

# Notes on Divine Providence

a 13 lecture series by Andy Dobb

# Introduction

Secular society governs itself through laws, which in turn are controlled by national constitutions, outlining the "spirit" of the law. A national constitution, while it may mandate certain specific laws, more generally interprets the attitudes and intentions national laws will follow. National constitutions are the single most important declaration of nationhood, and without them the ship of state is without a rudder, the rights, privileges and guarantees of the citizenry are neither defined nor protected.

Ideally a nation should reflect the ideals and concepts of heaven, and, in a way, the modern system of creating directive constitutions in itself is a form of the heavenly ideal. In the heavenly model the Lord is the highest authority, the angels under His guidance and care, much as the differing aspects of natural government are under the guidance of the constitution.

The book "Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Providence" is the Lord's constitution for the human race. In the opening paragraphs this work defines the Divine Providence as the Lord's government, thus drawing the comparison between a Divinely given constitution and a natural one. Interestingly it was written at a time before natural constitutions had come into being.

If one views Divine Providence as a Divine framework for governing the human race, one is shown in both structure and content of the book, how the Lord's love, operating through His wisdom strives unceasingly towards the goal of human salvation.

Like a natural constitution this work follows in broad sweeps to establish the Lord's relationship to people, His responsibilities towards us, and human responsibilities to the Lord. The work makes provision for those who turn away from the Lord, much as the penal section of a constitution outlines the rights of the state and position of criminals who place themselves beyond the laws of the state. The constitution ends with a description of the nature of the Lord's love for people, and the inviolability of His government.

The fundamental difference between natural and Divine law, however, is the end in view. Natural law seeks to protect the rights of the citizenry and maintain order. Divine law looks to one end: salvation. This theme runs like a scarlet cord throughout the entire book.

The purpose of the following notes on the book, Divine Providence, is threefold:

- to fully acquaint the reader with the structure of the Divine constitution. By seeing the relevant sections of the book in relation to each other, one is able to appreciate the complete sense of order prevailing in the Lord's government.
- to acquaint the reader with the content of the book, which, by focusing on the Lord's goal in creation, a heaven from the human race, gives us a deeper insight into and understanding of human behavior in terms of the Lord's goal.
- to acquaint the reader in a structured way of human responsibilities towards the Lord, in other words, to foster good citizenship in the Lord's kingdom.

This study is in no way a replacement for the book, Divine Providence, and it is strongly recommended

that the reader read the notes in conjunction with the book. Further, this book cannot possibly hope to cover every subject or nuance contained within the original, but it is hoped that they will foster further investigation, and encourage the reader to think in terms of Divine Providence.

# Lecture One

## THE GOVERNMENT OF THE LORD

The Writings define "Divine Providence" as the "government of the Divine Love and Wisdom of the Lord" (@DP 1).

AC 10773: "The government of the Lord in the heavens and on earth is called Providence. And as all the good which is of love and all the truth which is of faith, are from Him, and absolutely nothing from a person, it is evident from this that the Divine Providence of the Lord is in each and all things that conduce to the salvation of the human race. This Lord thus teaches in John: -

JOH 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

JOH 15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

JOH 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

Rev. Ormond Odhner writes:

"The Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only God. He alone rules heaven and earth. He alone is the king of angels and man, and His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Of His government there shall be no end, and this for one special reason: because it is a government of absolute freedom, and that which is inseminated (planted) in freedom endures forever." (Odhner, Ormond. DIVINE GOVERNMENT, NCL 1951:207).

In order to understand the nature of Divine Providence as the government of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, we are directed by the book itself to examine the nature of the Lord as shown in the book "Divine Love and Wisdom."

As we study this book, we find that the Lord's creation is governed and maintained by His providence. In one sense, creation is continual, and the continuation is "providence." Thus creation was effected by means of the Divine Love acting through the Divine Wisdom, and providence is the continuation of this outflowing Love through wisdom."

DP 2: "We shall consider in this section the preservation of the union of the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom, or of the Divine Good and the Divine Truth, in the things which were created."

## THE DIVINE LOVE AND THE DIVINE WISDOM

Divine Love and Divine Wisdom are completely interrelated. They cannot be separated, except intellectually. We are told:

@DLW 34. The Divine being and Divine expression in the human God are in a distinct combination one ; and because the Divine being is Divine love, and the Divine expression is Divine wisdom, therefore these, too, are in a distinct combination one.

We say that they are in a distinct combination one because love and wisdom are two distinct attributes, but so united that love is a property of wisdom and wisdom a property of love. For love has its being in wisdom, and wisdom has its expression in love.

Moreover, because wisdom takes its expression from love , therefore Divine wisdom also is being; and it follows from this that love and wisdom taken together are the Divine being, whereas in considering them in distinction from each other we call love the Divine being, and wisdom the Divine expression. Such is the angelic idea of Divine love and wisdom.

This concept of the innermost nature of God is central to New Church teaching. The Divine Love is the core, the very being of the Lord Himself. But love can only be manifested by means of wisdom. Strictly speaking, one cannot separate the love from its wisdom, just as one cannot separate being from manifestation, or substance from form. Thus while they are completely one, they are distinct from each other. This is the meaning of the term used above "one distinctly."

It is pointed out in @DP 3 that love cannot exist without wisdom, or wisdom without love.

DP 3: "...love without wisdom cannot do anything, nor wisdom without love; for love without wisdom cannot form a single thought. Indeed, it cannot see, perceive, or say anything; therefore it cannot do anything..."

Later we are shown that although we can intellectually separate good and wisdom and see them as if they were distinct from each other, they are nevertheless completely one. It is this oneness which is explained in the following passage:

DP 10: The Good of love is not good except so far as it is united to the good of love.

The same passage explains how this unity comes about:

DP 10: Good has its origin in the Lord, and likewise truth; for the Lord is Good itself and Truth itself, and these two in Him are one. For this reason good in the angels of heaven and in men on earth is good in itself only so far as it has been united to truth, and truth is only truth in itself only so far as it has been united to good.

This relationship between good and truth is described in the Writings as a "marriage", because of their interconnectedness. This marriage, originating in the Lord, is present in each and everything of creation, including the way the human spirit responds to the Lord, the structure of the mind, and even in the differences between the sexes themselves.

However, because our minds are able to see things independently, for the sake of intellectual thought, one is able to consider the Divine Love on its own, and the Divine Wisdom on its own, as if they were separate things, when in fact they are inseparably one.

When the Lord created He created FROM love, BY MEANS OF wisdom. Thus the two are present in every part of creation. From this, it follows that love and wisdom are also present in every part of the Lord's government of creation. Take note of the examples of Love in Wisdom as given in the following:

DP 3: That the universe, with all things in general and in particular therein, was created from the Divine Love by means of the Divine Wisdom can be confirmed from all things in the world that may be examined by the eye.

The book, Divine Providence, invites people to examine a tree with the most powerful means at their disposal, penetrating more and more deeply into the mysteries of the object. Then, we are told, think from spiritual things, in which case we will see that the tree tends towards reproducing itself, and that the whole of its existence is geared to that end. This is called the "prolific principle":

DP 3: Moreover, if you will reflect deeply enough from the spiritual point of view, you will see that this prolific principle is not from the seed, nor from the sun of this world which is pure fire, but that it is in the seed from God the Creator, to whom belongs infinite Wisdom.

Examine any object in the created universe, with the purpose of finding the Divine Love present in Divine Wisdom there and this will become clear. However, in order to see these things, we need to examine the objects from the point of view of the spiritual things within and not simply according to their external appearance.

The Divine Love and Wisdom proceeding together form a "one"; thus, their form is impressed on all of creation. The unity of love and wisdom, while distinct, is completely whole, and is so because of the distinctions between them. Thus we are told:

DP 4: "...that form makes one more perfectly in proportion as those things which enter into it are distinct from one another and are yet united."

Angels confirmed this by saying:

DP 4: "... the more distinctly [good and truth] are two, the more perfectly can they constitute one..."

The angels themselves are perfect examples of how perfect oneness is made up of a series of different things. Each angel is a unique, individual human being, each reflecting some aspect of the Lord's Divine Love and His Divine Wisdom, and yet groupings of angels form societies, in which the love of the individual angel is perfected by the loves of those around them. In a continuation of this process, groupings of societies form heavens, and heavens kingdoms. Heaven increases in perfection according to the multitude of angels there in their order. From this we can see this principle most clearly: that from a variety of many things one has a perfect oneness.

It is this oneness of the Divine Love and Wisdom, which act together both to create, and to preserve creation. The process of preservation is the Lord's Divine Providence:

@DLW 37: "The Divine Providence in the forming, regenerating, and saving of men, partakes equally of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. From more of Divine Love than of Divine Wisdom, or more of Divine Wisdom than of Divine Love, a person cannot be reformed, regenerated and saved. Divine Love wills

to save all, but it can save only by means of Divine Wisdom; to Divine Wisdom belong all the laws through which salvation is effected; and these laws Love cannot transcend, because Divine Love and Divine Wisdom are one and act in unison."

The entire providence of the Lord, then, is the coming forth into creation, of this love and wisdom from the Lord. A person either receives it, or not, according to his freedom, but no matter what our choice may be, our lives are still governed by this providence.

## **THE DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM EXIST IN FORMS CREATED BY IT**

In the book "Divine Providence", we are clearly shown how the oneness of the Divine Love and Wisdom are reflected in creation. We are told in @TCR 43 that the essence of love is:

"... to love others outside of oneself, to desire to be one with them, and to render them blessed from oneself."

Creation, then, had as its aim the creation of beings, or vessels, which are able to receive the Divine Love in a suitable form, and to be able to respond to that love. The reason for this is given:

@DLW 47: "It is the essential of love not to love self, but to love others, and to be conjoined with others by love. It is the essential of love, moreover, to be loved by others, for thus conjunction is effected. The essence of all love consists in this conjunction; this, in fact, is its life, which is called enjoyment, pleasantness, delight, sweetness, bliss, happiness, and felicity. Love consists in this, that its own should be another's; to feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, that is loving. But to feel one's own joy in another, and not the other's joy in oneself is not loving; for this is loving self, while the former is loving the neighbor."

These essentials of love exist in the Lord. His love is so powerful that He created the universe itself in order to be able to have a vessel suitable to receive His love, not only passively, but responsively, that is able to return that love.

AC 1735: "The Most High, or Inmost, is the Celestial element of Love, or Love itself. Jehovah, or the Lord's internal, was the celestial element itself of love, that is, it was Love itself, to which no other attributes are appropriate than those of pure Love and so pure Mercy towards the whole human race, that Mercy being such that it wills to save all men, to make them eternally happy, and to impart to them all that is its Own - thus out of pure Mercy and by the mighty power of love to draw towards heaven, that is, towards Itself, all who are willing to follow. That Love itself is Jehovah.."

DLW continues with the same idea:

@DLW 49: "With respect to God; it is impossible for Him to love others and to be loved reciprocally by others in whom there is anything of infinity, that is, anything of the essence and life of love in itself, or anything of the divine, for if there were things having in them anything of infinity, that is, of the essence and life of love in itself, that is, of the Divine, it would not be God loved by others, but God

loving Himself; since the Infinite, that is, the Divine, is one only, and if this were in others, Itself would be in them, and would be the love of self Itself; and of that love not the least trace can be possible in God, since it is wholly opposed to the Divine Essence."

Thus in order to satisfy His Divine Love, the Lord created people who are able to receive His Love and to return it to Him.

## **ALL CREATED FORMS ARE RECIPIENTS OF THE DIVINE**

All of creation, then, was created in order to receive the Divine Love and Wisdom:

@DLW 55: "The angelic idea of this is that what is created in God from God, is like that in a person which has been derived from his life, but from which the life has been withdrawn, which is such a nature as to be in accord with his life, and yet it is not his life."

Thus creation, while it can receive God's life, is not God. It is separated from Him to the degree that His life has been withdrawn from the created things. Nevertheless, the reciprocal nature of creation requires that even though the Lord's life has been withdrawn from creation, the created thing must be in such a form that this very life can then flow back into it. In flowing back into the created form, however, the life does not become one with the created form, but remains apart from it, as it continues to belong to the Lord Himself.

@DLW 56: "Every created thing, by virtue of this origin, is such in its nature as to be a recipient of God, not by continuity, but by contiguity."

Thus the Divine Love and Wisdom do not flow directly into the created form (continuity), for if it did this, the power of the Divine would completely take over the nature of the vessel, and the created form would cease to exist as an entity in itself.

Instead the Lord is present as it were next to the vessel (contiguity), and thus flows into it and thus preserves the vessel. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the way the Lord flows into people: He does not flow directly into our bodies (which would be continuity from Himself), for the matter of our bodies could not receive the Divine Presence and maintain its integrity. By the Lord flows into the soul which receives life from the Lord, and then transfers that life to the body. Thus the soul is an intermediary between the Lord and our body. In this way the body is able to continue to exist, and the Lord is present by "contiguity" that is, by being "next" to the body, but not in the body except by means of the soul.

We are shown this reception of life from the Lord clearly in the case of angels who are angels because their bodies have been taught to receive the Lord's presence:

@DLW 57: "From this it is that angels are angels, not from themselves, but by virtue of this conjunction with God-Man; and this conjunction is according to the reception of Divine Good and Divine Truth, which are God, and which seem to proceed from Him, though really they are in Him. This reception is according to their application to themselves of the laws of order, which are Divine truths, in the exercise of that freedom of thinking and willing according to reason, which they possess from the Lord



as if it were their own. By this they have a reception, as from themselves, of Divine Good and of Divine Truth, and by this there is a reciprocation of love..."

Thus in angels the form which receives the inflowing life from the Lord is their ability to apply the laws of order freely. When they do this, they come into a state of order which can then receive the Lord's order within them. Thus a reciprocal relationship is established between the angels and the Lord.

This same principle works for the rest of creation as well (cf. DLW 57e, 58).

## **ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY THE DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM**

It follows from this that since the Lord can only be present in things created by Him, and yet we know that the Lord is present everywhere, that therefore the Lord created all things.

@DLW 52: "So full of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom is the universe in greatest and least, and in first and last things, that it may be said to be Divine Love and Divine Wisdom on an image... Not that the created universe is God-Man, but that it is from Him; for nothing whatever in the created universe is substance and form in itself, or life in itself, or love and wisdom in itself, yea, neither is a person in himself, but all is from God, who is Man, Wisdom and Love, also Form and Substance in itself. That which has Being-in-itself is uncreate and infinite, but whatever is from Very Being, since it contains in it nothing of Being-in-itself, is created and finite, and this exhibits an image of Him from whom it has being and has form."

This concept is captured in the Psalm:

"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters" (Psalms 24:1, 2).

## **THE SPIRITUAL SUN**

Before the Lord could create the natural universe, He had to create a first finite substance, which could mediate his presence to mankind. In a sense He had to create a universal "soul" which would be act for the rest of creation as our soul acts for us. Thus He had to create a substance which on the one hand could receive His Divine presence, and on the other could communicate this divine presence without it being fully present in the created things.

This first substance was really the first "finiting of the infinite," or the first substance from which the infinite had been withdrawn. As such it was no longer infinite, no longer continuous with the Lord, but now limited and finited, "separated" from the Lord. By means of this first substance the Lord could be present in all things:

DP 5: "... the Divine is in every created thing, because God the Creator, who is the Lord from eternity, produced from himself the Sun of the spiritual world, and through that Sun all things in the universe;

consequently, that that Sun, which is from the Lord and in which the Lord is, is not only the first substance but is also the one substance from which all things are; and because it is the one only substance it follows that this substance is in every created thing, but with infinite variety according to the uses of each."

The spiritual sun, then, is the first proceeding of the Divine Love and Wisdom:

@DLW 151: "The Lord created the universe and all things of it by means of the sun which is the first proceeding of Divine Love and Wisdom."

The book, Divine Love and Wisdom, challenges us to think of creation arising from any other source. Even if we turn to our physical universe, we find that suns were the first things from which planets were subsequently created. Initially planets themselves were hot, burning, balls of fire, miniature suns in their own right. Once they began to cool off, various life forms were formed. Creation, both spiritual and natural, then seems to begin in fire and heat:

@DLW 152: "No one who is capable of seeing effects from causes, and afterwards causes from effects in their order and sequence, can deny that the sun is the first of creation, for all the things that are in its world have perpetual existence from it, their existence is derived from it... The sun is spoken of as creating, but this means the Lord, by means of the sun; for the sun was also created by the Lord."

We can see the truth of this from our own world: the sun was indeed created first, and from that planets, upon which the Lord gradually evolved life until life receptive of Him could respond directly to Him (for the most recent thoughts on evolution, cf. TIME MAGAZINE, October 11, 1993). We need, however, to be able to work backwards from effects to causes, and back to the causes of causes. Thus it follows that our natural sun is merely a creation on the natural plane of a corresponding creation on the spiritual plane:

@DLW 153: "There are two suns through which all things were created by the Lord, the sun of the spiritual world and the sun of the natural world. The Lord created all things by the sun of the natural world, since the latter is far below the former; it is in middle distance; above it is the spiritual world and below it is the natural world. This sun of the natural world was created to render aid, as kind of substitute..."

@DLW 296: "There are in the Lord three things that are the Lord, the Divine of Love, the Divine of Wisdom, and the Divine of Use; and these three are presented in appearance outside of the sun of the spiritual world, the Divine of love by heat, the Divine of wisdom by light, and the Divine of use by the atmosphere which is their containent."

The sun of the spiritual world is the medium by which the Lord created the universe:

@DLW 154: "...because that sun is the first proceeding of Divine Love and Wisdom, and from Divine Love and Divine Wisdom all things are."

Thus the spiritual sun conveys, by correspondences, the things of Divine Love and Wisdom, and through the correspondences, it creates forms, which can receive the Divine. It is important, however, to keep firmly in mind that the Spiritual Sun is not the Lord Himself:

@DLW 93: "The sun of the spiritual world is not God, but is a proceeding from the Divine Love and Divine Wisdom of God-Man; so also are the heat and light from that sun."

And later on we are warned:

@DLW 97: "Let everyone beware of thinking that the sun of the spiritual world is God Himself. God Himself is a Man. The first proceeding from His Love and Wisdom is that fiery spiritual [substance] which appears before the angels as a sun. Where, therefore, the Lord manifests Himself to the angels in person, He manifests Himself as a Man; and this sometimes in the sun, sometimes outside of it."

## SPIRITUAL HEAT AND LIGHT

The Lord created the Spiritual Sun first because the sun carries His love and wisdom onto lower places of creation, much as our soul carries His life into our minds and bodies.

@DLW 86: "That sun is not the Lord Himself, but is from the Lord. It is the Divine Love and Divine Wisdom proceeding from Him that appears as a sun in that [spiritual] world. And because Love and Wisdom in the Lord are one, that sun is said to be Divine Love; for Divine Wisdom is of Divine Love, consequently is Love."

To angels the spiritual sun appears the same as our natural sun appears to us:

@DLW 87: "Since love and fire mutually correspond, that sun appears before the eyes of the angels as fiery; for angels cannot see love with their eyes, but they see in place of love what corresponds to it."

Thus when angels see the spiritual sun, they think of the Lord, and He appears to them in this sun:

HH 117: "In heaven the Lord is seen as a sun, for the reason that He is Divine Love, from which all spiritual things, and by means of the sun of the world all natural things, have their existence. That love is what shines as a sun."

