

The Life-Changing Power of Order

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Whoever offers praise, glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God (Psalm 50:23).

Picture this. You are in a hurry to get out the door for an important appointment. But your car keys are missing. You look in the usual place near the back door and they are not there. You rummage through the jumbled bowl of extra keys looking for that spare one you think you saw in there but nothing appears. It's so frustrating. And just when you are about to give up, your spouse says, I think I saw you in the garage last night dear. And yes, that's where you find them.

So much of our physical life requires organization and a certain level of order for us to function well. If things don't have places then we not only waste a lot of time looking for them, the added burden of mental stress and anxiety can easily trigger hostile inner feelings showing up as conflict with the people around us. What's the solution? Can you hear your mother's voice? "A place for everything, and everything in its place?"

So think about this. If simply having our physical homes in better order can substantially improve our natural lives, what might happen if the home for our deeper selves, our minds ... our spirits, could get the same kind of treatment? What would it be like to feel comfortable and relaxed if we entertained people inside the walls of our spiritual homes so to speak? As we prepare for the Easter season let's consider how the Lord can help us make progress tidying up this private part of our world.

In the Lord's Word near the end of each Gospel we find a collection of stories and teachings from His final days on earth. Here we discover that the Lord provides the very best example of the greatest ordering process of all time. It's the big stage where He set the pattern—wrote the book about how to clean up a spiritual mess. He calls it...being glorified.

In the Gospel of John chapter 12 we read that Jesus said, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified (verse 23)." In chapter 13, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately" (verses 32,32). And then in chapter 17, Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.... And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was (verses 1,5).

As abstract as it may sound, the Lord's glorification was in fact a spiritual process that is very relevant to putting our own spiritual house in order. When the glorification was happening during the Lord's life on earth it was the heart of a realignment process that was spiritually transformative for the entire human race. And the truth is, that the Lord's glorification has also given us the tools to work on this realignment process in our own lives. And if we do our part thoroughly it will not only "spark joy" in our natural lives but bring a "fullness of inner joy" to our spiritual life to eternity.

So, what is this "glorification process" and how can it have a life-changing effect on us? The term itself, "glorification" can easily come across as abstract and very theological. We don't hear much talk about it and it can easily be misconstrued. You might think that glorification is talking about external worship and adoration of God for what He has done—for dying on the cross or something like that. But this is not the essential teaching about "glorification" which permeates the Word and the Heavenly Doctrine (for references see *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 300).

Before we go on, it is important to realize that we cannot do this subject anything close to justice in the little time we have together this morning. So, let's focus on the systematic ordering part of the glorification process and show it can be helpful to us on our individual spiritual journey.

Put briefly, and oh so generally, the Lord's entire life on earth was dedicated to the purpose of restructuring and rebuilding His inflowing lifelines to human beings. Steadily, from birth all the way to the passion of the cross and beyond, the Lord was on a mission to restore an orderly, functional and loving connection between the Divine Soul within Him and the human race. This connection had frayed so badly it was nearing a breaking point. Purely material self-interest, and the love of dominating over others had risen above the spiritual values of loving God and the neighbor. To put it baldly, things were pretty messed up.

From creation, the Lord had designed a systematic, orderly program for people to receive heavenly love and wisdom into their receptive minds and hearts. But over time, people's priorities shifted. Instead of looking up to God and outward to their neighbor, their focus shifted downward and inward. And by the time of the Lord's advent, the Divine love and wisdom emanating from our Creator was barely being received by the natural minds of people on earth. A massive re-organization project called a spiritual judgment had to happen. And that's what the Lord's glorification accomplished. He took on the oppositional forces of hell. He re-structured old communication channels throughout the entire spiritual world. He sorted out fresh pathways so that His inflowing life could re-connect with the people who were searching for it. And especially with those who were willing to have it change and bring order to their lives.

In New Church teachings, from the *Arcana Coelestia* we learn, "When the Lord put off the human [that He received from Mary] He put on a Divine Human." "Thus, He restored to order both heaven and hell. He restored them step by step until He had glorified Himself completely." And it was the Lord's last temptation called, "the passion of the cross" where all things were "restored to order." The Lord came on earth that He might glorify His Human, in order that He might keep all things in order to eternity (see *Arcana* 2159:2, 4075, 10659:3).

"Keep all things in order to eternity." That sounds pretty amazing but maybe a bit clinical? It was anything but. It was a dramatic, disturbing, and conflict-ridden process with human passion and Divine intervention engaged at every turn. Sorting out the bad from the good and making decisions or judgments about them is so much a part of any ordering process. It can appear chaotic and messy while things are being sorted out. But there was a very clear and orderly progression going on in the Lord's life. He was demonstrating the ultimate process for managing evil and false disorders and restoring the loving links between Himself and the human race. And when you hear the Easter story you sense the raw emotional aspect at the conclusion of the glorification process on the cross. The human the Lord assumed while in the world suffered great physical and emotional pain as the sorting process reached its conclusion.

But that was then, and this is now. What can we learn from the Lord's glorification? The Lord helps us understand through this teaching in *Arcana Coelestia*:

Anything in the Word that means a person's regeneration also means the glorification of the Human within the Lord; for a person's regeneration is an image of the Lord's glorification, 3138, 3212, 3296, 3490, 4402, 5688.

