War $300,000,000,00, and the Second World War $300,000,000,000,00. But this is not the whole cost. The sufferings of war, its deaths, sickness, and poverty, the disordered of useful industries, and the burden of taxation continually increase. We are beginning to realize as never before that for these burdens to continue and increase means the breakdown of civilization. The economic reasons for lessening armaments and ending war were never so strong as they are today.

And as nations are being brought closer together by means of vastly increased transportation facilities, we have been learning to look beyond our national borders and to take world views. We are beginning to be able in national affairs to see from another's standpoint, to feel another nation's suffering, and to recognize our duty to relieve it. Our nation is the most productive and the wealthiest nation the world has ever seen. The only proper use of wealth is service, and great amounts of our wealth have been spent in aid to other nations. All this helps toward making people a conference of nations looking to the limiting of armaments and the doing away with war.

Yet strong as the economic reasons are for reducing armaments and establishing peaceful means of adjusting relations among nations, the conference and the effort which it represents cannot succeed, nor can enduring peace among the nations be established on purely economic grounds.

The history of the growth and development of nations is a long one, but it teaches us that society is organic, that a nation is but a larger man, and that all the nations should be united to form a still greater man. Each individual and each nation has its particular genius, its particular uses to the whole. More and more people are beginning to realize this. The wide-spread travel today has brought the peoples of the earth in touch with each other more than ever before, and to the realization that they can be happy only as they live together in peace and in mutual helpfulness.

The idea has generally prevailed that man loses something of his freedom and personal rights by his national and international relationships and obligations, and that there must be some compromise between his private and the public welfare. He may gain as a whole, it is thought, but he has much to lose as well as to gain. But this idea has its origin in a gross misconception of the nature of man, and is
a great mistake. It is based on the belief that man's freedom is in doing what he pleases and his highest good in getting all that he can for himself. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Our civil, social, national, and international relationships are ways of influence from the minds of each to all and of all to each. This truth should be obvious from the inventions which each nation has contributed to the development and progress of mankind. Cut an individual nation off from all communication with others and it would wither and die. Instead of losing freedom or power or any good, man gains. It is a law of infinite wisdom that the parts should be subordinate to the whole and find their highest good in working for the good of the whole. This is illustrated by the various organs and parts of the body. Each part, however minute, has its place and use.

The laws for national development are the same as the laws for individual development and they have their origin not in any legal compacts or political organizations, but in the Divine order and in the very nature of man himself. The life of the individual is bound up in the life of the world, and private interests are much more intimately connected with the public good and dependent upon it than is generally supposed. They mutually act and react upon each other, and the prosperity of the whole is the welfare of the individual.

This means that everyone has his duties, which are twofold: his personal duties and his duties to the state. By his private duties he helps form the character and life of the nation; by his public duties he helps to guide and control the national life and power. In both these forms of service he is consulting his own good most fully when he consults the good of the whole.

Everyone ought to use his influence for the public good. Every man and woman can do something. Every person has some influence with some one. The vast and overwhelming weight and force of public opinion is composed of individual thoughts and affections. Many persons do not do anything because they think they can do so little. It is not the duty of any individual to force or control public opinion, but to do his own part in forming it.

And as we thus render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, we should be sure that we are also rendering unto God the things that are God's. The prophets Isaiah and Micah declare that the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, rebuking many nations, causing them to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and to learn war no more. It was to this unity that the Lord looked forward when He prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." It is of such unity that the apostle Paul wrote: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

In the book of Revelation we are told that the leaves of the tree of life were for the healing of the nations. No natural force can bring peace, for peace is a Divine achievement. All the activities of the world - its learning, its arts, its industries, its pleasures - both in the larger field of community life and in
our smaller personal life, need this healing. Selfishness has crept in, and they need to be cleansed and healed.

Abstractly the nations are the affections of the human heart, and the nations that need healing are the affections grown selfish, turned aside from the Lord to our own evil ways. Though we are speaking of the affections of the individual, we may rightly apply the same thought to the nations of the earth, with their natural selfishnesses, rivalries, and hostilities, their burdens of suffering and sorrow. The Lord is working to heal them but we have a part in this work, and as we work with Him, we have reason for confidence of success. For in working with Him we are working in no doubtful cause. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

The Scripture which gives this promise tells more of the source of this healing. It is the river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This river is the truth of the Lord's Word. But truth to be known must be lived. So we are enjoined, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand," and in the last chapter, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." The teaching of this book, the book of Revelation, is that the Lord Jesus Christ lives and reigns in heaven and on earth, that He is working in this world to establish His kingdom. If we are to help to accomplish this, the Lord's purpose must be our purpose, His ways must be our ways.

The New Church has a special mission here. There are those who do not read the Word, and others who do read but do not understand it, who cannot be directly enlightened. The New Church, knowing that the Lord lives and reigns, by learning from His Word His laws for the building of His kingdom, can give its light and encouragement to others.

Only in the conscientious discharge of both their spiritual and their civil duties will men keep the Lord's command: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

Amen