Thus when angels see the spiritual sun, they think of the Lord, and He appears to them in this sun:

@DLW 89: "In the spiritual world where angels and spirits are there are heat and light, just as in the natural world where men are; moreover in like manner as heat, the heat is felt and the light is seen as light. Still the heat and light of the spiritual world and of the natural world are so entirely different as to have nothing in common. They differ one from the other as what is alive differs from what is dead. The heat of the spiritual world in itself is alive; so is the light; but the heat of the natural world in itself is dead; so is its light. For the heat and light of the spiritual world go forth from a sun that is pure love, while the heat and light of the natural world go forth from a sun that is pure fire; and love is alive, and the Divine Love is Life itself; while fire is dead, and solar fire is death itself, and may be so called because it has nothing whatever of life in it."

@DLW 91: "Such being the difference between the heat and light of the two worlds, it is very evident why those who are in the one world cannot see those who are in the other world. For the eyes of a person, who sees from natural light are of the substance of his world, and the eyes of an angel are of

the substance of his world; thus in both cases they are formed for the proper reception of their own light."

## THE DIVINE ATMOSPHERE

The heat and light of the spiritual sun are carried forth by "the Divine of Use", or the sphere of use proceeding from the Lord. This sphere of use performs the same functions as atmospheres do in this world, for we need atmospheres to carry the heat and light of the natural sun.

@DLW 299: "Now since these three, love, wisdom and use, are in the Lord, and are the Lord, and since the Lord is everywhere, for He is omnipresent; and since the Lord cannot make Himself present, such as He is in Himself and such as He is in His own sun, to any angel or a person, He therefore presents Himself by means of such things as can be received, presenting Himself, as to love by heat, as to wisdom by light, and as to use by an atmosphere. The Lord presents Himself as to use by an atmosphere, because an atmosphere is a containent of heat and light, as use is the containent of love and wisdom. For heat and light going forth in nothing, that is, in vacuum, but must go forth in a containent which is a subject. This containent we call atmosphere; and this encompasses the sun, receiving the sun in its bosom, and bearing it to heaven where angels are, and then to the world where men are, thus making the Lord's presence everywhere manifest."

### HOW WAS THE UNIVERSE CREATED?

This lecture is not the place to go into a long description of how the universe was created by means of the spiritual sun. That process is described in the work Divine Love and Wisdom. However, it would be useful to examine a very short article on the subject:

"God created the universe by pouring out divine substance from Himself, and then, in some mysterious way we cannot understand, withdrawing Himself from it, until it became dead matter, separate entirely from Himself, and therefore finite. This might be explained in mathematical terms by saying, "Infinity divided by infinity equals any finite number, or all finite numbers."

"If this proposition is correct, then it could represent the "big bang" which exploded into stars, planets, oceans, forests, fertile lands, the whole tremendous universe!"

"We are on firm ground when we assert that creation started with dead matter, of the lowest and most inert degree - grasses, water, rocks, minerals etc. God then fashioned these into forms capable of receiving life on a higher level: first the vegetable kingdom; then, from the animal kingdom which is sustained by the vegetable kingdom; then, from the animal kingdom, Man. Somehow at this stage a "soul" must have been implanted, but when exactly this was done, and how (perhaps by a virgin birth?) we cannot tell, because we are part of the process. WE know that love was the driving force, and that wisdom was the controlling factor. Divine love set the process going, and Divine Wisdom planned the action. And when you have love and wisdom working together, then you have power" (Kingslake 1992:31).

# THUS DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM ARE REFLECTED IN ALL THINGS

Because the Lord is Divine Love, expressed through Divine truth, and because His impress is on the whole of creation, all things in creation are reflections of the Lord Himself. However, as we have seen, the Divine Love and Divine Wisdom are "distinctly one," meaning that they may appear to be separate and different. It follows then that there are some things, which receive more of the Divine Love than of the Divine Wisdom, and vice versa.

The primary focus of creation, however, is the human being, because people can respond to the Lord. Their minds are able to take the Divine Life flowing into the soul, and to use it to lift them out of the animal-like degree of life into a higher level of thought and response. Thus, the human being is capable of rational thought, of directed emotions and of decisive actions - which animals are not capable of.

Thus in the first chapter of Divine Providence, we see the focus of creation shifting from its universal approach given in Divine Love and Wisdom, and centering on the human race.

## THE PARALLEL WITH WILL AND UNDERSTANDING

The first parallel Divine Providence draws between creation in general and mankind in particular is that of will and understanding. All things were made FROM Divine Love, BY MEANS of the Divine Wisdom. The interrelationship of these has been described above, and yet it exists fully in the human mind.

DP 11: "All willing is of love, and has relation to good; and all knowing, perceiving, and thinking are of the understanding, and have relation to truth. From this it is clear that to will has no reality, but to will this or that has reality."

Thus, the human mind is the arena in which the finite marriage of good and truth takes place.

DP 12: "There is a marriage in everything that a person wills and thinks, and in his consequent conclusions and purposes... For instance, when a person wills and thinks about being fed, clothed, having a dwelling place, conducting any business, performing any work, or engaging in social intercourse, he first wills and thinks about these things, or forms his conclusions and purposes, simultaneously; but when he has reduced into effects what he has willed and thought, the one follows after the other; nevertheless they continue to make one in his will and thought."

There is no area in our lives where we are able to think without willing, or to will without thinking. It is possible to think about things that are distasteful, but in order to entertain those thoughts, even if it is only out of curiosity, or in order to judge them, there still has to be a willingness to entertain those thoughts.

In a similar way, willingness must express itself in thought, for that is the only way that our inner feelings can come to our consciousness. Thus the two are as interconnected in us as love and wisdom in the Lord, or as the heat and light of the spiritual sun.

# THE AIM OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

All of creation then is from the Lord. However, creation must be sustained. The Lord must control it Himself. This controlling process, or government, is the Divine Providence.

We are told in Genesis

Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

This image is implanted in all things of creation because all creation is from the Lord. The image of the Lord in a person relates to the a person's will, and the likeness of the Lord is in our understanding. But the Lord is ONE, and the Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, although intellectually distinct, are nevertheless one in operation and in life. Thus mankind was created to reflect this oneness from the Lord.

The difference between the Lord and us however, is that while Love and Wisdom are distinctly one, in humans the will and understanding are separated, divided from each other. In order to understand this, we must remember that while thought is always from the will, we have two wills, one from inherited evil, one from the remains, or states of good and truth implanted in us by the Lord.

The aim of the Lord's providence, however, is to provide a vessel which can receive His presence and which, through a response to Him, be brought into a state of heaven. In order to bring this about, the human mind needs to be one. Thus:

DP 16: "The Lord does not suffer that anything should be divided; therefore it must be either in good and at the same time in truth, or in evil and at the same time in falsity."

The Laws of Divine Providence all work towards the end of bringing a person into a union of good and in the will and truth in the understanding, although the Lord allows people the freedom to form a hellish marriage in their minds between evil and falsity.

DP 17: "After death, however, every one comes into one union or the other, because he can no longer be reformed or regenerated; he then remains such as his life, that is, such as his ruling love has been in the world."

We have to make this marriage in our minds, because good has no reality unless it is conjoined to truth, nor truth unless it is conjoined with good. Thus no matter how much we INTEND to do good, that good does not actually exist until we do it. Our lives then create within us a reality of either good or evil.

DP 21: "From what has been said it maybe evident that the Divine Providence of the Lord is continually operating to unite truth to good and good to truth in a person, because this union is the Church, and is also heaven, for this union is in the Lord and in all things that proceed from Him. It is from this union that heaven is called a marriage, as also is the Church..."

# Lecture Two - The Aim of Creation

## INTRODUCTION

When the Lord created, He created for a specific reason: to create people who could respond to Him, who could receive His love and return it to Himself. To understand this, we need to have an understanding of the nature of the Lord's love. In the work, Divine Love and Wisdom, this love is called spiritual love, and is defined in the following way:

"... spiritual love is such that it wishes to give its own to another; and so far as it can do this it is in its being (esse), in its peace, and in its blessedness."

Thus in the Lord's love we see the elements of creation. His love is the essence of spiritual love: He wished to give of Himself to someone outside of Himself, to bring His peace and blessedness to the whole of creation. In TCR we read a similar passage:

"It is the essence of love to love others outside of oneself, to desire to be one with them, and to render them blessed from oneself" (@TCR 43).

The same concept is repeated in the Divine Love and Wisdom:

"It is the essential of love not to love self, but to love others, and to be conjoined with others by love. It is the essential of love, moreover, to be loved by others, for thus conjunction is effected" (@DLW 47).

In these passages we are shown that the Lord's love, which is His esse or very being, strove to come out into action. The activity of love, which is truth, is the creative force within the entire universe. But the Lord's love needed an object that could receive it as if it were from a separate source. The Lord therefore created people to appear to be separated from Him. Thus in @TCR 43, we are told that the essence of love is "to love others outside of oneself." But one only loves others outside of oneself if one can be conjoined with them and make them happy from oneself.

Conjunction with the Lord, therefore, is the very essence of the whole creation:

"The essence of all love consists in conjunction; this, in fact, is its life, which is called enjoyment, pleasantness, delight, sweetness, bliss, happiness and felicity. Love consists in this, that its own should be another's; to feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, that is loving" (@DLW 47).

This love then, is what caused the Lord to create the human race. He created mankind to be vessels that could receive His love. But He also created them with freedom to reject His love if they so choose.

For this reason He created mankind into His own image and likeness - able to love or not to love, according to their own choice. His aim, or end in creation was a state of conjunction with Himself, a heaven from the human race. In this chapter of Divine Providence, we are shown how the Lord brings that conjunction about.

These ideas may initially sound strange to those who are not familiar with New Church doctrine. No

other church believes that heaven is from the human race:

"In the Christian world it is wholly unknown that heaven and hell are from the human race..." (@HH 311)

Most people believe that angels are a completely separate creation from ordinary people populate heaven. These angels are often seen as being between the Lord and people. Those who believe in a separate creation of angels also believe that when we die we stay in our graves until judgment day, whereupon we are resurrected and our earthly bodies are restored. Those who are good continue to live on this earth forever.

But this belief springs from a false understanding of the Lord's purpose for creation: The Lord created mankind specifically to become angels, so that we can be conjoined with Him and He with us. In DP we read:

"Both heaven and hell are from the human race - heaven from those who are in the love and good and from this in the understanding of truth, and hell from those who are in the love of evil and from this in the understanding of falsity..." (@DP 27)

In a later lecture we will see how the Lord allows people to choose between good and evil. But at this moment it is enough to say that the Lord:

"...did not create the universe for His own sake, but for the sake of those with whom He will be in heaven..." (@DP 27)

The Writings stress that everyone who loves good and does it will go to heaven. We are told that heaven consists of everyone from the beginning of this earth who have lived well, and this number includes all the children who have died before they reach maturity (Cf. @HH 415, 416).

## DEFINITION OF HEAVEN

It is at this point that we begin to see something of the reason for the Lord's creation. Compare the difference between two books of the Doctrine: in Heaven and Hell heaven is described in great detail. We are taught about the way angels live, what their homes, clothes, and so on are like. We are told about the sun of heaven, about the quarters in heaven, about kingdoms and societies.

But in Divine Providence heaven is portrayed in a completely different way, a way that deals with the essential inner things of heaven rather than with the outer things. In this latter work heaven is defined more as a state of being, from which one expects the description given in Heaven and Hell will flow.

There is a real importance to knowing both things about heaven: we need to know what to expect to happen to us when we die. This expectation is often the prod that stirs us to turn aside from evil and follow the path of regeneration. But in order to follow that path, we have to have an understanding of what the inner relationship between the Lord and ourselves is like. In the Gospel the Lord says:

"... the kingdom of heaven is within you" (Luke 17:21).



It is this point that the book Divine Providence develops in this chapter the idea that we are created by the Lord in order to populate His kingdom, not a kingdom similar to an earthly country, but a kingdom which is based on our relationship with the Lord Himself.

Because heaven is within us, it follows that we enter it through the life of regeneration in this world:

"Those who have heaven in them desire the good of all, and feel delight in benefiting others, not for the sake of themselves and the world, but for the sake of the good, and for the sake of truth, which is to be done. But those who have hell in them desire evil to all, and feel delight in doing evil to others. If these feel delight in benefiting others, it is not for the sake of what is good and true, but for the sake of themselves and the world" (@AC 10718).

The chapter of Divine Providence under study here deals with heaven in terms of a person's conjunction with the Lord. The Oxford Dictionary defines "conjunction" as making a single one or whole out of two or more things. This concept is of central importance to understanding the state of heaven within people, and from that understanding the goal or end of creation.

## CONJUNCTION WITH THE LORD

Heaven, we are told in Divine Providence, is heaven from the Lord:

"... for the love and wisdom in which the angels are and which constitute heaven are not from the angels, but from the Lord, and are, in fact, the Lord in them" (@DP 28).

This means that the Lord is heaven, and people are in heaven to the degree that they receive the Lord's love. This concept is taught in many places in the Doctrines:

"The Divine of the Lord makes the heavens, and heaven is with everyone according to his reception of love and of faith from the Lord" (@AC 10717).

"Nevertheless, regarded in themselves, the men themselves do not constitute the church, but the Lord in them; and so neither do angels regarded in themselves constitute heaven, but the Lord in them. For the Lord does not dwell in anything of the person's or angel's own; but in His own with them; hence it is that when the church and heaven are spoken of, the Divine of the Lord is meant with those who are there, from which it is plain how it ought to be apprehended that the Lord is to all in all of heaven and the church, and that the Lord Himself is heaven and the church" (@AC 10125).

"Be it known that whatever represented the Lord Himself (in the Word) also represented by heaven, for the Divine that proceeds from the Lord, when received by the angels makes heaven. Thus in respect to what is their own the angels themselves do not make heaven; but in respect to the Divine which they receive from the Lord. That this is so can be seen from the fact that each one of them there acknowledges, believes, and also perceives, that there is nothing of good from himself, but only from the Lord; and that whatever is from him is not good... As this is so, it follows that it is the Divine of the Lord which maketh heavenly life with them, consequently heaven" (@AC 10151).

In these and many other passages of the Heavenly Doctrines, the teaching is affirmed that heaven

consists of a relationship between a person and the Lord. In this relationship a person recognizes, "acknowledges, believes and perceives" that of himself he is nothing and that the Lord is every thing. When a person comes into this state, he is completely open to the Lord's presence, and heaven is firmly established within him.

In Divine Providence this relationship is defined as a "conjunction" between the Lord and a person (@DP 28). The conjunction comes about as the person puts aside the evils of his own proprium and learns the love and wisdom of the Lord.

"The angels themselves confess that they live from the Lord; hence it may be evident that heaven is conjunction with the Lord" (@DP 28).

Conjunction, therefore, is a relationship in which the person receives love and faith from the Lord and returns it. This return is called "reciprocation", and therefore in order for conjunction to be effective, a person must reciprocate the Lord's presence:

"...all conjunction need reciprocity, whereby there is a consent on both sides" (@AC 6047).

In Divine Providence 28 we are given a model of reciprocal conjunction in terms of love conjoining itself to wisdom by means of and affection for knowing. When a person wants to know, then that desire is joined with an affection for truth, for what is the point of knowing anything if it is not the truth? The person who has this desire, then, to know the truth, acts upon that desire, and searches for an understanding of the truth. The more he knows, the more he wants to understand, and the more he is able to gain a perception of the truth itself. This perception, or the ability to see the truth in the things learned, feeds the affection to the point where he learns the truth, which then becomes a part of his way of thinking - in essence it becomes a part of himself, and he is changed by the experience. But remember that both the affection and the truth come from the Lord. Thus the person's affection for truth is actually an affection stimulated by the Lord, it is the Lord's presence in a person. Similarly, the understanding and perception of truth is also the Lord's presence in a person. Thus it seems as if it is we who conjoin ourselves to the Lord, but this is only an appearance of truth. The reality is that:

"... it is in fact the Lord who conjoins them to Himself by wisdom" (@DP 28).

In the @AC 6047 we are given an outline of how people are led by affection from truth to a perception of that truth, and wishes to be conjoined to the Lord:

"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 ... When this is done from the affection of truth, then the person is enlightened by the Lord so as to perceive, without knowing whence, what is true; and he confirmed therein in accordance with the good in which he is..." (@AC 6047)

Thus the Lord, according to a set principle forms heaven within us. We feel, in this world as if we are the originators of this conjunction, as if we turn to the Lord and He responds to us. This, however, is an illusion, for the Lord is constantly, and by every means at His disposal, drawing us to Himself, and our proper response is to respond affirmatively to His drawing.

"From this it is clear that the reciprocal conjunction of angels with the Lord is not from the angels, but only seems to be from them. Such also is the conjunction of the Lord with the Church..." (@DP 28[e])

Conjunction of angels and men with the Lord, then is the vital component of heaven. Without a reciprocal conjunction, there would be no heaven and no church. It follows from this that the whole of heaven is created in such a way to preserve and enhance that conjunction, so that the angels of heaven, who are continually being perfected, are, in that perfection, receiving the Divine Love and wisdom more and more, and in turn reflecting it more in their own lives.

To explain how people in heaven are continually perfected, the book Divine Providence concentrates on two things: the way in which this conjunction is communicated between the Lord and the angels, and secondly, how the angels themselves are perfected.

## CONJUNCTION IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

Divine Providence introduces the concept of how conjunction is attained in the Spiritual World in the following passage. It is important because it gives us an insight into the mechanics of the Spiritual World:

"All conjunction in the spiritual world is effected by means of looking. When anyone there is thinking of another from a desire to speak with him, the other immediately becomes present, and they see each other face to face" (@DP 29).

This system of communicating is common in heaven:

"For it is a common occurrence in heaven for persons to appear to be present in a place where their look is fixed or terminated, even when this place is far away from where they really are. This presence is called the presence of the internal sight..." (@HH 121)

In the spiritual world angels and spirits are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings in this way. To some degree we do this in this world as well: we picture the qualities and even the appearance of a person about whom we are thinking, or we look intently at a person with whom we are speaking. It is hard to speak to a person who doesn't look one in the eye. So we also rely to some degree on communication by look. But we are considerably limited compared to spiritual communication.

When the Lord communicates with spirits He fixes "His look" upon them. Thus He focuses His Love and Wisdom on that particular individual. This is really an appearance, for the Lord's love and wisdom is constant for all people, just as the sun sends its light and heat consistently on all people. But the reality is that the Lord communicates with those people who are willing to receive His presence. For those people it is as if they had turned themselves to the Lord, and opened their minds to Him. When this happens, it seems as though the Lord is more closely present.

"For all angels turn their face towards the Lord, and the Lord looks upon their forehead, because the forehead corresponds to love... while angels direct their eyes towards the Lord, because eyes correspond to wisdom and its perception" (@DP 29).

Thus conjunction between angels and the Lord is a matter of sharing love and wisdom, or, in other words, of the angels receiving the Lord's love and returning it to Him, making the union between Him and them reciprocal. This relationship of reciprocity was designed by the Lord to bring joy and peace to the individual angel as they receive His presence.

PEOPLE ARE CREATED TO BE MORE AND MORE CONJOINED WITH THE LORD (@DP 32).

One of the most wonderful teachings in the Doctrines is that this relationship between the Lord and a person, created by the Lord for our benefit is continuing and leads to a closer and closer relationship with the Lord. The bond of love is never static, the human being, both in this world and in the next, is in a continual process of perfection by the Lord.

The means by which this perfection takes place lies in the structure of the mind. As modern psychologists can tell us, the human mind is a wonderfully complex thing, and they are only dealing with the last degree of our minds.

The Writings describe the mind in terms of heaven. This description is important, because heaven really exists within our minds. Remember the Lord's words: "the kingdom of heaven is within you." Thus heaven is formed within our minds, within the things we love and think, within our thoughts and intentions. From this it follows that our minds are an image of heaven:

"The interiors of a person, which belong to his mind and disposition, are also in like order (i.e. the order of the three heavens see @HH 29). He has an inmost, a middle, and an outmost part; for when a person was created all things of Divine order were brought together in him, that he became Divine order in form, and consequently a heaven in miniature" (@HH 30).