And because a person can get an idea of regeneration more easily than he can of the Lord's glorification, let His glorification be illustrated by means of a person's regeneration (*Arcana Coelestia* 8353).

You see, the glorification process has a strong correlation to the ordering we must do to experience our own kind of glorification, our conjunction with the Divine. This ordering on our part is in very broad terms referred to in the New Church as a person's regeneration or spiritual rebirth.

When a person is being regenerated, lower things are made sub-ordinate and subject to higher ones, that is, exterior things become servants, and the interior become masters (*Arcana Coelestia* 5161).

In other words, regeneration calls us to put in place an orderly set of moral and spiritual priorities. So here is where we come back to our opening analogy about organizing our physical environment.

There is a current trend to use what's called the Marie Kondo system to organize the things in our homes. It has a great over-arching simplicity to it. First you bring your things out into plain view so that you know the extent of the project. Then you take each object by itself and you ask yourself, "How useful is it and does it spark joy in my life?" What follows—or what is meant to follow—is a kind of judgment. A letting go of things that are no longer useful. And a bringing together, a kind of bundling if you will, or categorization of those things that will be part of your life going forward.

There are many fascinating analogies to spiritual ordering in Kondo's system. But it is true that putting our physical belongings into a useful order is no guarantee that we will be more kind, truthful and wise, in a word, "regenerated" people. People with good and evil intentions can be equally well-organized in the externals of life. So, this is where the spiritual, internal ordering process is so key. It's our parallel to the Lord's glorification...

In the case of the person who is being regenerated a new state begins when order is turned around. The change takes place when interior things are given dominion over exterior ones, and exterior things begin to serve interior ones - which involves both ideas in the understanding and desires in the will. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2159:3)

Having our priorities, our external environment in order can be an excellent help to doing this kind of spiritual work, but when it comes right down to it, the internal re-ordering of our understanding and will is far more essential. These will form the vessels for our reception of and conjunction with the Lord.

Notice what was said, "a new state begins when order is turned around." Salvation does not come in a moment. Regeneration is a slow process of cleansing and purification. It cannot be hurried. The complete re-ordering of our desires and intentions will not, and cannot, happen overnight. Subtle shifts start happening when we begin to take our spiritual connection to the Lord seriously. It could be that we begin conversing with the Lord on a routine basis...by listening to His Word, by reading it, and by thinking about it. But also engaging in speech with God as we do when we pray. Talking about the Lord and His teachings with others also helps us to wrestle with them and discover their internal consistency and then allow them to govern our decisions and the way we live our lives.

Often it can feel painful to change our disorderly patterns of thought and behavior. But it can feel freeing as well to let go of worn-out old habits that are not serving us well. And we must remember that inside that effort, the Lord is powering the intense and liberating task of ordering the deeper recesses of our spiritual home.

Another useful spiritual, house-cleaning, order-building strategy is from time to time to take stock of what we are thinking about. It's one form of self-examination. We have a God-given power of reflection which allows us to climb above the pile so to speak and observe from above what is going on in our minds. And from this elevated perspective, we can see our thought processes in a higher light and continuously get better at sorting the pile below. For example, we might notice that we have regular uncharitable criticisms of a friend or spouse in our thought pile. It's time to acknowledge them for what they are. To ask the Lord's help. And to set them aside.

Still another way to put our spiritual house in order is to watch for who we tend to blame for the disorders in our lives. Searching for cause is human nature. But we need to be cautious lest we attribute responsibility to others for our own evils. And it can work the opposite way as well. It is usually counterproductive to take on the burden of organizing other people's moral and spiritual lives which are out of our jurisdiction.

The Lord's Word is chock full of processes and tools for spiritual self-improvement, but there is one thing that tops the charts. We know it well. It is the cultivation of trust and spiritual confidence in the Lord. He came in the flesh. He fought intensely for our spiritual freedom. And He experienced the processes we are going through intimately, as part of His own glorification (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4352-3). It is He who empowers us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). And there is nothing more important for us to do.

As the Psalmist said:

The steps of a good person are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. (*Psalm 37:23*).

Amen.

Readings:

John 12: 20-32

Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose, I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

Therefore, the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

Arcana Coelestia 10659:3

Those who are enlightened by the Lord through the Word understand that the Lord came into the world to subdue the hells and to restore everything there and in the heavens to order, which could not by any means have been accomplished except through His Human; for He was able from the Human, but not from the Divine without the Human, to fight against the hells. [Those with enlightenment also understand] that the Lord came into the world to glorify His Human, in order that through that glorified Human all things restored to order by Him might be maintained forever in that condition.

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(1) God is Order itself. (2) He created humankind from order, in order, and for order. (3) He created the human rational mind in accordance with the order of the spiritual world, and a person's body in accordance with the order of the natural world. (4) Therefore, it is a law of order that a person from his little spiritual world or little heaven should govern his little cosmos or little natural world, just as God from His great heaven or spiritual world governs His great cosmos or natural world. (5) Many other laws of order flow forth from these.