A footnote to the above-quoted passage gives a list of other passages in the Arcana Coelestia which elaborate on the teaching that as to our minds we are miniature heavens, see this footnote as it is important.

This concept of our minds as miniature heavens is important. When the Lord created mankind, He created us in such a way that once we begin the process of being conjoined with Him, we continue in that process to eternity. There is no point at which we can say "I am perfect."

To explain how we are conjoined to the Lord in an ever-increasing perception, Divine Providence explains that the mind is created in three discrete degrees corresponding with the degrees of heaven.

Students are directed to the work of Divine Love and Wisdom #173 to 281 for an important explanation of the concept of degrees. As this information is too long to be included in these notes, we simply outline the basics concerning them:

"The things which follow cannot be comprehended unless it be known that there are degrees, also what they are, and what their nature is, because in every created thing, thus in every form there are degrees" (@DLW 179).

"A knowledge of degrees is like a key to lay open the causes of things, and to give entrance into them. Without this knowledge, scarcely anything of cause can be known; for without it the objects of both

worlds seem to have but a single meaning, as if there were nothing in them beyond that which meets the eye; when yet compared to the things which lie hidden within, what is thus seen is as one to thousands, yea, to tens of thousands" (@DLW 184).

This point is especially true in the subject under discussion here: DP 32, points out that the way people are conjoined to the Lord forever is by means of the degrees of the mind. We have to understand how these degrees are going to function if we are to have any idea of how the Lord creates the reciprocal relationship within us. It needs to be clearly understood that there are two different kinds of degrees:

"'Continuous' degrees is a term applied to the gradual lessening or decreasing from grosser to finer, or from denser to rarer; or rather, to growths and increasing from finer to grosser, or from rarer to denser; precisely like the graduations of light to shade, or of heat to cold" (@DLW 184).

Thus a continuous degree would be the variation from cold to hot, or the change in light from brilliant afternoon sun to evening twilight. The main point of continuous degrees is that the subject under discussion does not change but varies.

The case is quite different with discrete degrees:

"But discrete degrees are called discrete because the prior is by itself, the subsequent by itself; and the final end by itself; and yet taken together they make a one" (@DLW 184).

One way to describe discrete degrees is to describe the change in feeling to a thought to an action. Say, for example a person has a desire for something. The feeling or desire exists within itself. But, in order to come into being, the desire is clothed in thought, so a person thinks about the feeling. Note here, however, that feeling becomes thought, the two are actually one, even though they are distinct. Then, when the thought is acted on, and becomes a spoken or written word, then both the feeling and the thought are present in the word, but the word is nevertheless separated from them.

This concept is important in New Church doctrine, because, as we have seen above, everything has three degrees of height (or discrete degrees within them).

When the Lord created people, He created them with the intention that they should, by being conjoined with Him, become angels of heaven. In order to conjoin people to Himself, He made their minds able to receive His presence at the level of life they choose, and then to continue to receive it more and more perfectly at that level. Thus in @DP 32 we read:

"These degrees are in every one from birth, and as they are opened, the person is in the Lord and the Lord is in him."

The same passage then goes on to describe how these degrees are opened in us. Study this passage carefully, and note the following:-

- When a person is born he or she is born into the first (or outer) degree. This is the level of our consciousness in this world. Other places in the Writings describe this degree of the mind as having three levels: the level which receives data from the senses, the level which creates images from these sensual things, and finally the rational level, which judges the "goodness" or "badness" of the

lower levels. Ideally the rational is formed from the truths a person has learned from the Lord.

We live in this degree while we are alive in this world, and while it is possible for us to come stuck at either of the two lower levels, it is ideal for us to become rational. Thus @DP 32 states that people may "increase this degree in himself by continuous process until he becomes rational." (The mind and its degrees are studied more fully in the third year under the subject of the mind.)

- Even though we live in the natural degree of the mind in this world, we are not designed to live at that level to eternity. The natural level, being tied as it is to sensual data from the world around us really only forms a foundation for the higher, more spiritual degrees of our minds, which are opened after death. A person comes into the second degree after death "if he lives according to the spiritual laws of order which are the principles of Divine Truth" (@DP 32).

In a similar way, the person comes into the third degree, also after death, "if he lives according to the celestial laws of order, which are principles of Divine good" (@DP 32).

Thus we see the way in which our mind reflects heaven, and is opened according to the order of heaven; inmost is a celestial degree, related to the Lord's Divine love and which is opened after death if we live in accordance with His laws of love, the primary of which is to love the Lord Himself. Notice how this love is in agreement with the first of the great commandments:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart..."

The celestial degree, however, is quite different from the spiritual, which reflects the laws of the Lord's Wisdom. Central to these laws is the second great commandment:

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

On these two laws, the Lord says, hang all the Laws and the Prophets, and so also hang our entire spiritual life. They are present in all people, but are not active until by our life in this world we make them so. These degrees are opened according to a person's life in this world, and are perfected in heaven:

"As they are open and afterwards perfected, a person is more and more nearly conjoined to the Lord" (@DP 32).

Our state of conjunction with the Lord, and consequently the state of heaven within us is determined by how opened these two levels are in us. While we are in this world, and are concerned with the matter of daily survival, we are not conscious of these two inner degrees,

"... because it is an earthly body, and in that body its spiritual mind thinks naturally. But it is otherwise when the mind is loosed from the bonds of that body; then it no longer thinks naturally, but spiritually..." (@HH 314)

Our mind, then, is especially designed for the increase of our conjunction with the Lord. While we live in this world, if we seek the Lord, and try to live our lives according to the teachings He gives us, and to shun evil as sins against us, so He is able to open our inner degrees. As these degrees are opened,

unconsciously in this world, consciously in the next, the Lord then "fixes His look" on us, and we, because our life is in agreement with His receive that look, and the bond is established.

It is important to note at this point, that conjunction with the Lord takes place on a deeper plane than that of simple knowledge. Conjunction really takes place on the plane of charity, rather than that of faith. We can see this from experience: it doesn't matter what we know about ANY subject, but what we do with that knowledge. The same is true with spiritual matters as well.

Thus we are told:

"A person is more and more nearly conjoined to the Lord, not by knowledge alone, nor by intelligence alone, nor even by wisdom alone, but by a life conjoined to these" (@DP 33).

The life of knowledge, intelligence and wisdom does not conjoin a person to the Lord because these things belong to the understanding, which can be led either by hereditary evil or by the new will. Thus a person can be in great knowledge, intelligence and even in wisdom without actually being regenerate at all (see @DP 222). The spiritually determining part of a person's life, therefore, is his will, which receives the Lord's life and transmits that to the understanding. This will must be purified of evil.

"Hence it is evident that so far as one shuns evils of the devil and as obstacles to the Lord's entrance, he is more and more nearly conjoined to the Lord..." (@DP 33)

This same passage, @DP 33 continues to state that:

"The more fully evils in the natural man are removed by shunning and turning away from them, the more nearly is the person conjoined to the Lord."

In the activity of shunning evils as sins against the Lord, one sees a person's side of the reciprocal conjunction with the Lord. Consider that the Lord, by means of remains, the Word and His presence inspires us in this world to shun evil. We respond to this by actually turning away from evil, thus in essence we receive the Lord's presence into our lives. In this world this process takes place on the natural or conscious degree, and we are perfected in that degree by becoming increasingly rational. After death we are then led into consciousness of one of the two levels, in which we are then perfected to eternity. Thus the Lord's end, which is a heaven from the human race finds its fulfillment.

"THE MORE NEARLY A PERSON IS CONJOINED TO THE LORD, THE WISER HE BECOMES" (@DP 34).

The result of this closer conjunction with the Lord is an increased state of perfection. As the degrees of the mind are opened, so the person becomes wiser. A person's wisdom, therefore, is proportional to the level of his mind opened by regeneration:

"There are three degrees of wisdom, the natural, the spiritual and the celestial. A person is in the natural degree of wisdom while he lives in this world" (@DP 34[2]).

The concept of discrete degrees discussed in @DLW 179 - 281 is that one degree does not BECOME the next degree by perfection. They remain forever separate, and yet in their perfection refer more and

more closely to each other. Consider an analogy of a person who has a wonderful vocabulary to describe his thoughts - his words may give a picture of the thoughts and feelings he has, but they remain forever a description, they never become the thoughts and feelings themselves.

This principle holds true for the structure of the mind and the way in which it is conjoined to the Lord. We are told that the natural degree of the mind can be opened and developed during our life in this world, but it does not BECOME the spiritual degree:

"...because the spiritual degree is not an extension of the natural degree by continuity, but is conjoined to it by correspondences..." (@DP 34[2])

It follows, therefore, that a person enters the celestial or spiritual degree after death (@DP 34[2]). Thus wisdom is a result not of an accumulation of knowledge, but of the light and heat of the higher degrees upon those knowledge. As a person is regenerated so these higher degrees imperceptibly affect his knowledge, and he becomes wise:

"But let no one believe that a person has wisdom because he knows many things, and perceives them in a certain light, and can talk about them intelligently, unless that wisdom is conjoined with love" (@DP 35).

In other words, wisdom is the interplay of knowledge and love. The Writings use this concept in many places, for example, faith must be conjoined with charity in order to be real. Wisdom, then, is the result of a person's receiving the Lord's presence in life, actually in the activity of life. The more closely a person is conjoined with the Lord, the more the Lord stirs his love, and the more he or she is able to perceive the things of knowledge in the presence of that love:

"The wisdom that comes to perception is a perception of truth from an affection for it, especially a perception of spiritual truth" (@DP 36).

The person who is being regenerated and who is thus entering into the sphere of the Lord sees truths as they pertain to life: this is the perception he has from the affection for truth.

"THE MORE NEARLY A PERSON IS CONJOINED TO THE LORD, THE HAPPIER HE BECOMES" (@DP 37)

Conjunction with the Lord bringing wisdom, brings with it also happiness. These two go together, one affecting the understanding of a person, the other his will, or affection. Happiness is a result of conjunction with the Lord because as a person is regenerated so his mind is opened and receives the Lord's presence.

"For happiness, or states of blessedness and joy, become more and more exalted as the higher degrees of the mind, which are called spiritual and celestial, are opened in a person, and after his life in this world, these degrees continue to develop to eternity" (@DP 37).

In one sense happiness is the ultimate goal of all creation: if the Lord created mankind in order to populate His heavens, it follows that He created mankind in order to be happy. Heaven is, by definition, a state of happiness, blessedness and peace. In @TCR 43 the essence of the Lord's love is described as to render creation blessed from Himself, and this state of happiness exists in heaven.



As people are more and more closely conjoined to the Lord, so their sense of happiness increases:

"For happiness, or states of blessedness and joy, become more exalted as the higher degrees the mind, which are called the spiritual and celestial, are opened in a person, and after his life in this world, these degrees continue to develop to eternity" (@DP 37).

A person comes into true happiness as the delight of evil is removed. People in evil loves are happy, but their happiness is not heavenly. In fact, it is a form of misery which evil spirits define as happiness.

All happiness is from love (@DP 38), but only truly heavenly loves produce true happiness. There is a vast difference between these two kinds of happinesses, but notice the following passage:

"The delights of the lusts of evil and the delights of the affection of good cannot be compared" (@DP 40).

The truth of this statement is obvious in these two examples from the Writings:

"...heavenly love is such that it wishes what is its own to be another's; consequently no one in heaven perceives his own good in himself to be good unless it is also in another; and this is the source of happiness in heaven" (@HH 268).

Swedenborg once asked evil spirits what their delight was. They replied:

"... it is the delight of committing adultery, stealing, defrauding and telling lies. Again, I asked, what are these delights like? They replied, they are perceived by others as offensive odors from excrement, and as the putrid smell from dead bodies, and as the reeking stench from stagnant urine pools..." (@DP 340 supp)

By comparing just these two passages, and there are many, many more in the Writings which even more graphically point out the difference between heaven and hell, we are shown that happiness and delight comes from love. That which a person loves will be delightful to him. For this reason, heaven, which is loved by the angels there is most delightful to them. Evil spirits perceive a delight in their evil loves, but that delight is not true delight, for it inward oriented, looking away from the Lord who is the true source of all happiness. Thus we are told that:

"... the more nearly anyone is conjoined to the Lord, the happier he becomes..." (@DP 41)

It is pointed out in @DP 41 that this heavenly happiness is "rarely manifested" in the world, but becomes so when a person passes into the next world. For more information on this subject read @HH 395 to 414 on the subject of Heavenly Joy and happiness.

## FREEDOM

Because the Lord created people in order to populate His heavens, and in order that this goal may be realized, He created us with a mind in the heavenly form with the ability to increase in wisdom and happiness, it follows that He also created people to be free. Human freedom in spiritual matters is the pivot upon which our entire conjunction with the Lord is built. As this course progresses, we will

spend a great deal of time discussing the issue of freedom. At the moment, however, it is sufficient to point out that there are two kinds of freedom:

- Heavenly freedom, which is our freedom to choose to follow the Lord and be conjoined with Him. It is the exercise of this freedom which leads us into conjunction with the Lord, and so into wisdom and happiness.
- Opposite to this heavenly freedom is our freedom to choose the evil and selfish things to which we incline from hereditary. This freedom is that of hell, and ultimately leads us away from the Lord, away from happiness and away from wisdom.

During a life of regeneration, which ultimately leads one into conjunction with the Lord, people act from heavenly freedom. The more closely a person is conjoined to the Lord, the "more distinctly does appear to be the master of himself" (@DP 42).

When we act in freedom, our life seems to be our own. When however, we are in the throws of temptation, this life is threatened by the sense of delight in evil infused into us by hell. In temptation we are not sure quite who we are: are we really good or really evil. But, as the temptation passes, we come into a clearer idea of our spiritual identity. The Writings teach that as we give ourselves over to the Lord, and internalize His teachings, so we feel more and more that we are in control of our own lives, and yet we acknowledge more and more that the Lord is in control. The reason for this is that as we give our lives to the Lord, the evil spirits around us loose their influence on us, and we are freer to do the good things we want to do without the temptation to turn away from them. Thus our lives seem to be more and more completely our own.

To evil spirits this seems to be impossible. To them the idea of submission to the Lord is not one of gaining freedom to do good, but of losing the freedom to do evil. Thus they see heavenly freedom as bondage. @DP 43 gives us an interesting insight into their concept of freedom and bondage:

"Moreover, it cannot be denied that to be led by good is freedom, and to be led by evil is slavery; for to be led by good is to be led by the Lord, and to be led by evil is to be led by the devil."

Thus a person is in freedom and in happiness of life resulting from living according to freedom. But true happiness is the result of being conjoined to the Lord. In this conjunction the Lord gives more and more freedom, and the person sees himself as being more and more the master of his life: he is doing what he wants to do, that is: to follow the Lord.

It is important to know that the Lord never forces anyone, for He leaves each person in total freedom to choose good or evil:

"... the Lord never forces anyone, for nothing to which anyone is forced appears as his own, and what does not appear to be his own cannot be his love's and so be appropriated to him as his own. Therefore a person is led by the Lord continually in freedom, and is also reformed and regenerated in freedom" (@DP 43).

# CONCLUSION

From this chapter, then, we are able to see that the Lord created the human race for the sake of heaven, thus so that He can bring people into heaven where He can make them happy. By doing this He satisfies the essence of His love. In order to achieve His goal He created us to operate as if we were separate from Him:

- He created us so that heaven could be formed within us by creating our minds according to the structure of heaven (see @DP 34-36).
- He created us so that as heaven is formed within us, we become wiser and happier, and in a greater state of spiritual freedom. This comes about because as we come into a conjunction with Him by shunning evils and being regenerated, our minds are reformed, and the evils, which infest us and cause misery, are separated from us.
- By coming into the state of heaven we fulfill the essence of the Lord's love, which is: "to love others outside of oneself, to wish to be one with them, and to render them blessed from oneself" (@TCR 43.) This is fulfilled because when we are in heaven, we are to all extents and appearances "outside of the Lord", and yet because we receive His presence in a reciprocal conjunction we are one with Him, and thus by virtue of this conjunction receive His love and blessedness.

"Finally (Providence) has for its end that a person should appear more distinctly to himself to be master of himself, and yet to recognize more clearly that he is the Lord's" (@DP 45).

Thus this chapter of the Book Divine Providence closes. If one regards this book as a kind of Divine constitution outlining the Lord's government of the human race, this chapter is a sort of prologue, or introduction to that constitution. It sets out the reason for creation, as well as the goal the Lord has in mind for each one of us. Subsequent chapters describe in detail how this goal is achieved.

# Lecture Three - The Lord Regards the Eternal.

## INTRODUCTION

By way of introducing this lecture, answer the following questions: (circle the answer)

- You are overweight and need to go on a diet. When confronted with a piece of chocolate, do you choose to abandon your diet, and eat the chocolate, or reject the chocolate?

Eat the chocolate - stick to diet

- You want to go on holiday, but are faced with the choice of saving for the holiday or buying a new pair of shoes that you want but do not need. Do you buy the shoes or save the money?

But the shoes - save the money

- You have just left school. You could go to university, or get a job, a car and new clothes. Which do you choose?

Go to university - get the job

- Your child wants to watch a television show that you think is unsuitable. You inform the child he/she cannot watch. The child throws a tantrum. Do you give in to the child or stick to your guns?

Give in to child - stick to guns

- You are happily married. Lately a person at work has been showing sexual interest in you. Part of you thinks an affair would be fun. Do you give in to the affair, or resist it?

Resist the affair - Give in

One of life's great problems is the problem of choosing something that has immediate results over things that have long term results. Psychologists call this the problem of "immediate gratification" and its opposite, "delayed gratification".<sup>1</sup>

- These terms are difficult to translate directly into Zulu. It seems that the closest we can come to (with thanks to Rev. Lucky Thabede) is the following:

Immediate gratification = ukugculiseka manjalo

Delayed gratification = ukugculiseka okugodliwe

When we have to choose between two things, we often tend to choose the thing that will please us at the moment. In a choice we have to give up things that will give us more pleasure, but they are things we will have to wait for. A student who watches television rather than doing homework gets the immediate gratification of television, but not the long-term happiness of passing school. On the other hand, the student who foregoes the TV and does the homework loses the momentary pleasure of that

particular show, but gets far more, and lasting, pleasure later when the subject is passed with distinction.

Gratification is an important part of our lives, yet all too often we give in to the immediate pleasure without thinking about the long term effects this pleasure will have on us - often they are negative. The old saying, "the best things in life are worth waiting for" has a good deal of truth in it.

The issue of immediate and delayed gratification is also vitally important to our spiritual life as well. All too often the delights of immediate gratification are incompatible with good. Think of some of the things we do on the spur of the moment that are harmful to our spiritual lives: anger, adultery, and theft, murder. All those things, and others, feel good at the time. But in the long run they ruin our lives. On the other hand, spiritual happiness is a result of things done: self-discipline, repentance, trust and faith. All these are things we have to "wait" for.

As we make choices, whether for immediate or delayed gratification, we feed loves within us. Thus every choice has an impact on our lives, no matter how small the choice seems to be. Consider the following teachings from the Doctrines:

AC 3854: "... every smallest moment of a person's life involves a series of consequences extending to eternity, each moment being as a new beginning to those which follow; and so with all and each of the moments of his life, both of his understanding and of his will. And as the Lord foresaw from eternity what would be the person's quality, and what it would be to eternity, it is evident that His providence is in the veriest singulars, and as before said governs and bends the person to such a quality; and this by a continual moderating of his freedom."

And also in the following passage:

AC 6490: "Unless the Lord's Providence was in the veriest singulars, it would be impossible for a person to be saved, or indeed to live, for life is from the Lord, and all the moments of life have a series of consequences to eternity."

This means that every choice we make has an eternal effect on our lives. Why, then, are we given the ability to choose? This is a question we will return to in a later lecture. But it is an important one. We are given choice because that is how the Lord leads us to heaven.

Obviously the types of choices we make will influence whether we finally go to heaven or hell. These, however, are not a reward or a punishment, but rather the fruit of our life in this world.

Our eventual position in heaven or hell is not the result of a single choice, but of a series of choices made during the course of our lives.

Making choices influences the whole of our lives, and this needs to be kept in mind when we are thinking of immediate or delayed gratification. If we always give in to the pleasures of the here and now, we run the danger of never having the pleasures of heaven. The reason lies in the nature of pleasure.

# THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE ONLY REGARDS ETERNITY

Because our life is made up of a series of choices between things that feel good and those that we ought to do, it follows that when the Lord leads us in His providence, He continually leads us to eternity. Consider the following:

The Divine Providence of the Lord, in everything that it does, regards the infinite and the eternal (@DP 46 - heading).

We have already seen that the Divine Providence is continually present in each and every detail of our lives, including the choices we make, and the things that happen to us. But His presence regards eternity.

How does one define "eternity"? The Oxford Dictionary says: eternal: that always has existed and will exist.

Most of our definitions of eternity will include some idea of time and space. Perhaps the most common definition for eternity is "forever" or "always".

But another way of looking at eternity is to remove the concept of time and space, for "these cannot but limit ideas and cause abstract ideas to be as nothing" (@DP 46). If we take time out of eternity we are given a different idea: that of BEING, or REALITY. Think of the origin of eternity: it comes from the Lord, for He is eternal, He "is and was and is to come", not in a sense of time, but in the sense that His Being (i.e. the Divine Esse) is constant.

Hence it may also be comprehended that a person has reality because he was created by the Infinite God who is the ALL; and that he is a finite substance because he was created by the Infinite God who is Substance itself; and further that he is wisdom because he was created by the Infinite God who is wisdom itself, and so on" (@DP 46).

The eternity of a person, then, is not a matter of time, but rather a matter of being. Because we are created into the image and likeness of God, we have His attributes in a finite manner. This means that our life, once it has been created, is constant, it cannot be "unmade" or destroyed.

From this it follows that every created thing, and especially a person, and the love and wisdom in him, have reality and are not merely ideas of being. For unless God were infinite there would be no finite; and unless the Infinite were the All there would be no reality; and unless God had created all things from Himself there would be nothing. In a word, We are because God is (@DP 46[e]).

This is the eternity that the Lord regards within us. In a sense, He regards those things in us that are from Him (as we shall see later.)

Our eternal life, then is a reflection of the Lord's infinity. In order to understand this subject further, the rest of the chapter is divided into five subsections, each developing this concept further.

POINT ONE: The Infinite in Itself and the Eternal in Itself are the same as the Divine (@DP 48).

We cannot separate the concept of infinity and eternity from the Lord. When we think of the Lord as Divine Being (Esse) and Divine Manifestation (Existere), we cannot but think of them as having no boundaries, of time, space, or reality. God is God is God. He is the All in all things. But the way we understand His nature is described in terms of infinity and eternity:

"...the angels understand by the Infinite nothing else than the Divine Being (Esse) and by the Eternal the Divine Existing (Existere)" (@DP 48).

Another way of looking at this, is to consider it in terms of love and wisdom, or good and truth:

## INFINITY ETERNITY

Esse Existere

Being Existing (Manifesting)

Love Wisdom

Good Truth

The book points out that when we confuse infinity and eternity with time and space, we limit the idea. Time and space are in creation, while infinity and eternity are from God alone. Unless we raise our eyes from natural things, we will not be able to comprehend this matter:

It can be seen by those who think of the Infinite not from space and of the Eternal not from time; but it cannot be seen by those who think of the Infinite from the Eternal from space and time. Thus it can be seen by those who think on a higher, that is, more interior plane in the rational (mind); but it cannot be seen by those who think on a lower, that is, more exterior plane.

Thus in this first section of this chapter, we are given an insight into the nature of Infinity and Eternity of the Lord, which is of great importance, because that is what His providence regards in us. In @DP 50 we are shown that spirits and angels think apart from time and space. Thus as soon as we leave this world, we leave the limitations of this world, and come into the freedom of the spiritual world, where time and space are no longer factors.

The fact that we cannot think of the Infinite and Eternal in terms of time and space has ramifications for our lives in this world. We are surely to model our lives upon, and make decisions based upon the fact that the things we do affect our being. Time and space should be of no consideration. Thus when faced with the decision between immediate and delayed gratification, our question should not be "what does this do for me now," but rather "how does this decision affect my very being, which will have consequences to eternity?"

Thus we are lead into a consideration of the second point:

POINT TWO: The Infinite and Eternal in Itself cannot but regard what is Infinite [and Eternal] from itself in finite things (@DP 52).

We only enter heaven if we have heaven within us. Consider the following passage:

DP 53: "The Divine cannot regard anything but what is Divine, and it cannot regard this anywhere but in things created by itself. That is this so is evident from this fact, that no one can regard another from what is his own."

When we look at things, and have to make a choice about them, our choice is based either on things we love, or things we don't love. If we love heaven, then our choices will be determined by whether we want to go to heaven or not, and so we will shun evils that draw us away from heaven. If we love hell, we will allow hell to influence our decisions.

The Lord loves each one of us, but He can only love things within us that are a reflection of His Divinity. Thus He cannot love hell in us. All the good we do is from the Lord Himself. None of it originates in us. Divine Providence states this very clearly:

DP 53: "For it is known that all the good and all the truth which anyone has is not from himself but from the Lord alone; indeed, that no one can even name the Lord, or utter His names Jesus and Christ, except from Him alone... In a word, the Lord cannot have an abode in a person and in an angel and dwell with them except in what is His own, and not in what is their proprium."

It is the way we reflect the Infinite and Eternal, that is, the Lord, in our lives that determines the kind of conjunction we have with Him. Remember that the object and goal of Divine Providence is a heaven for a human race. Therefore the Lord is constantly looking for things within us which can be conjoined to Him. Only those love which relate to His love and wisdom can receive Him. Above we made a chart of the properties of Infinity and Eternity, relating to the Lord. Let us extend that now to include mankind:

INFINITY | ETERNITY L Esse | Existere o Being | Existing (Manifesting) r Love | Wisdom d Good | Truth

M Charity | Faith a Willing well | Doing well n Feelings | Thoughts

In a word, the Lord cannot have an abode in a person and in an angel and dwell with them except in what is His own and not in what is their proprium (@DP 53).

The things we chose to do because they are from the Lord form vessels within us that receive His presence. Without those vessels He cannot be with us, as there is nothing to receive Him. Our "vessels" are formed according to the choices we make during our lives.

POINT THREE: The Divine Providence in Everything it does regards what is infinite and eternal from itself, especially in saving the human race (@DP 55).

The things of the Lord in us take form in the choices we make, because it is in the level of choice that we differentiate between the Lord in us, and our own propria. As we choose to live and develop according to the Lord's pattern, so we become more and more an image of Himself, and thus His infinity and eternity are reflected in us, in our love and wisdom, in our charity and faith.



In @DP 56 and 57 our attention is drawn to another quality of the infinity and eternity of the Lord, and the way in which it is reflected in our lives. Remember to shut out ideas of time and space and consider the following passages:

An image of the Infinite and Eternal in the variety of all things is apparent in this, that there is not one thing the same as another, nor can there be to eternity (@DP 56).

An image of the Infinite and Eternal in the fructification and multiplication of all things is evident in the vegetable kingdom... (@DP 56)

It is the same with men with regard to their affections, which belong to their love, and to their perceptions that belong to their wisdom (@DP 57).

Thus the concept of infinity and eternity as being represented in vessels within us is sharpened. The Lord's presence is full to the degree that we are open to Him in our own unique and individual way. His concern is our reality, our being, our very life, and the expression of that in our external actions.

The Lord's concern with us, then, is with how we receive Him, not for His sake, but for ours:

DP 58: "The Divine Providence regards what is infinite and eternal from itself especially in saving the human race, because the Divine Providence has for its end a heaven from the human race... and because of this end it follows that the reformation and regeneration of a person, thus salvation, is what the Divine Providence especially regards; for heaven exists from those who have been saved or regenerated..."

Our regeneration is played out in the choices we make. How do we know if we are being regenerated? By checking to see if our choices are based on eternal things, for those are the things of the Lord in us. Thus we can ask ourselves a checking question when faced with a choice:

DP 59: "What is that which is not eternal? It not the temporal comparatively as nothing, and does it not also become nothing when it comes to an end? It is not so with what is eternal: that alone is, because its being has no end."

To rephrase this question would be to put it into a form something like this: If I choose such and such, will it gratify me immediately, and if so, how long will that gratification last? What sort of choice would I make if I looked for something that will last to eternity?

As we base our choices on eternal principles, so we gradually undergo a personality change. Immediate gratification loses its delights, and is replaced with the more lasting satisfaction of knowing that one has done the right thing, that the series of consequences stretching to eternity as a result of that choice will lead us into a closer relationship with the Lord.

POINT FOUR: An image of the Infinite and Eternal is presented in an angelic heaven (@DP 60).

Consider the following passage:

DP 60: "heaven, however, is granted to none but those who know the way to it and who walk therein. This way can in some measure be known from a knowledge of the character of those who constitute

heaven, and also by knowing that no one becomes an angel, that is, comes into heaven, unless he carries with him from the world something of the angelic character..."

When we consider the angelic heaven, we must think of it as the state following death. But we should also think of it as the state of being in relation to the Lord. The Kingdom of God is within you - now. Because Infinity and Eternity are a state of reality, and because they cannot be defined in terms of time and space, one cannot say that there is any time in our lives when we are not receptive of infinity and eternity - unless by our deliberate choices we close our minds to receiving the Lord's inflowing life. Each of us is a spirit, and so each of us is governed by the laws of the spiritual world:

Every one's spirit is affection and thought thence derived; and as all affection is of love and thought is of the understanding, every spirit is his own love and his own understanding thence derived (@DP 61).

Thus by definition we are spirits, and so by definition we are beyond the constraints of time and space, except for the body. Also, because of this, we are representation of the Infinite and Eternal love and care of the Lord, for we are images of the Lord's heaven:

"The angelic heaven is an image of the Infinite and eternal, because it is an image of the Lord, and the Lord is the Infinite and the Eternal" (@DP 62).

While heaven is made up of many angels and angelic societies, so each of us is made up of many loves, or loves in many forms, which, when orchestrated by a ruling love for good, makes a harmony within us. The Lord alone unites our affections and loves (@DP 63), and so brings us into the form and association with heaven and Himself.

This is the object of creation, but it can only come about by a careful application to life of the laws of Providence, especially with regard to the fact that the Infinity and Eternity of Providence is reflected in the way we make our choices and live our lives. When choices are made from good motives, then they reflect the Lord's infinity, when made from true principles, they reflect His eternity, and heaven is formed within us.

POINT FIVE: The inmost of the Divine Providence is to regard what is infinite and eternal in forming the angelic heaven, in order that it may be before the Lord as one person, the image of Himself (@DP 64).

By forming people into the image of heaven, the Lord brings people into a harmony with Himself and with others. In @DP 64 it is pointed out that heaven as a whole is in the form of a single person, and in @DP 65 we are shown that even in this oneness the Lord allows for a range of variety only reflected in the human body. This variety allows for as full as possible expression of the Lord infinite love and eternal truth, each aspect of which finds expression in some individual angel, or some society of heaven.

Now since a person by creation is a heaven in the least form, and consequently an image of the Lord, and since heaven consists of as many affections as there are angels, and each affection in its form is a person, it follows that it is the continual design of the Divine Providence that a person may become a heaven in form and consequently an image of the Lord, and since this is effected by means of the affection of good and truth, that he may become such an affection (@DP 67).

It is in this passage that the Chapter builds to its closest identification with the Infinite and Eternal as being the expressions of affection in each person. When the Lord regards that which is infinite in a person, He is regarding the person's loves, his affections, his motives in doing things. In regarding the person's eternal life, He is referring to the persons understanding, his faith, his expression of the loves within him, for these are what make a person an angel, bring him or her into harmony with the Divine, and receive the Lord's influx.

In a later passage we are told:

DP 68: "Since ... none can become angels but those who have been men in the world, it follows that the person who suffers himself to be led to heaven is continually prepared by the Lord for his own place; and this is done by means of such an affection of good and truth as corresponds with it..."

Thus our choices and the way we gratify them is of greatest importance in our lives. If we apply the test of the eternal use of a course of action, then the Lord will lead us to see things in terms of eternity, and we will walk the path leading to heaven.

Taking this all into account then, we should be aware of the dangers of immediate gratification. By being conscious of the Lord's influx into our will and understanding, and His desire that these should reflect His own love and wisdom, should give us reason to examine our action, our choices and our motives for why we choose the things we do.

# Lecture Four - The Laws of Divine Providence

## INTRODUCTION

In our study of Divine Providence so far, we have been shown that Providence is the government of the Lord, specifically that it is the government of Divine Love by means of Divine Wisdom. Because it is such, the goals of Divine Providence are identical to the goals of the Lord's love and wisdom, that is, the creation of a heaven from the human race. We were shown that the more a person lives in the stream of providence, the more fully and completely he is conjoined to the Lord. The direct benefit of this conjunction is that the person is then brought into a state of happiness and wisdom.

The course of the Book Divine Providence then swings to the way in which the Lord's providence works. We are shown the parameters set by the Lord: He regards only things that are infinite and eternal in a person. Understanding this is of great importance to understanding the Lord's presence in our lives: His concern is not with short-term things, but with the way things affect our spiritual salvation.

In the long fourth chapter of the book we are shown how the Lord's Divine Providence provides for our spiritual states, by providing certain freedoms to people, which enable them to respond to the Lord.

### The Need for Spiritual Freedom

In the first lecture we discussed the nature of the Lord, notably that the essence of His love is "...to love others outside of oneself, to desire to be one with them, and to render them blessed from oneself" (@TCR 43). We also noted that:

- @DLW 47: "It is the essential of love not to love self, but to love others, and to be conjoined to others by love..."

When the Lord created people, in order to fulfill the nature or essence of His love, He created people with the ability of returning and responding to His love. We call this response a "reciprocal conjunction" ("reciprocal" means, "to return").

In order to receive and return the Lord's love, He created us to exist as independent beings, separated from the Lord, responsible for our own response to Him. As we shall see as this lecture develops, this response is vitally important. However, there are certain things about it which need a brief explanation:

- Firstly even though life appears to us to be our own, it nevertheless belongs entirely to the Lord. We are told continually in the Doctrines that people are only vessels that receive the Lord. He alone has life.
- Even though the Lord created us to feel as though our thoughts and feelings are our own, because feelings and thoughts can only have their origin in life, and because we are recipients of life, it follows that our thoughts and feelings flow into us from the Lord by way of angels and/or evil

spirits.

Having said this, however, does not mean that we are sort of pale images of the Lord: the life He gives us, while it is His alone, is given to us as though it were our own, to use as we will. Similarly, the thoughts and feelings flowing into us, while they are sourced in the Lord, nevertheless have a reality in our lives that makes it seem that they originate in ourselves.

Finally it is vitally important to understand that the Lord has given us spiritual freedom, or, in other words, control over the thoughts and feelings which affect our lives. We can choose to follow any path in life we want (spiritually speaking, that is), and end up in heaven or hell. The Lord never interferes with this freedom.

Thus the concept of spiritual freedom is vital to our spiritual life. In one sense it is the link between the Lord and people. It is inextricably bound into our concept of salvation, thus the fulfillment of the Lord's end in creation: a heaven from the human race.

## **HOW THE LORD CREATED AND PRESERVES FREEDOM**

The Lord created, and protects freedom through a series of spiritual laws, which we call the Laws of Divine Providence. These laws are universal: in a sense they describe the human condition, because they show us how people's minds are created. Understanding these laws is vital to understanding Divine Providence, as well as understanding human salvation, which is our reciprocal response to the Lord.

### **First Law**

"It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should act from freedom according to reason" (@DP 71).

If a person looks around himself or herself, he will see many of the miracles of nature, some great, some small. Each miracle is wrought by the wisdom of the Lord. The way a worm turns into a butterfly, crystals with brilliant colors buried in a drab grey stone, the billowing clouds of a windswept veld. There are many examples of the Lord's work that show us something of the quality of His wisdom.

In nature, especially, we see that the Lord never works in a random or haphazard way. Every detail of creation is related to every other detail - minute plankton of the sea, for example, feed the great whales. The elemental substances of nature combine to form the most beautiful and useful compositions that each plays a part in the organization of the whole. Think for a moment of water, formed by combining two tiny substances, hydrogen and oxygen, to become a mainstay of life. The combination of these substances is not an erratic hit-and-miss, once in a lifetime chance, but part of a carefully worked out order impressed on creation by the Lord.

The Lord has taken so much care with the ordering of nature, and continues to constantly ensure that nature continues to function in the way He intended. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the Lord's relationship with people must also follow a nature and design that will maximize each person's likelihood of coming into the state of heaven, which is the Lord's whole purpose of creation.

We are told:

DP 70: "It is well known that there is a Divine Providence, but it is not known what its nature is..."

The Doctrines of the New Church show us that the Lord governs us through a series of principles, a constitution, so to speak, that cannot be changed, for it ensures the greatest freedom of the individual to respond to the Lord from his own free will, and so be conjoined with the Lord. These principles are called the LAWS OF PROVIDENCE, and understanding them is like understanding the laws of one's country: it helps one to live within the sphere of order.

The first law of Divine Providence is "that a person should act from freedom according to reason" (@DP 71). Within this one sentence lie all the secrets not only of our response to the Lord, but also our ability to interact with everything else in our own little worlds.

The object of religion and the end of creation is for each person to become an angel of heaven (@DP 19ff). But the Lord is not satisfied with pre-programmed people - He wants people to come into heaven from their own free choice. He wants us to go to heaven because we choose to. To enable us to make this choice He created each person with two faculties or abilities: one is the ability to reason, or rationality, the other is the ability to bring our reason into act, or freedom (@DP 71). In other words, the Lord made us so that we can decide to do something, and then have the freedom to actually commit the act.

These two faculties, freedom and reason, give us the challenge of spiritual life: we are constantly faced with the choice between bringing into action or suppressing our thoughts and feelings in word or deed. We can think and will as we please, but we are not always allowed to do or express these things (@DP 71). For example we may think that we would like to murder someone, but unless we are willing to face the consequences, we are not free to actually commit the crime.

The result is that our lives exist on two planes simultaneously: the internal part of us that thinks and feels, the private thoughts that we conceal from others for one reason or the other forms a spiritual plane in our lives. The external words and actions, displayed for all to see, is our natural part. And so we are divided, often, but not always, between what we would like to do and what we are actually able to do.

In the spiritual world, however, this division cannot exist. Remember the teaching given in the first chapter of Divine Providence:

DP 16: "The Lord does not suffer that anything should be divided; therefore it must be either in good and at the same time in truth, or in evil, and at the same time in falsity..."

A person in heaven or hell is unable to speak differently from how he feels, he cannot act apart from his loves. So our ability to do so in this world is a temporary state, given for our own protection, given to create and preserve an orderly society, for in this world if people were able to act as they pleased before they are reformed and regenerated, society would collapse immediately and the end of creation, a heaven from the human race would be instantly thwarted.

In order to control our inherently evil loves and to allow us to act apart from these loves, the Lord has

given us the ability to reason. We are told in the Doctrines that each person inclines to evils of every kind (@TCR 520). But because we can reason, we are able to lift our minds higher than our personal feelings. We may feel like murdering someone, but, from reason, we can see that to commit that deed would have sad results, not only for ourselves, but also for the family and friends. And so, because of our ability to understand and reason, we are able to restrain ourselves and find another vent for our feelings.

Being able to reason, however, would be meaningless unless we were able to act according to that reasoning, for it is only by bringing our reasoning into action (if it is good reasoning) that we can break clear of our inherited evils, or, if one is an evil person, it is only by being able to confirm the with reasons evil loves.

So the Lord gives us the freedom to live our lives in a way that reflects our reasoning ability. Most of the time we do this without actually thinking about it. But if we did think about it, however, we would soon see that the choices we make are the result of the things we love:

DP 73: "...it should be known that all freedom is of love, insomuch that love and freedom are one; and as love is the life of a person, freedom also is his life. For every delight that a person has is from his love, nor can delight come from any other source; and to act from the delight of love is to act from freedom, for a person is led by delight as something that is borne along by the current of a river."

Each person has a set of loves, and those loves are enforced or confirmed in their minds by an unconscious reasoning, a confirming of good, and a justification of evil, which clothes the loves and gives it form, by means of this a person lives his or her life by freely acting out their loves.

So, the Writings tell us, there are three general kinds of freedom (see @DP 73), each the result of different loves:

- The first is natural freedom, which is the freedom to act according to our evil inclinations.

@DP 73[3]: "Natural freedom every person has from inheritance. From it a person loves nothing but self and the world: his first love is nothing else..."

A thief, for example, acts from natural freedom when he steals. In a sense natural freedom is the freedom to act according to the lowest things in human nature:

@DP 73[4]: "A person's desire, for example, to commit adultery, to defraud, to blaspheme, to take revenge, is from the love into which he is born..."

- The second kind is rational freedom, which is the freedom to pretend to be something we are not.

@DP 73[5]: "Rational freedom is from the love of reputation for the sake of honor and gain. The delight of this love is to appear externally as a moral person..."

A person, who wishes to present himself to the world as an honest person, may act honestly, but on the inside feel that lying and cheating are permissible. He refrains from doing certain things, not because he thinks they are evil, but because he wants to preserve his reputation.

@DP 73[5]: "His freedom, therefore, derives nothing from a love of public welfare, nor does his reason derive anything, for it harmonizes with his love..."

- The third kind of freedom is the freedom that comes from actually not doing evil things because they are sins against the Lord.

@DP 73[6]: "Spiritual freedom is from the love of eternal life. Into this love and its delight no one comes but the person who thinks that evils are sins, and consequently does not will them, and at the same time looks to the Lord..."

A person, who believes theft is a sin, and does not commit it for that reason, exercises spiritual freedom.

The Lord safeguards these types of freedom in each person in order to allow each person to develop his loves in his own way. There is never a time that the Lord Himself will take away even the natural freedom of an evil person, nor the hypocritical freedom of the merely rational man. Instead He tries to elevate, or up-grade the freedom from which a person acts. Thus He allows a person who is externally good to see that he can also be spiritually good.

The law of freedom and rationality is constant in our lives. We are encouraged to act in freedom according to our reason, if that action leads to good. At the same time we are permitted to act freely even if that action results in evil - the Lord's laws are not there to bind us into a certain course of action, but to free us to develop as we choose, so that we can respond to the Lord freely.

There are, however, results of the Law of Freedom and Rationality, and these also are inviolate. We are told that

DP 74: "Whatever a person does from freedom, whether it be of reason or not, provided it be according to his reason, appears to him to be his own."

This happens because when we decide to pursue a course of action, our loves are united with our understanding, and so we have a double investment in the action. It becomes a part of us, indelibly written on our spirits, for this is the way our spirit is molded - either into an image of the Lord or of hell.

At the same time we are told that whatever we do in freedom according to our reason remains with us to eternity (@DP 78). For most of us this may be a frightening thing: to realize that all the things we have done, things we are not particularly proud of, will always be a part of us. The Lord cannot remove them, for to do so would be to breach the terms of His own laws. They stay with a person because they

DP 78: "... enter his life and become a part of it, consequently they become his own..."

DP 79: "What a person does from freedom according to his thought is also said to remain with him, since nothing that a person has appropriated to himself<sup>2</sup> can be eradicated; for it has come to be [a part] of his love and at the same time of his understanding, and consequently of his life."



- Appropriated to himself = to make his own

These teachings need to be seen in the light of other teachings. We can always repent and should we begin to shun evils as sins against the Lord, then He rearranges our minds so that what was once confirmed in thought and deed and therefore had taken centre place, can be pushed to the edges of our minds and so forgotten about (@DP 79).

This concept is important: once we confirm some evil in our lives, it cannot be removed entirely, but only pushed to the edges of our minds. Consider the teaching of @DP 79:

DP 79: "[Evil] ... can be removed indeed, but still it cannot be expelled; as when it is removed it is transferred as it were from the centre to the circumference, and there it stays. This is what is meant by its remaining..."

But still, the influence of each thing we do remains with us. The evils we do and think influence the way our mind is formed, even after we repent, for the repentance and the exercise of spiritual freedom will follow the nature of the evil. When we repent and shun evils as sins against the Lord, we then come into good principles:

DP 79: "these good principles then constitute the centre, and they remove the evils towards the circumference further and further as he abhors and turns away from them..."

If goods or evils of life stay with us when they are confirmed by both the will and understanding, it follows that both our freedom and reason have to be present to make the states of life permanent. This concept has serious ramifications when we think of it from another angle: what should happen if either our freedom or reason was missing from an action?

DP 80: "Nothing is appropriated to a person that he merely thinks, or even that he thinks to will, unless at the same time he wills to such a degree as to do it when opportunity offers."

This teaching has important consequences in our lives. One often hears the old saying, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." Intentions are part of our thinking, and so is a part of our reasoning. Unless those intentions are brought into act, by acting in freedom according to our reason, the act never exists.

On this point we should be warned, however, that as far as evil is concerned, thoughts on a subject often find a kindred spirit with the tendencies of our hereditary will, and going hand in hand, the thought can lead us to action in accordance with natural freedom. The danger of this is highlighted in the following passage:

DP 81: "The evils which a person believes to be allowable, even though he does not commit them, are also appropriated to him; since whatever is allowable in the thought comes from the will, for then there is consent. When, therefore, a person believes any evil to be allowable, he loosens an internal restraint upon it, and he is withheld from doing it only by external restraints, such as fears; and because his spirit favors that evil, when external restraints are removed he does it as allowable; and meanwhile he continually does it in his spirit."

Thus we are shown how important spiritual freedom is and why the law of freedom and reason is the first of the laws of Divine Providence. By creating us free, with the ability to reason out our motives and actions for ourselves, the Lord has created us so that we are truly able to respond to and reciprocate His love. These two abilities are present in every detail of our lives. "It is by means of these two faculties (rationality and liberty) that a person is reformed and regenerated by the Lord; and without them he cannot be reformed and regenerated" (@DP 82).

Remember that the purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race. In order to achieve this, the Lord created us in such a way that we can turn to Him in freedom, according to our understanding of Him, and so be reformed and recreated. The concept of freedom and reason is central to this process, for unless we had the ability to reason, we would never see our evils, and if we did not have the freedom to turn from them, the sight of them would not help us at all.

This is not the time to go into a detailed description of the process of regeneration, but we are given an overview of it. Read @DP 83 and notice the three states of a person. Then refer back to @DP 73 and compare these states with the three states of freedom. The result should be something of a general correlation:

DP 83: "Man's first state, which is a state of condemnation, everyone has by inheritance from his parents; for a person is thereby born into the love of self and the world, and from these as well-springs, into evils of every kind."

DP 73: "Natural freedom every one has from inheritance. From it a person loves nothing but self and the world: his first love is nothing else."

This first state or the "state of condemnation" is a person's spiritual state before they begin the active process of repentance, reformation and regeneration. Notice how the natural freedom governs this state: a person who is bent on selfishness finds "freedom" in a life of selfishness, and so reasons selfishly and acts in accordance with that reason.

But what happens if the person begins to reason apart from his or her selfishness? What is a person takes some of the truths of the Word to heart, and begins to change his or her reasoning? The result then is the "state of reformation."

DP 83: "Man's second state, which is a state of reformation, is that in which he begins to think about heaven on account of the joy there; and thus concerning God from whom the joy of heaven comes to him."

At first glance one would expect this second state to fit nicely into the second kind of spiritual freedom mentioned in @DP 73, namely, rational freedom. And to a degree it does. Notice the description of DP 73:

"Rational Freedom is from the love of reputation for the sake of honor and gain. The delight of this love is to appear externally as a moral person, and because such a one loves his reputation, he does not defraud, commit adultery, take revenge, or blaspheme.... he also from freedom according to his reason acts in sincere, chaste and friendly ways."

At first these two states seem to go together. The state of reformation is, to some degree, a state of self-compulsion, when our externals are in order, while our internals are only coming into order. This state is described in the Arcana:

AC 4353e: "Act precedes, a person's willing follows, for that which a person does from his understanding, he at last does from the will, and finally puts it on as a habit; and it is then insinuated in his rational or internal man."

The discrepancy between the two, however, arises in the matter or motive. The person who is pharisaic, and who exercises merely natural freedom does not derive anything spiritual from his external behavior. He is, indeed, a whitened sepulcher.

But, the person who is truly reforming exercises more a spiritual freedom. Note the description of that freedom:

@DP 73[6]: "Spiritual freedom is from the love of eternal life. Into this love and its delight no one comes but the person who thinks that evils are sins, and consequently does not will them, and at the same time looks to the Lord."

Thus in a state of reformation a person is midway between rational freedom and spiritual freedom. As he or she progresses away from natural things, he or she will move towards spiritual things:

DP 83: "At first such thoughts [about spiritual things] spring from the delight of self love; for to him this delight is heavenly joy..."

DP 84: "Man's third state, which is a state of regeneration, follows upon and is a continuation of the former state. It begins when a person desists from evils as sins, and it progresses as he shuns them, and it is perfected as he fights against them; and then, as he from the Lord conquers them, he is regenerated."

At this point the person exercises true spiritual freedom:

@DP 73[6]: "Spiritual freedom is from the love of eternal life. Into this love and its delight no one comes but the person who thinks that evils are sins, and consequently does not will them, and at the same time looks to the Lord."

The importance of this concept of freedom and reason in our regeneration cannot be stressed enough. We are told in no uncertain terms that:

DP 85: "Man is reformed and regenerated by means of these two faculties, called rationality and liberty, and he cannot be reformed and regenerated without them, because it is by means of rationality that he can understand and know what is evil and what is good, and it is by means of liberty that he can will what he understands and knows."

They are so important that the Lord never removes them from people. Even evil people, who grossly misuse their rationality and liberty, still have it, and even though they may put themselves into bondage to hell, their faculties are preserved (@DP 86).

In the passages @DP 87 - 95 we are shown how the faculties of freedom and reason give the Lord the ability to fulfill His greatest wish: a heaven from the human race. In Chapter Two heaven is defined as conjunction with the Lord (@DP 28). We are also shown that as a person is more closely conjoined with the Lord, the wiser and happier he becomes (because he enters more and more into the state of heaven.)

In the present section we are working on, we are shown how the faculties of freedom and reason bring about this conjunction. Firstly we have been shown that a person is conjoined to the Lord through the process of reformation and regeneration, and these are contingent on rationality and freedom.

Then, in @DP 87 we are shown how the person is lead into a state of wisdom:

"By means of these two faculties a person can be so far reformed and regenerated so he can be led by means of them to acknowledge that everything true and good that he thinks and does is from the Lord and not from Himself."

This insight is the start of real wisdom: for all good is from the Lord, and of ourselves we are nothing but evil. Remember that during our reformation and regeneration, our evils are not removed from us, they are merely pushed to the edges of our minds. Thus the Lord leads a person to recognize that true power belongs to the Lord alone, especially our power, or ability to think and will.

Thus the regenerating person comes to realize that his ability is not his own, and so therefore does not take merit for his good actions (@DP 90), and it is this ascription of good to the Lord that finally regenerates a person:

DP 91: "However, very few can apprehend with the understanding that the acknowledgement of the Lord, and the acknowledgement that all that is good and true is from Him, are what cause a person to be reformed and regenerated."

This acknowledgement of the Lord's power in our lives alive in our rationality and freedom, is what reforms and regenerates us. Ultimately it conjoins us to the Lord:

DP 92: "The conjunction of the Lord with a person, and the reciprocal conjunction of a person with the Lord, are effected by means of these two faculties?." Conjunction with the Lord and regeneration are one, for so far as anyone is conjoined to the Lord he is regenerated..."

## CONCLUSION

The Lord has given us this law, not to scare us into repentance, but so that we can begin to understand the mechanics of His government. This law explains why the Lord permits evils to happen, it explains why there is not instant salvation, why we have to do the work of regeneration set forth by the Lord.

All the laws of providence are inviolate:

DP 96: "The Lord preserves these two faculties in a person unimpaired, and as sacred in every step of His Divine Providence."

The Lord will not break them. They are even handed, operating the same for an evil person as for a good person, and they ensure that for each action there is a consequence: the result of evil is hell, of good, heaven. Thus the Lord governs His creation with absolute fairness, and at the same time with pity and compassion, with mercy and gentle leading. But He also is firm - those who break His commandments will reap the fruit of their actions, not because the Lord wishes to punish them, but because there is no way He can waive the results.

The ability of mankind to act in freedom according to reason is a marvel in itself. In the operation of this law we are shown that the Lord allows nothing haphazard in His creation. We are more miraculously made, and more carefully governed than all the wonders of the natural world for while the laws of nature are merely to serve mankind and give him an environment to live in. But the Laws of Providence are the means to the end: they are the laws that draw all creation into perspective, for they these laws were given that mankind, of his own free will may approach the Lord and be conjoined to Him, thus fulfilling the whole purpose of creation: a heaven from the human race.

# Lecture Four b - The Laws of Divine Providence

## INTRODUCTION

In the first Law of Divine Providence, we are shown how the Lord created people to live in spiritual freedom according to their reason. This ability is essential to human life, and is what enables us to respond to the Lord, or reject Him, as fully individual and free people. As a law it is how the Lord fulfils the essence of His love: to create people outside of Himself, to wish to be one with them, and to render them blessed. For when we are free to act according to our reason, we are essentially "outside" of the Lord, and so can enter into a relationship with Him of our own free will and accord. By creating us to act as if we are separate from Him, the Lord is able to fulfill the desire of creation, which is a heaven from the human race.

By creating people in this way, the Lord focused the force of His Divine wisdom on people. Had He formed us in any other way, then He would have thwarted not only the essentials of His love, but also the very reason for creation: a heaven from the human race.

To act in freedom according to reason, therefore, is the Lord's primary gift to us? However, it has ramifications. We know from practical experience that freedom brings responsibility with it, spiritual freedom no less than natural. The result of giving us freedom, therefore, is that each one of us has the responsibility of exercising that freedom - our final resting-place in heaven or hell depends on that exercise. Thus the second law of Divine Providence deals with our use of this wonderful gift given to us by the Lord.

## SECOND LAW

"It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should as from himself remove evils as sins in the external man; and thus not otherwise can the Lord remove evils in the internal man, and then at the same time in the external." (@DP 100 - heading)

Imagine a person burning with anger, the more angrily he acts, the angrier he becomes, until his whole being is consumed by it, until every waking moment is dominated by it. Picture this anger to be so pervasive in his life that no feeling thought or action is free of it. A person so obsessed with his anger is actually ruled by it - it becomes his life's love and everything else in him exists only to serve and feed this internal fury.

Many people fall into this kind of obsession with an evil - if it is not anger, it is something else, usually it is many interrelated evils. They may not even be aware that they are obsessed - the person in our example may feel so fully justified in his anger that instead of seeing it as evil, he may see it as a good or righteous anger. And so the evil, masquerading as good in his life stays hidden, fermenting and growing, gaining dominion over his whole being.

The object of the Divine Providence is a heaven from the human race, and this can only be achieved when an individual turns to the Lord and enters into a state of conjunction with Him. Conjunction with the Lord, however, can only come about by submission to the Lord's will, by a life according to the Lord's commandments, and by a subjection of evils within one's life.

The Lord wants nothing more than to be united to each person and to draw each of us into the sphere of heaven. But He cannot enter into us with His love unless the evils that are rampant within us are removed.

"Everyone can see from reason alone that the Lord, who is Good itself and Truth itself, cannot enter into a person unless the evils and falsities in him are removed. For evil is the opposite of good, and falsity is the opposite of truth..." (@DP 100)

Evil is opposite to good, falsity from evil is opposite to the truth coming from good - they are mutually destructive, and so, to protect our freedom to choose good or evil, the Lord does not draw near to us when we are consumed with evil, for that would be too painful for us (cf. @DP 100[e]).

If, then, we want conjunction with the Lord, if we want to go to heaven, we must, as of ourselves remove evil in our external man, and when we do that we open a door which allows the Lord to remove evils in our internal man. Then, when this happens, the Lord draws near us, our spirits are drawn into the angelic sphere, just as the Lord taught:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any one hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

The principle that we must remove evils in our external man is so important that it is listed as a Law of Providence. It cannot be changed. The Lord will not, indeed cannot, bring anyone into heaven if that person does not first fight against evil in himself. There is no other gate to the sheepfold than through the shunning of evils as sins against the Lord.

## THE INTERNAL AND THE EXTERNAL

Key to understanding and practicing this Law of Providence is knowing that each one of us has two parts, an internal and an external of thought:

"By the external and the internal of thought are here meant the same as by the external and the internal man, and by these are meant the external and internal of the will and of the understanding..." (@DP 103)

It is of great importance to understand the nature of the internal and external of our minds.

The person in our example burned with an inner anger that influenced his entire life. The anger burns deep inside him, so deep in fact that by justifying it he believes it to be good and as a result is unaware that it is there. Yet this anger finds outlets in thoughts and actions. Even when he is doing something good or ostensibly kind, still, the action is polluted by anger. Thus we see the distinction between internal and external things in our lives: we can feel one thing in our internals, e.g. anger, and express

a different thing in our external, such as friendliness towards the very person to whom our anger is directed.

"For anyone can talk with another in a friendly way from external thought, and yet be at enmity with him in internal thought. Anyone can talk about love towards the neighbor and love to God from external thought and at the same time from its affection, when nevertheless in his internal thought he cares nothing for the neighbor and does not fear God... Those do so who are in the lusts of evil and who yet wish it to appear before the world that they are not in them" (@DP 104).

The deeply rooted anger forms this person's internal man, while the thoughts (apparently friendly) constitute his external man. From his internal, the person burns with anger. In his external he puts on a front, thinking the polite thoughts to hide the anger he doesn't want shown to the public. So his anger, covered over by the external of thought and the action itself, lies hidden from view.

Most people have this form of "double thought" (@DP 104), partly because of the way we are brought up to hide our inner thoughts and feelings, and partly because society would be torn asunder if each person gave vent to their inclinations towards evil.

But there is another reason why the Lord allows us to have this double thought:

"Unless a person had from these an external and internal of thought he would not be able to perceive and view any evil in himself and be reformed; in fact, he would not be able to speak, but only to utter sounds like a beast" (@DP 104[e]).

These two levels of thought, therefore, are of great importance to our spiritual life. Each of us is created to act in freedom according to reason. In order to be able to do this, we have to be able to reflect on our actions and intentions, which in turn can only happen if we are able to divorce our inner thoughts from our outer, and so sit in judgment on ourselves.

It is easier to understand this if we pay attention to the following teaching:

"The internal of thought is from the life's love and its affections and consequent perceptions; while the external of thought is from the contents of the memory which minister to the life's love as confirmations and as means to further its end" (@DP 105).

One way of understanding this is to ally the internal thought with our attitudes, for these spring from love, and are expressed in thought and word. If we consider our example we find the person consumed with anger takes an angry attitude towards the world. This attitude is like a pilot directing an aircraft, for it steers the person's entire external interaction with others. Because we are capable of double thought, the attitude is often hidden behind actions or words, but it is there as a powerful force, nonetheless.

The external of thought, we are told, is from the things of the memory. These are the countless things we learn during our lives. Imagine the memory to be a giant filing cabinet, stuffed full of information. What draws out the relevant data for use? The internal of thought: our affections and attitudes. This accounts for why a person who is angry interprets things in such a way that they feed his or her anger. A non-angry person may interpret the same data in a completely different way.



For this reason we are told that

"The external of a person's thought is in itself of the same nature as its internal" (@DP 106).

Because of this it is important for a person to become aware of the nature of his internal of thought. Remember the teaching that each person is free to act in accordance with reason. That freedom is in fact an activity of the will, especially as it shows itself in the internal of thought. Thus our freedom lies in our love of good or evil. But, as we have seen, the external of thought is derived from the internal, if follows the real powerhouse in our mind is the internal of thought. Note the following passage:

"The life's love of a person, by means of its affections and their consequent perceptions and by means of its delights and their consequent thoughts, rules the entire person - the internal of his mind by means of affections and their consequent perceptions, and the external of his mind by means of the delights of the affections and their consequent thoughts" (@DP 106[e]).

So the internal of thought, the external and the ultimate action act together as end, cause and effect. The internal is the end, so if anger is the end, or the purpose of one's life, then it will come into being through the cause, or the means. The cause is made up of the surface thoughts we have that we do not actually believe but which we want others to think we believe. They serve to cover up our end, but also to bring it into action that is the effect. In this way our life forms a unit, for the internal flows into the external and then into the action. Anger finds itself a home in our thoughts and consequently in our actions.

## THE EXTERNAL MUST BE PURIFIED

In order to be conjoined to the Lord and so fulfill His end of creation, we have to be purified of our evil loves and practices, for these form an obstruction between the Lord and us. He cannot enter an evil sphere; neither can one who is in evil enter heaven. And so we must be purified which can only be done with our co-operation.

The evils within the internal and external are so closely bonded together that to remove evil from one means removing evil from both. They cannot be separated.

"... the external of a person's thought in itself is of the same character as the internal of his thought; and that they cohere like two things, one not only being within the other but also existing from the other, so that it is not possible to remove one without at the same time removing the other..." (@DP 111)

It is the teaching then, that we cannot remove evils from our internal man as these form too much a part of our being - we reflect very little on these evils:

"A person is not able to perceive the lusts of his own evil. He does indeed perceive their delights, but he reflects little upon them; for delights captivate the thoughts and banish reflection. Therefore unless he knew from some other source that they are evil he would call them good, and from freedom according to reason of his thought he would commit them; and when he does this he appropriates them to himself" (@DP 113).

Yet if we are to be regenerated, the lusts controlling us must be removed. The key to this removal does not lie in the internal of thought, but in purifying the external. It lies in the recognition that certain delights are evil, and that those delights therefore need to be shunned.

Only the Lord can look at our ends and purify them. Our responsibility, then, and our area of co-operation with the Lord is to remove evil in our external man. When we allow our evil loves to come out into activity, the activity hides the love, with the result that the originating evil love is bottled up within us, erupting into life in the form of open evils. Thus the person in the example actually nurtures anger when it is allowed it to control his life. Angry thoughts and actions actually protect anger.

However, when we shun the evils of life, and stop doing them, the evil love in us finds no outlet into our lives (@DP 112, 113). If we do not allow our evil love to find expression in our thoughts and life, then suddenly the evil internal, which before had been hidden and protected, is suddenly made vulnerable. When we shun an evil as a sin against the Lord in our external man, then the Lord is able to approach our internal man and put the evil to flight.

#### MAN'S INSTRUMENTALITY

"Evils in the external man cannot be removed except through a person's instrumentality, because it is of the Divine Providence of the Lord that whatever a person hears, sees, thinks, wills, says and does should appear entirely as his own" (@DP 116).

We can only fight against evils in our external by the combats of temptation - when we as if from our own power, fight against our evil thoughts and actions because they are sins. The person in our example may decide that to no longer think angry thoughts against other people. To achieve this he will have to compel himself to think, say and do things that seem to go against his anger. The battles of temptation are long and hard because when we are in them we are fighting against what seems to be our very nature.

In those battles, however, the Lord gives us both courage and strength to resist evil. Consider the following passage:

"Let anyone who will, consult his reason as to whether it does not appear that a person thinks from himself about good and truth, spiritual as well as moral and civil. Let him then accept this tenet of doctrine that everything that is good and true is from the Lord and nothing from a person. He will then acknowledge this as a consequence, that a person ought to do good and think truth as of himself, but yet should acknowledge that he does these things from the Lord, and that a person should remove evils as of himself but yet should acknowledge that he does so from the Lord" (@DP 116[e]).

The central tenet in removing evils from our external, then, is that each person operates in conjunction with the Lord. The desire to remove evil, the will and power to do so come from the Lord. But the effort to apply these must come from the individual.

The Heavenly Doctrines assure us that the Lord is always present during temptation. When we fight an evil in our external, He fights against it in our internal. What we feel within ourselves is a lessening of our delight in that evil, until the Lord is able to completely remove any delight in the evil and we are then free from its effects (cf. @DP 118 et al.).

As we go through the process of shunning evil in our externals, that is evil in thought, speech and act,

"The Lord then purifies a person from the lusts [of evil] in the internal man, and from the evils themselves in the external" (@DP 119).

The Lord, however, cannot purify a person unless we first begin the process. This is why it is so important for people to examine themselves from time to time. The examination should not concentrate only on actions, but on our intentions, for when we look at our intention we get an idea of what our internal is. We cannot know our deepest loves, but we are very aware of the things that delight us and give us pleasure. When we shun evil pleasures, then the Lord is able to remove the evil love that causes those pleasures. So we read that:

"Man is in no wise purified by all these works unless he examines himself, recognizes his sins, acknowledges them, condemns himself for them and does the work of repentance by desisting from them; and unless he does all these things as of himself, but still in acknowledgement from heart that he does them from the Lord" (@DP 121[2]e).

There is, then, no other way for the Lord to begin the process of bringing a person into heaven. Each individual has to see his evils and begin to shun them. Then the Lord is able to purify the person and draw him close to himself. Each person is given the tools to do this, for the Lord has given us, and protects within us, the ability to reason, the ability to lift our minds higher than our own current circumstances and survey our lives. He has given us rationality so that we are able to learn the difference between good and evil. He has given us the freedom to implement that rationality in our lives so that we are not forced to act simply because we want to act - we are able to rise above our base desires and act according to our understanding of the Lord's truth.

And the Lord has given us the responsibility of taking the first step away from evil. Although He always leads us towards good and works to turn all our evils into good, still He will not interfere with our choices. We have to turn to Him as if from ourselves.

#### THE LORD'S CONTINUAL ENDEAVOR

And when we do turn to the Lord, He receives us with joy. When we shun evils in our external man, He renders us all possible assistance to remove the loves from our internal man. Even during the combats of temptation He is always at our side helping us during the battle, for the good fight is the way He can lead us into His kingdom, and so His end in creation, a heaven from the human race, is made a reality. So we are told:

"It is the continual endeavor of the Divine Providence of the Lord to unite a person to Himself and Himself to a person in order that He may be able to bestow upon a person the felicities of eternal life; and this can be done only so far as evils with their lusts are removed" (@DP 123).

In the last passages dealing with this law we are shown how the Lord acts on our lives. He acts in two ways:

"The Lord in no wise acts upon any particular thing in a person separately but upon all things at the same time" (@DP 124).

The Lord regards the whole of heaven as one person, the Grand Man. Thus in the Lord's sight all things are connected and form a oneness. By acting on the whole of heaven, the Lord also acts on each individual in heaven, and each person in creation. Thus by being present in the whole of heaven, He is also present in each part of heaven. Because we are connected with heaven by means of associate spirits, and because each person is a spirit clothed in a natural body, it follows that the Lord is directly present with each person as well.

"It should, however, be clearly observed that the Lord also acts upon every particular thing in a person separately, and most meticulously, but at the same time through all things of his form..." (@DP 124)

The second point is as follows:

"The Lord acts from inmost things and from ultimates at the same time." (@DP 124)

He is able to do this because He took on the ultimates of the human form and glorified them. Thus He is able to be present with people on all levels of life simultaneously. But He can only be present in a person's ultimates unless people co-operate with the Lord in removing evil from the externals of life. The Lord is then present in the externals of life as well as in the internals (@DP 125).

"When the Lord has implanted a heavenly life's love in place of the infernal one then there are implanted affections of good and truth in place of the lusts of evil and falsity; and in place of the delights of the lusts of evil and falsity there are implanted the delights of the affections of good; and in place of the evils of infernal love there are implanted the goods of heaven love. Then also instead of cunning there is implanted prudence, and instead of thoughts of malice there are implanted thoughts of wisdom. Thus a person is born again and becomes a new person" (@DP 126).

# Lecture Four c - The Laws of Divine Providence

## INTRODUCTION

The Lord is Order Itself, and it follows that each and everything He does, or that comes from Him, reflects order. He created with a set purpose: a heaven from the human race, a heaven of people who wish to be there, who responded to His leading from their own volition. The Lord's order shines through as each level and part of creation, particularly in the laws of Providence.

To achieve His end of a heaven from the human race, He made people with two great faculties: freedom and reason, the ability to learn about God, to see the relationship between oneself and the Lord, and the freedom to then act and live according to it. These two most important abilities make a person a person, distinguishing him from animals. Without them we are incapable of any spiritual life. With them we can be brought into the close relationship the Lord wants for us.

It follows then that the Lord protects these two abilities in us most carefully. Anything that takes away our freedom and reason takes away our ability to respond to the Lord, takes away our freedom to be reformed and regenerated, so thwarting the Lord's desire of a heaven from the human race. According to His order, the Lord created people able to remove evils in the external person, and, as one does this the Lord removes the myriad lusts of evil which infest the internal person. Thus the order of reformation and regeneration was established by the Lord and inscribed on the very being of the human race, and is protected by the laws of order known as the Laws of Providence.

In this way the Lord ensures that the individual must respond to the Lord from his own choice. The Lord can do nothing with a person who does not choose to follow Him, He can neither reform nor regenerate him. The onus of choosing spiritual life rests with the individual, with the result that heaven is made up of those who freely turn to the Lord and embrace Him with their lives, while hell is made up of those who from their own free choice turn away from Him and reject His leading.

## THIRD LAW

"It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should not be compelled by external means to think and will, and thus to believe and love, the things of religion, but should persuade and at times compel himself to do so." (@DP 129 - heading)

It is a law of Divine Providence, then, following upon the first two laws, that the freedom to think and will must be most carefully guarded. If this were not so, people would be deprived of the very abilities that make them human, and heaven would be barren.

There is nothing in the world which can make a person love something against his will, nor anything that can make a person think one thing when in fact he thinks another. No number of laws can enforce this on people, no amount of fear can make people revise the way they think and feel - even though

they may put on an external face of agreement for certain reasons, still in their hearts, the freedom to embrace or not embrace a concept is their own.

## MIRACLES AND SIGNS

Down through the centuries many people have been swayed by external things, most particularly by miracles and signs. This was certainly true of the crowds of simple people in the New Testament who followed the Lord because He healed them, or multiplied loaves of bread and so on.

Even today it is often felt that if a person could only see a miracle one would believe. One only has to think of Lourdes and other places where people flock for healing because they believe a miracle took place on that site. Yet doctrine teaches and experience demonstrates that this is not so. The Lord performed miracle after miracle during His ministry, and yet the Pharisees still asked Him to show them a sign from heaven (Mark 8:11).

There are still miracles in the world, but not the kind people are thinking of. Consider the following passage:

"... manifest miracles do not take place at this day, but miracles not manifest, or invisible, which are such things as do not infuse what is holy, or take away freedom from a person; and therefore the dead do not rise again, and a person is not withheld from evils through immediate revelations, and through angels..." @AC 4031[3])

In modern times, people observe miracles without seeing them - the birth of a baby, the intrinsic order of sub-atomic particles. And yet they still see nothing of God in these things. The reason is that in order for a person to see the Lord reflected in the miracles of the world around us, we must first want to see Him.

An actual miracle will never convert us, for if it did, it would take away our ability to think apart from that miracle.

"Compelled faith, such as is that which enters by means of miracles, does not stick; and also would do harm to those with whom faith can be implanted by means of the Word in a state not compelled" (@AC 10571[e].)

One sees this phenomenon in fundamentalist Christianity, in which people who have witnessed the miracles of healing and talking in tongues may be brought to believe. The Heavenly Doctrines tell us that when we see something like this, our minds are so taken with the miracle they become incapable of thinking apart from the miracle. It becomes very easy to say "I don't understand, and would deny it, but because I saw such-and-such, I cannot deny, and so will believe..."

Miracles hold us in bondage, for they take away our freedom of thought and hold us in faith to the miracle itself, rather than in faith to the Lord.

The reason why miracles and signs do not reform us, is that they captivate our external mind, but not the internal. The Lord's presence with us is in the internal mind, and from that in the external (@DP

130):

"It cannot be denied that miracles induce a belief and a strong persuasion that what is said and taught by him who performs the miracles is true, and that this at first so occupies the external of a person's thought as to hold it spell bound" (@DP 130).

And in another passage we are told:

"Miracles close up the internal man, and take away all free will... And miracles are like veils and bolts to prevent anything from entering; but this bolt or barrier is successively broken down, and all truths are dissipated.." (Inv 6)

The problem miracles raise, therefore, is the way they tie-up the external mind. Notice the words used in @DP 130: miracles hold a person "spell-bound", they "deprive" him of rationality and liberty.

Miracles work in the opposite direction from the Lord: when a person sees something that is apparently irrefutable, the person has no reason think rationally about that thing. Nor is there the freedom to reject it. For example: grass is green, no one debates this. Because it is so obvious, one is also not free to believe that grass is red. Thus the obviousness of the fact removes human freedom from reasoning and acting according to reason.

Miracles present an absolute in front of a person: if one saw a person raised from the dead, they would have no option but to believe the miracle.

"From these considerations it may be evident that faith induced by miracles is not faith but persuasion; for there is nothing rational in it, still less anything spiritual, as it is only external without an internal" (@DP 131).

Miraculous faith imposes an external faith in a person: it is the faith in the event, or in the person who experienced the event, but not in the Lord Himself, or,

"He who worships God solely on account of a miracle, worships only the name of God..." (@AC 10566)

In the New Church this creates some interesting problems for us: do we believe the Writings to be the second coming of the Lord because Swedenborg had a series of spiritual adventures, or do we believe it because the truths contained in the Writings make philosophical and rational sense? If the first is the case, then the faith before us is miraculous, if the second it is not.

Because of this the New Church has taken pains over the past two hundred years to downplay Swedenborg's experiences, and increase the theological importance of the Writings. By doing this they allow people to approach the New Church from the point of view that the Writings in themselves make perfect theological and Biblical sense. Swedenborg's experiences are considerably secondary. Thus while Swedenborg relates that his entrance into the spiritual world is a miracle:

"When my interior sight was first opened and through my eyes they saw the world and what was in it, spirits and angels were so astonished that they said it was the greatest miracle of all time..." (@AC 1880[3])

We are frequently told that the New Church would not be based on miracles, but on the revelation of the internal sense of the Word:

"This New Church is not being established by any miracles..." (@Coro 50)

"But in place of them there has been revealed the spiritual sense of the Word; and the Spiritual World has been disclosed; and the nature of heaven and hell has been manifested; and also that a person lives as a person after death; which are more excellent than all miracles" @Coro 51 see also @Inv 39, 43, 46, 52, 55e).

"That this Church is raised up and established not through miracles, but through the revelation of the spiritual sense, and through the introduction of my spirit and at the same time of my body into the Spiritual World, in order that I might know there what heaven and hell are; and that, immediately in light from the Lord, I might imbibe the Truths of faith through which a person is led to eternal life" (@Inv 7).

Before closing this section on miracles, however, it is useful to notice that miracles serve some good use: with those who are already in faith, miracles can serve to confirm and strengthen that faith.

"They who have faith from revelation, can be confirmed ... from miracles, because they are in the affirmative ... But they who have not faith from revelation, cannot be confirmed ... from miracles, because they are in the negative" (@SE 4759).

In another passage:

"They who have been in the good of life ... can be brought to the affirmative through experiences, and through miracles. They who are in evil of life cannot; because evil is recipient of the negative..." (SDm 4580:2)

In general, however, miracles work opposite to the Lord's chosen method of leading us into heaven: by a life chosen in freedom according to reason. Miracles close reason and remove freedom. Thus the Lord has provided in this grand constitution that no one can be compelled by external means. The only path to reformation and regeneration, thus the only true response to the Lord's presence, must be through our own preparedness, in freedom to accept the Lord's government in our lives.

## VISIONS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD

The same thing is true with other spiritual phenomena: many believe, like the rich man in hell, that if only they could speak to someone from heaven, they would believe (Luke 16:27-31). In one sense visions are another form of miracle. Speech with the dead also compels a person, for one then puts faith in what the dead person has said, rather than in the Word, which is the Lord speaking to us. Abraham told the rich man that if his brothers would not listen to Moses and the Prophets, meaning the Word, neither would they listen to anyone sent from the dead.

Consider the following passages relating the origin of both visions and speech with the dead:



"Visions are of two kinds, Divine and diabolical. Divine visions are produced by means of representatives in heaven, and diabolical visions by means of magic in hell. There are also fantastic visions, which are the delusions of a distracted mind" (@DP 134).

Divine visions, the same passage says, "do not appear at the present day". That means that the only kinds of visions that do appear are either diabolical or of a "distracted mind." It is interesting to read the accounts of the many "saints" who saw visions: St. Ignatius Loyola frequently saw visions of the Virgin Mary, but these visions were always sought by him, and usually occurred after periods of fasting and intense spiritual activity on his part. Could not they then be the result of a "distracted mind"?

"...Infernal visions have sometimes appeared, induced by fanatical and visionary spirits who, from the madness which possessed them, called themselves the Holy Spirit. But these spirits have now been gathered together by the Lord and cast into a hell separate from the hells of others" (@DP 134).

The case is equally true with conversations with the dead: these also have little effect on the implantation of faith:

"... a person might indeed be persuaded and driven to worship for a short time" (@DP 134a).

It should be pointed out, here, that contact with spirits is possible, but not desirable. @DP 135 states that contact has been possible for ages, but that it is seldom granted, and then the spirit is limited in what he or she can say to the person. This teaching is confirmed by the teaching in the Arcana that a person was created to speak to spirits:

"The human being has been created by the Lord in such a way that while living in the body he could at the same time talk to spirits and angels, as actually happened in most ancient times; for being a spirit clothed with a body he is one among them. But because, after a period of time, people have so immersed themselves in bodily and worldly interests that they hardly care about anything different, that path has therefore been closed. But as soon as the bodily interests in which a person is immersed retire into the background, the path is opened, and he finds himself among spirits and shares his life with them" (@AC 69).

This particular teaching is expanded in @AC 1880[4]:

"... He was so created that heaven and earth might co-exist and act as one, with men knowing what was going on in heaven and the angels what was going on in the world. And when they departed the earthly life men might accordingly pass from the Lord's kingdom on earth into the Lord's kingdom in the heavens, passing not as into a different kingdom, but as into the same one in which they had been when they lived in the body. But because a person has become so bodily-minded he has closed heaven against himself."

The exception to this rule seems to be Swedenborg himself, who was consciously alert in both worlds simultaneously. Perhaps his preparation for this had the effect of making his "bodily interests retire into the back-ground". Certainly, as he says in @DP 135 and in many other passages in the Writings, the angels and spirits with him did not give him anything of their own, but everything taught to him was from the Lord alone.

With us, however, this is not permissible because as we are so worldly and bodily minded, the faith formed from miraculous events not only compels a person, but also has the added effect of blocking in one's evils, and so preventing reformation and regeneration (@DP 134a). We have been taught that we incline to evils of every kind which must be seen and rooted out of us, otherwise they fester. They can only be removed from our lives if we shun them as sins against the Lord. However, a person who has faith in a miracle puts his faith in the miracle itself, not in the Lord, and the result is that the evil within stays shut inside him, like an abscess with no place to drain. Thus it festers until it finally erupts into blasphemy and profanation, if not in this world, certainly in the next.

## THREATS AND PUNISHMENTS

By this law of providence, the prohibiting of compelling influences from forcing us to believe and will, to reform and regenerate, the Lord ensures our spiritual freedom. Many people are indeed converted by the miracles they see, or other spiritual experiences they have. If they are essentially good people, looking to the Lord as their Lord and Savior, then the miracle does them no harm, for it serves to confirm what they already believe. But if they have no such faith, then the miracle does them no spiritual good, for it serves to inhibit their progress rather than promote it. Two people may watch the birth of a child, truly a miracle in itself. One sees the hand of the Lord, His wondrous creation and so worship Him from the vision. The other person may see nothing except a natural sequence of events, common to animals and men, with nothing of God or order or miracle in it.

Just as there is nothing outside a person, except the Word, which teaches a person the proper way to respond to the Lord, so nothing can compel someone to believe or disbelieve. If miracles and other such forceful experiences cannot lead a person to reform or regenerate because they compel, so also the experiences of everyday life also do not lead one to reformation.

The reason why miracles, visions and conversations with the dead do not give rise to true faith is because they compel the external man. In DP 136 we are shown a progression of thought along these lines:

- The external cannot compel the internal, but the internal can compel the external.
- The internal is so averse to compulsion by the external that it turns itself away.
- External delights allure the internal to consent and also to love.
- There can be a forced internal and a free internal.

The relationship laid out in this passage between the internal and external is very clear: miracles etc. compel the external, but, they only hold the external in bondage:

"One can no more be compelled to believe than to think that a thing is so when he thinks that it is not so; and one can no more be compelled to love than to what he does not will, for belief belongs to the thought and love to the will" (@DP 136[2]).

Thus external things hold the mind in thrall, but they do not affect the internal things of the mind. Instead, we are told, the internal man turns away from these things. In a sense we have all had the

experience of being presented with evidence of something we do not believe. If the evidence is irrefutable, we may find ourselves grudgingly assenting, while a part of us resists the evidence none the less. This is true in spiritual matters as well.

While the external cannot compel the internal, it can allure the internal with certain delights, thus seduce the internal into accepting the evidence before it. However, when this happens, the internal is actually assenting to the external, and thus leads the external, so we cannot say that compulsion has taken place.

The effect of this upon worship is that our relationship with the Lord must be free. People ought to worship the Lord because from within they see value to it, and wish to worship.

"Worship that is forced is corporeal, lifeless, vague and gloomy; corporeal because it is of the body and not of the mind, lifeless because there is no life in it, vague because there is no understanding in it, and gloomy because there is no heavenly delight in it. On the other hand, worship that is not forced, when it is genuine, is spiritual, living, clear and joyful; spiritual because there is spirit from the Lord in it, living because there is life from the Lord in it, clear because there is wisdom from the Lord in it, and joyful because there is heaven from the Lord in it" (@DP 137.)

## **NO REFORMATION WITHOUT RATIONALITY OR LIBERTY**

As a consequence of this we are given a genuine rule: if miracles, visions and conversations with the dead compel the external and take away spiritual freedom, then

"No one is reformed in states that are not of rationality and liberty" (@DP 138).

This rule, while applying to the states above, also apply to other times in our lives when we are compelled. Many people when faced with situations of extreme fear or misfortune cry out to the Lord for help, for the moment they put their trust and faith in Him, imploring His help. But then, after the fear subsides, so also their faith subsides, and gradually disappears completely. Fear induces faith only so long as the fear lasts, and once it is past, the faith passes with it.

One great hindrance to reformation is a state of ignorance and blindness in the understanding. A person who is ignorant of the Lord cannot respond to Him, and one whose understanding has been blinded by a false dogma sees only the dogma, not the Lord. Thus the rational faculty is greatly reduced, scarcely serving any function at all, for a person in ignorance cannot think rationally, and one who is blinded by a false doctrine is incapable of thinking for himself beyond that doctrine. The effect is the same as that of miracles, a stunted rational and deprivation of freedom. These things compel a person just as effectively as miracles.

Healthy spiritual life, therefore, depends on a healthy body and mind, coupled with a clear understanding of what the Lord is teaching us. Thus it depends on a genuine rationality with the freedom to bring that rationality into act. Anything short of this takes away our freedom to act as a spiritual being.

Each of the states given in @DP 139 to 144 indicate certain things that remove our rationality. The interesting thing is that at some point we all fall into these categories. This is a thought provoking concept - our rationality and liberty are interrupted during the course of life, not by the Lord, but by our own ignorance, fear and general spiritual condition.

## MENTAL STATES THAT COMPEL

- State of fear: fear of loss of honor or gain, civil or religious punishment (@DP 139).
- State of misfortune: times of danger, loss of wealth, honor, etc. (@DP 140).
- State of mental disorder: melancholy (depression) spurious and false remorse, hallucinations, grief, or bodily related mental disorders (@DP 141).
- State of bodily disease: when the body is sick the mind is also sick (@DP 142).
- State of blindness of the understanding: ignorance of the truth.

## SELF COMPULSION

The only valid compulsion to faith is the compulsion from within - a self compulsion based on a sight of the Lord drawn from rational thought, and from a desire to live according to it derived from the freedom implanted in us by the Lord at creation. When a person learns from the Word, and confirms that teaching in his own life, then the Lord forms a conscience within him. This conscience acts to remind us when necessary to keep to the path of regeneration, to stick to the way of the Lord. At times we have to compel ourselves, literally forcing ourselves to maintain the life dictated by religion.

But this inner compulsion is different from an external compulsion: it arises from a different source and has different effects. No one is led to reformation because of miracles, conversations with the dead or fear, because they compel a person, taking away his liberty and rationality, closing the mind and blocking in the evils which should be removed from our lives. But, when we compel ourselves, just the opposite happens, for we come into true states of freedom - freedom to follow the Lord. Our minds are opened to inflowing life from the Lord which vitalizes us and forces the evils loves to become quiescent, the evil deeds and thoughts to die down altogether. By compelling ourselves we literally turn ourselves to the Lord and place ourselves in His care, and the Lord, like a gentle shepherd leads us into the pasture so His kingdom.

The faculties of freedom and reason, implanted in us by the Lord sets us apart from common animals. Because of these two abilities we can worship and follow the Lord - without them we can do neither. With them we can be reformed and regenerated, without them we can respond only to our innate evil loves. The Lord, therefore, protects these two great faculties by means of His Divine Providence, and by protecting them, He also protects us from those who would take away our souls by compelling signs and arguments, for as they Lord admonishes us:

"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

# Lecture Four d - The Laws of Divine Providence

## INTRODUCTION

The quest for truth has led many people down paths of falsity, for being ignorant of truth at its source, they look instead to its effects and try to determine the origin. So they look at the world around them and see the state of the human race, the cruelty and injustice of a person upon a person, and instead of inquiring the source of these things, they blame an unseeing, uncaring God. The result is that they leave the things of religion, turning their backs on God and turn to rationalizations and justifications of the world.

Take the example of those who see the beauties of nature, the complexities of created substances, but because of a childish understanding of God, disregard His involvement in creation, and so attribute all of nature to some vague and blind force that by chance produced both the order of molecular structure and the chaos of a volcanic eruption.

It is common for people, in their search for truth to begin from natural and visible things as an approach to the cause of things. When we learn any fact, we first learn the fact itself, then, when that is mastered, the underpinning of reasoning and understanding follows. Thus it appears as if we learn from the outmost inward. And yet this is merely an appearance.

The fourth law of Divine Providence builds on the fact that if a person is expected to act from freedom according to reason, and in doing this remove evils from the external being, and if the person only can compel him or herself to do so, then it follows that the knowledge of doing this must come from the Lord Himself.

In a sense all knowledge comes from the Lord. In revelation we are given the concept of Divine Providence, of freedom and reason, of self compulsion. We are shown the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. These knowledges from the Lord enrich the things we observe in the world around us, giving us a heightened awareness of the Lord Himself and our relationship with Him.

## FOURTH LAW

"It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should be led and taught by the Lord from heaven by means of the Word, and doctrine and preaching from the Word, and this to all appearance as of Himself" (@DP 154 - heading).

The explanation of this law begins with the observation that this law runs opposite to the appearance:

"The appearance is that a person is led and taught of himself, but the truth is that he is led and taught by the Lord alone" (@DP 154).

If we give in to the appearance that we lead and teach ourselves, three things happen:

- the person is unable to remove evils (@DP 154).
- the effectively worship other gods than the Lord (@DP 154).
- the rational degree of the mind is unable to develop (@DP 154).

In spite of these consequences, however, it still has to appear to the person that he or she is learning the truth from his or her own volition. The law of providence states that this appearance is necessary, for "man should be led and taught by the Lord... by means of the Word..." The appearance that we learn of our own accord and ability enhances the appearance of self-life so important to our freedom to respond to the Lord.

The reality, of which we are all but intellectually unaware, is that our life is not our own, it flows into us from the Lord, for He is the source of all life. Consider the following passage:

"Now, because there cannot be given to a person, so long as he is in the world, the perception by sensation that he lives from the Lord alone, since the appearance that he lives from himself is not taken away from him, for without it a person is not a person..." (@DP 156)

Thus the Lord is the substance to our form. But He gives us the appearance of self-life for the sake of His end, which is a heaven created of those who freely receive His inflowing life.

The same is true of learning truth and being led by the Lord. The appearance is that we learn from our own ability, that from the knowledge we acquire, we determine our lives and lead ourselves, even though at times we may acknowledge that this is only an appearance. The reality is that all knowledge is given to us by the Lord, and that we are led by Him alone if we accept and receive the things He has given us.

The explanation of this law gives us a detailed description of the fact that although we have the appearance of self life, in fact "there cannot be given to a person, so long as he is in the world, the perception by sensation that he lives from the Lord" (@DP 156), there still needs to be an intellectual understanding and awareness of the fact that this is an appearance. The reality is that our life is from the Lord alone. Several reasons are given for the truth that our lives begin in the Lord:

- The first reason is that there is only one essence, one substance, and one form from which all things are derived. Philosophically this means that all things originate in a one, and that oneness is the Lord Himself. He is the only essence, of life, meaning the originator, He is the only substance, meaning that all substances come from Him. His is the only form (the human form) and thus all other forms are "images and likenesses" of Him created by Him, from His essence and substance. Thus there is only one God who is the source of all things, and people are creations from the Lord.
- The essence, substance and form of the Lord are His Divine love and wisdom, and from these all things were created. Because we are created from these things, in a finite form, so we have the imprint of them within ourselves. The Divine Love is imaged in our will and our love. This in us is the essence of our lives. The form of this essence is in the Divine Wisdom, which in us takes the form of understanding and the wisdom or knowledge we might have. Love always expresses itself as truth or wisdom. Thus our minds are drawn from the Lord, and are images of Him.
- As a result of this, our minds are formed and shaped by the Lord. We receive His love in our will,

and His truth in our understanding.

- Since we can accept and acknowledge from observation that the real person within us is our will and through, thus our mind, therefore we can also acknowledge that if the mind is a reflection of the Divine, that therefore our life is from Him alone.
- Further, by acknowledging ourselves to be from the Divine, we can also acknowledge that all other people are also from the Divine. This leads to the conclusion that the Divine is everywhere, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.
- Finally we can see that this one originating self, who is everywhere, and who created all beings, is the Lord Himself.

Thus we are given from our reason to see that the appearance of self life on our parts is just an appearance, equivalent to the appearance of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, or the further appearance that the earth is suspended motionless in space.

Now because people are created from the Divine, it follows that they are also led by Him. The Lord, however, in leading people preserves the appearance that we learn from our selves. To do this, He uses the angels who spiritual accompany us.

## THE ROLE OF ANGELS

According to appearances, we turn to the Word as the source of knowledge and leading, we actually turn to the Lord, for the Lord is the Word, He is the Divine Truth, that once was made flesh and dwelt among us. He speaks through the Word to us. As we read and learn the things He teaches there, we open our hearts and minds to Him, enabling His influence to come down into our gestures and actions. Thus the Lord leads us from the level of effects, from our everyday thoughts and feelings, to the degree of causes, to an understanding of, and a control over, the loves and affections which give rise to the effects. And so the Lord is able to influence our lives by means of His truth.

This process, of course does not happen without intermediate steps and degrees through which the truth, descending from the Lord is gradually brought into a form that we, in our external states can receive and accept. Each of these accommodations is so carefully governed by this law of providence that without the revelation given to the New Church we would be entirely ignorant of them.

The role played by the angelic heavens in our learning from the Word and being led by it is considerable. We are told that:

"Man is led and taught by the Lord alone through the angelic heaven and from it." (@DP 162)

The Lord uses the angelic heaven, because He is in heaven:

"... as the soul is in a person... in like manner He is in every society of heaven and also in every angel there; for a person's soul is not only the soul of the whole person but also the soul of every part" (@DP 162).

It is frequently taught in the Writings that the Lord sees the whole of heaven as if it were one person,

and so governs heaven as one person. By being the soul within heaven, He is in the whole and in all parts, just as our soul is within the whole and each part of our bodies. In DP 164 we are shown how each person in this world receive the Lord and have a place in the spiritual world determined by our reception of Him. In that place we are ruled and governed by the Lord.

It is generally known in the New Church that each part of the Word is associated with and corresponds to some society in heaven. As we read the Word and learn from it, so we are brought into association with the angelic societies who influence us, as the soul inflows into and gives life to the body. Thus the Word brings us into the presence, and sphere of heaven, putting to flight the evil spirits who infest our hereditary and actual evils.

But the heavens do not act from their own will and understanding. The Lord, acting through the angels acts directly into our lives. It is His love and wisdom that makes heaven, it is His power that conquers the evil spirits, but He uses the ministrations of angels to protect a person from the full force of His love, for the Lord desires nothing else than to bring all people into heaven, for this reason He created, and for this reason He established the laws of providence that a person might freely of his own accord turn to and respond to the Lord. Without the intermediate angels, we would be caught up by the Divine Love and lifted into heaven, whether we wished it or not, with the result that the end of creation would be thwarted.

## INFLUX AND ENLIGHTENMENT

But all these things happen above our conscious realm. We can neither influence nor change them, for they are patterns of influx set into place by the Lord, and entrenched in His providence. The Lord leading it still more directly, for as we read and learn from His Word, as we enter the angelic sphere, so the influx from the Lord touches our both our will and our understanding.

Truth, presented in the Word, appeals to our understanding, as it is learned. The things of our understanding, however, do not enter into our lives, there are many things we know about, but for which we have no affection. We may know about the horrors of war, or the brutality of crime, we may understand how these things come about. But as we have no affection for them, they do not enter into our lives - they are knowledges dissociated from us, even though they are, so to speak, within us.

The same is true of truth. No matter how much we learn truth, it remains "outside" us until an affection for it is formed. Thus the Lord flows into our will and kindles within us a desire for the truth, a desire to learn more, to absorb into our very makeup the things we have learnt. In this way the Lord leads us from without, by means of the truths of the Word entering into our understanding, and from within, by an influx into our will which causes us to accept the things given to us. So the will and the understanding are united by the Lord, and we are led into our place in heaven.

"The term influx is used because it is customary to say that the soul flows into the body; and ... influx is spiritual and not physical; and a person's soul or life is his love or will. The term is used also because influx is comparatively like the flow of blood into the heart and from the heart into the lungs" (@DP 165).

The influx from the Lord into our will is also an influx into our understanding, for the will flows into



and colors the things we see and hear. If, for example, we hear something we like, we will have little difficulty in assimilating that new knowledge into our lives. But if we have no affection for the things we hear, they are as water of a ducks back.

The Lord's influx into our will, acting into the understanding, affects our understanding. The result is enlightenment. As we the continue to learn, so the Lord enlightens us, He gives us the ability to see the use, the goodness of the things we are learning, He shows us ways to apply these according to the wisdom gradually developing in our rational minds.

Enlightenment is spiritual light, resulting from the light of the spiritual sun, that is, Divine truth, entering our minds:

"There is spiritual light and there is natural light; and both are alike in external but unlike in internal appearance; for natural light is from the sun of the natural world, and consequently in itself is dead, while spiritual light is from the Sun of the spiritual world, and consequently in itself is living. It is this spiritual light and not natural light that enlightens the human understanding" (@DP 166).

It also needs to be pointed out that hell also has a light which attracts us in this world, and which influences our minds. Hellish light is completely different from heavenly light. Hellish light is really darkness, and produces a darkness on the mind.

The influx of spiritual or heavenly light from the Lord, and the resulting enlightenment, however, is only received by the person who wishes to receive it. "The light a person has is such as his understanding is" (@DP 167). The person who reads the Word and who allows himself to be affected by it will receive, the person who is impervious to its teachings, or who reads the Word only to confirm some previously held doctrine, will not. The person who shuns evils as sins against the Lord as a result of being so taught, opens himself to the Lord, but he who ignores the teachings concerning charity closes himself off to the Lord.

It follows, therefore, that there are different types of enlightenment:

- Interior enlightenment from the Lord: | 2. Exterior enlightenment from the Lord:

**a percept** | enlightenment of relating to God. | thought from interior | enlightenment. | \* sees issues from | sides (valid and invalid) | \* Interior enlightenment from | 4. External enlightenment man: | from man: **things seen from one** | speaks only from know- side only. | ledge in the memory. **sight closed by** | confirms what others falsity. | have said.

"Such are the differences of enlightenment, and consequently of perception and thought. There is an actual enlightenment from spiritual light; but the enlightenment itself from that light does not appear in common with spiritual light. This enlightenment, however, has sometimes appeared to me in the spiritual world, being visible in the case of those who are in enlightenment from the Lord as a luminous appearance around the head, glowing with the color of the human face. But in the case of those who were in enlightenment from themselves, this luminous appearance was not about the head, but about the mouth and over the chin" (@DP 169).

# WAYS OF LEARNING THE TRUTH

It follows then, that response to the Word is an all important factor in our response to the Lord, for the Word is the Lord speaking to us, leading and guiding us. The more we turn to the Lord, the more we are able to receive Him.

There are many teachings in the Heavenly Doctrines that speak of the importance of learning knowledges. There is a direct relationship between understanding the Lord, being aware of His operation, as well as our personal religious responsibilities and our ability to turn to Him. Ignorance gives rise to evil. If that ignorance comes about from circumstance, then the evil can be remedied in the World of Spirits. But if we fall into evil because we have been remiss in taking what the Lord has freely and lovingly given us, then the ignorance arises not from circumstances, but from our own negligence.

Learning the truth does not mean that one has to be a doctrinal scholar. There are those who have the ability, and the opportunity to study the Word for themselves, and these people are encouraged to do so. But the Lord also makes provision for those who are not so able, those who do not have the ability, nor the time, nor the resources to draw for themselves doctrine from the Word. We are told that:

"Man is taught by the Lord by means of the Word, and by doctrine and preaching from the Word, and thus immediately from Himself alone" (@DP 171).

The Lord teaches us by means of the Word because He is the Word, it is from Him and treats of Him.

"Now since the Word is from the Lord alone and treats of the Lord alone, it follows that when a person is taught from the Word he is taught from the Lord, for the Word is Divine. Who can communicate the Divine and implant it in the heart except the Divine Himself from whom it is derived and of whom it treats?" (@DP 172[2])

The Lord teaches us from the Word "because it is the Divine Truth of the Divine Good", and that in fact is the Lord Himself, for He communicates His Divine Good to us by means of His Divine Truth. The conclusion in @DP 172 is that

"to be taught by the Word is to be taught by the Lord Himself... the fact that this is done mediately by preaching does not destroy its immediate nature."

Thus the Lord provides that all people may be taught by means of doctrine and preaching from the Word. Doctrine, drawn by those with the resources and communicated to those without opportunity to draw it for themselves. Preaching at services of worship serve to instruct people about the truth.

"The Word can only be taught mediately through parents, teachers, preachers, books and especially through the reading of it. Nevertheless it is not taught by these, but by the Lord through them" (@DP 172[6]).

The wonderful thing is that even though doctrinal teachings and sermons are produced from a human understanding of the Word, when they contain the Divine truth within them, the Lord can still use that truth to lead the person. The truth still affects his understanding. The Lord still flows into his will, and

the person is enlightened by the Lord and led to the life of goodness.

## PEOPLE TAUGHT AS IF FROM SELF

The Lord's end of creation is a heaven from a human race. Each one of us is beautifully and carefully formed to be able to come into that heaven. We are provided with the ability to learn in freedom and to act according to that knowledge, but it is the Lord who provides us with the knowledge, with the incentive to act. But the decision must be our own. We have the responsibility to learn what the Lord has to teach, and to apply it as well as we are able. The Lord does the rest.

"No one knows how the Lord leads and teaches a person in his internal just as no one knows how the soul operates to cause the eye to see, the ear to hear, the tongue and mouth to speak, the heart to keep the blood in motion, the lungs to breathe, the stomach to digest, the liver and the pancreas to distribute, the kidneys to secrete and countless other things. These things do not come within a person's perception and sensation. The same is true of what is done by the Lord in the interior substances and forms of the mind, which are infinitely more numerous. The Lord's operations in these are not apparent to a person; but many of their effects are apparent, as well as some of the causes producing the effects" (@DP 174).

When we come into the spiritual world, it is not how much we know that brings us into heaven or casts us into hell, but what we do with our knowledge. If we are ignorant, the ignorance itself does not condemn us, but how that ignorance is acquired, if from circumstances it is one thing, if from negligence, it is another. For the Lord has provided that we are able to learn, and He protects that provision with an entrenched law in His constitution, for

"It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should be led and taught by the Lord from heaven by means of the Word, and doctrine and preaching from the Word, and this to all appearance as of himself."

# Lecture Four e - The Laws of Divine Providence

## INTRODUCTION

In tracing the Laws of Divine Providence, we are shown clearly how the Lord's government by means of good and truth has to be received by a person in total freedom. The focus of the five laws is individual spiritual freedom, instilled in us by creation, and fixed in our minds by the way in which we receive the Lord's teaching. Nothing can alter that freedom, nothing natural or spiritual. We are, as it were, independent of the Lord. (In reality this independence is an appearance, but one so necessary that without it the entire structure of creation would fall.

The final law of Providence, then, is a natural conclusion to all the previous ones. Just as the first law, which states that a person must needs act from freedom according to reason, defines our relationship with the Lord, so the final law sets the seal on everything before it.

## FIFTH LAW

"It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should not perceive and feel anything of the operation of the Divine Providence, but still that he should know and acknowledge it" (@DP 175 - heading).

In the Word we are told the story of Naaman the Syrian who suffered from leprosy. Hoping to be cured he sent a huge gift to the prophet Elisha, asking for advice. Elisha told him to go and wash seven times in the river Jordan. At first Naaman was furious, asking whether the waters of Syria were not better than those of Israel. What good would it do him to wash in the Jordan. As his servant begged him to wash in the river, his refusal gradually gave way to agreement. When he finally wash, his leprosy left him, and he was made clean. Naaman's disbelief was turned into belief in the Lord. (2 Kings 5)

When he was raging about the perfidy of Elisha, Naaman could not have known that the Lord was leading him through his completely negative state to a point when he could say with utter sincerity "Now I KNOW that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel". The Lord had allowed Naaman his rage, he allowed him to turn away from the advice He had given to the Syrian by way of Elisha, because when Naaman finally obeyed the Lord, and put his faith in Him, he did it from his own freedom, according to his own reason.

One can empathize with Naaman, for we are often told things, or told to do things by the Lord through the Word. Frequently they are things we don't like, actions which seem to run contrary to popular opinion. Naaman must have thought he would look like a fool, trying to wash away leprosy in the Jordan river. Some of the things the Lord asks us to do may seem to make us look like fools in our eyes, or in the sight of others.

Is not foolish to reserve oneself for one's married partner, when all the world lives in a state of

promiscuity? At first it may seem so, but as the Lord promised Naaman that he would be clean if he washed in the Jordan, so he promises in the Word that marriage love is enhanced and made holy when the partners have waited until after their wedding to consummate their wedding.

Is it not foolish to come into the house of the Lord to worship and be instructed, when all the world is playing and recreating? At first glance it may appear to be. But the Lord compares His Word to a rock, and it is a wise man who builds his house on the rock of truth.

There are many things that the Lord asks us to do that run contrary to the practices of the world. And, at times, like Naaman, we are tempted not to observe them, but the Lord asks us to obey and listen for a reason: because when we do He can lead us out of a state of real foolishness into true wisdom.

It is a law of Divine Providence that we cannot feel the Lord's leading. He gives us a command. Often the world around us gives us a counter proposal - one which appeals to our natural man and gives us the idea that if we give in to it, it would make us feel good, or look good to those around us. So we are caught between two points of view, and although the Lord is leading us, we can't feel His leadership. We have to make up our own minds: will we follow the Lord, or will we follow the world?

In Divine Providence, two different types of people are described:

#### Natural People

- Does not believe in Divine Providence.
- Reasons negatively about Providence.
- Judges from the senses.
- Ascribes nothing to God, by all things to nature.

## SPIRITUAL PERSON

"The spiritual man, on the other hand, speaks and thinks within himself quite differently. Although he has no perception in his thought, and is not sensible by his eye-sight, of the Divine Providence, still he knows and acknowledges it" (@DP 175).

What would happen if we could feel providence? What would it be like if we were always aware of the Lord's leading? Naaman the Syrian would have felt compelled to wash in the river. He would never have been able to rage against the Lord. He also would not have come, voluntarily, to the point when he was able to state that the Lord is indeed the Lord. He would have been no more than a puppet.

The question is answered for us directly:

"If a person perceived and felt the operation of the Divine Providence he would not act from freedom according to reason, nor would anything appear to him to be as from Himself. It would be the same if he foreknew events." (@DP 176)

If we could feel the Lord's leading, if we always knew what the Lord had in store for us, all our

freedom of choice would be gone. We would simply react to the Lord's commands. The freedom of choice according to our rationality that establishes and makes us humans would cease to exist.

The same thing would be true if we knew exactly what the Lord had in store for us. What would we do if we knew that we would go to a certain society in heaven? Would there not automatically be the feeling of lassitude about our spiritual life? If we are going to heaven, why shun evils as sins against the Lord? Why not just live the way we wish because it does not matter what we do? Divine Providence 176 puts this most succinctly:

"... he would have no proprium, and so there would be no imputation to him, without which it would be a matter of indifference whether he did evil or good, and whether he had the faith of God or the persuasion of the hell; in a word he would not be a person" (@DP 176).

Or even worse, and just as likely we may decide that we are not satisfied with the spiritual home the Lord is providing for us, so, in typical human fashion we will set out to adjust the Lord's plan, subverting it to suit our own ideas on the subject.

And if we decided we knew better than the Lord where we should go in heaven, would we not be putting ourselves above the Lord, claiming to know better than He? Eventually we would deny the presence and existence of God completely, which is spiritual insanity, for "the fool has said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalms 53:1).

All these things would not only be possible, but likely, if we could see the providence of the Lord. If we could feel His leading and see His end for us, we would walk the long road downwards into spiritual madness. There could be no way out.

The passages in Divine Providence that treat of this subject give us a clear reason why we cannot perceive and feel the Divine Providence:

- We would cease to be human (@DP 176).
- He would continually struggle against Providence (@DP 177).
- He would either make himself God or deny God (@DP 177).

"These and many other harmful results would follow if a person were manifestly to perceive or feel the operation of the Divine Providence" (@DP 177[e]).

Not only are people not permitted to feel the operations of Divine Providence, but we are not allowed to know future events either:

"also for the reason that he may be able to act from freedom according to reason; for it is well known that a person desires to have in effect whatever he loves, and he leads himself to this end by his reason..." (@DP 178)

The pitfalls of knowing the future then are obvious: if one knew what would happen, there would be no reason to act from freedom according to reason in an attempt to achieve it. All delight in life would be taken away from us (@DP 178).

This does not mean that we should not think about or consider the future:

"As a foreknowledge of future events destroys the human itself, which is to act from freedom according to reason, therefore it is not granted to anyone to know the future; but everyone is permitted to form conclusions concerning future events from the reason; hence reason with all that pertains to it enters into a person's life" (@DP 179).

We would soon find ourselves in trouble if we could not assess the future in some way - we would not plant in spring for harvest, nor plan retirement packages. In other words, to not use reason to plan for the future is foolish.

Most people, we are told, would like to know what is going to happen, but for those who trust the Lord, this desire disappears:

"A longing to know the future is innate with most people; but this longing derives its origin from the love of evil. It is therefore taken away from those who believe in the Divine Providence; and there is given them a trust that the Lord is disposing their lot. Consequently they do not desire to know it beforehand lest they should in anyway set themselves against Divine Providence..." (@DP 179)

It is exactly to protect us from this that the Lord gives us the fifth law of His providence: that we cannot perceive or feel the Divine Providence.

Another reason why we cannot feel Divine Providence, or know the future, is that if we did, we would most certainly fiddle with it:

"If a person saw clearly the Divine Providence he would interpose in the order and tenor of its course, and would pervert and destroy that order" (@DP 180).

Our spiritual life is as complex as our natural body, and bears a direct correspondence to it. However, just as the inner parts of our body are covered by the skin, and it is the skin that presents us to view, so our natural life covers our inner, and presents that to view. As we cannot know the intricate workings of our bodies, so also we cannot know all the intricacies of our inner beings. If we did, we are told, we would interfere with them and pervert them.

"Consequently, as a person disposes the externals so the Lord disposes the internals, and this He does in one way if a person, of himself disposes the externals from the Lord and at the same time as of himself" (@DP 181).

Thus we work in conjunction from the Lord, when we allow reason to direct our freedom, the Lord brings about changes to our spirits - but we cannot feel those changes, we only feel the effects of them as they relate to our external lives.

But, if we could feel the Divine Presence, we would assume that it is a part of us, it is our power, and thus we would usurp Providence. The effect of this would be to make ourselves God, and ultimately deny the real God (@DP 182).

"If a person saw clearly the operations of the Divine Providence he would go contrary to God and also

deny Him, because a person is in the delight of self-love, and this delight constitutes his very life. Therefore, when he is kept in the delight of his life he is in his freedom, for freedom and that delight make one. If, therefore, he perceived that he is constantly being led away from his delight he would be enraged as against one who desired to destroy his life, and would regard him as an enemy. In order to prevent this the Lord does not manifestly appear in His Divine Providence, but by it He leads a person as silently as an imperceptible stream or favoring current bears a vessel along. Consequently a person does not know but that he is constantly in his own proprium, for a person's freedom and his proprium make one. Hence it is clear that freedom appropriates to a person what the Divine Providence introduces; but this would not take place if the Divine Providence make itself evident. To be appropriated is to become part of life" (@DP 186).

There is, however, a corollary to this law: we should not feel or perceive the Divine Providence, "but still, that he should know and acknowledge it."

Knowledge of and acknowledgment of Divine Providence is the willingness on our parts to believe that the Lord is leading us at all times. It is an acknowledgment that all the Laws of Providence which precede this one are active in our lives: that we should act from freedom according to reason, and that even when it seems that life is becoming unbearable, the Lord still preserves both of these faculties for us, so that we can, as if from ourselves, shun evils in our external man, which allows the Lord to cleanse our internal. It is the assurance that even though no one can compel us to refrain from evil, the Lord Himself gives us the wherewithal to resist in a state of temptation. We know that resistance to evil does not come from ourselves, for we know the inner pressures to give in, but it is the power from the Lord to say "no".

Acknowledgement of Divine Providence is the knowledge that all the things we have been taught from the Word come from the Lord alone, so that we don't have to vacillate between two principles, but need only to respond to the Lord as the angels do.

Thus we may not be able to see Providence in action, but, we are able to recognize it once it has passed:

"It is granted to a person to see the Divine Providence in the back and not in the face; and this in a spiritual state and not in a natural state" (@DP 187).

We are told that this means we can see Providence after it operates, and not before (@DP 187). When we see Providence after the fact, it enhances our appreciation of the Lord's love for us. It also preserves both our rationality and freedom. If Naaman had known for a fact that the Lord would heal him of leprosy before he entered Jordan's waters, he would not have had the freedom to act from himself. Yet, once he entered that river and was healed, he could see the working of the Lord in hindsight, and say with true feeling, "Now I KNOW that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel."

## CONCLUSION

These are the laws of providence as the Lord has revealed them to us in the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church, and as we live our daily lives they operate unceasingly, and mostly unnoticed, like a well oiled machine, efficiently guiding our lives, step by step, so that the Lord can be present to give us help



in the bad times, leadership in times when we don't know what to do next. It is the assurance that the Lord brings good out of every situation, even the most painful or awful.

But Providence does not operate totally invisibly. There are times when we can see Providence. We can imagine Naaman, riding back to Damascus reflecting on his new vision of the Lord. What did he think? Surely that the Lord was all powerful, that he would continue to serve Him all the days of his life. Would he not also have wondered about his reaction to the Lord? Of how the Lord, in spite of Naaman's rage, was able to bring him into a state of belief?

And how often do we stop and reflect on how often the Lord has guided us down the paths of life. How many times has the Lord caused us to grow from some experience, both positive and negative. How many times would we have stopped a course of events that were uncomfortable and threatening, only to discover years later that if we had, those events would not have produced the often wonderful fruit they did?

We can see Providence from behind. It takes thought to see the Lord's hand in our lives, but if we look, it is there. It does not mean that we should deliberately seek out evil, or abandon our selves to our lusts, but it does mean that when our lives seem hard, that when it looks like every cloud has no silver lining, the Lord is still with us, guiding us by means of His providence. It means that these negative times will pass, and if during them we have lived our lives according to the Lord's Word as best we can, we will eventually see how the Lord has brought good out of them.

When we look back over our lives, and see the power of the Lord, He strengthens our faith in Him, so that when the next wave of temptation or combat against evil rises up against us, we will be less likely to despair, for we will have seen the Lord's work, we have seen His operation in our lives. We will not know as we enter into those states how they will turn out. The evil may overwhelm us, there may be a great deal of pain for ourselves and for others. We may not see or understand why things will be like that. But if we are to know and acknowledge that the Lord is leading us, He will lead us out of those states, and like a snake that sheds its skin to grow bigger, so we will shed those temptations and grow spiritually bigger, stronger and more competent to face evil.

"The fool says in his heart there is no God" (Psalms 53) for "It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should not perceive and feel anything of the operation of the Divine Providence, but still that he should know and acknowledge it."

# Lecture Five - Human Prudence

## INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we examined how in creating people in order to populate heaven, the Lord made people according to a Divine principle (called the Laws of Providence) which allows the human race the greatest degree of spiritual freedom possible. Each person is created with the ability to reason, and the freedom to act according to that reason. Nothing whatsoever can interfere with this, not miracles, nor anything else. This freedom allows each individual in a state of total freedom to choose to accept or reject the Lord. Thus each of us is created in such a way that the essence of Divine Love, described in TCR 43 can be fulfilled.

But the very freedom to reason and act according to it, creates perceptual problems for people in this world. We are unaware, unless warned by Doctrine, that our life flows into us from without. The appearance of self life created in us by the Lord is so strong, that we come to put greater trust and emphasis in our own abilities than on the Lord's leadership. The result is that we think we know it all.

Perhaps it is simply to burst this bubble of illusion that the chapter following the five laws of Providence, deals with our side of the picture:

"There is no such thing as a person's own prudence. It only appears that there is, and there ought to be this appearance; but the Divine Providence is universal because it is in things most individual" (@DP 191 - heading).

The chapter begins in @DP 191 with the statement of the strength of the appearance of human prudence. No one can argue with this: we think, we feel, we decide our own course of action, totally as if we were the source and origin of our own thoughts and feelings. For many people this appearance is very difficult to overcome, and perhaps we can only overcome it by intellectual means. We were, after all, created to think as if our life was our own.

But we need to be reminded of our relationship with the Lord. In the Writings we are shown that all thoughts and feelings flow into us from the Lord (see appendix A - Thought). The manner in which feelings and thoughts flow into us is described in @AC 5846 - 5865.

"When this teaching is accepted it must also be accepted that there is no such thing as a person's prudence, but that it only appears that there is. Prudence is from no other source than intelligence and wisdom, and these are from no other source than the understanding and thought derived from it concerning what is good and true" (@DP 191).

Thus we are put into a position in which we must make a choice:

"Now either what the Church teaches must be true, that all wisdom and prudence are from God, or what the world teaches, that all wisdom and prudence are from a person" (@DP 191).

In addition to defining the dilemma in this way, @DP 191 continues to ask if the two points of the

dilemma can be reconciled in any way? The only solution is to recognize that the Church's teachings are true, while those of the world around us are false. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to arguing the case in favor of the Church.

## THE LIFE'S LOVE

The argument begins with the concept of a person's ruling love. Love is the source and origin of all things. The teachings show us that in Himself, in His Esse, or Being, God is pure, Divine Love. This love is clothed with wisdom, and, while the two may appear distinct in our thought, they are not, and cannot ever be anything but one. Thus the Divine Esse brings forth the Divine Existere, or in other words, the Divine Love produces Divine Wisdom. From this first principle, proceed all other relationships between good and truth, charity and faith, love and thought:

"All a person's thoughts are from the affections of his life's love; and there are no thoughts whatever, nor can there be, except from them" (@DP 193).

Human prudence is the thought drawn from a person's ruling love, and thus is an effect of the love in one's life.

There is a series of descending levels of good and truth in our lives, although in the descent they relationship between them does not change. Consider the following:

"Now since the soul of the will is love and the soul of the understanding is wisdom, both being from the Lord, it follows that love is the life of everyone, and is life of such a quality as is joined to wisdom; or what is the same, that the will is the life of everyone and is life of such a quality as is joined to the understanding" (@DP 193).

Picture, if you will, life flowing into a person from the Lord, which is received in two faculties, or abilities. Life from the Lord's love flows into a person's will, and from His wisdom into a person's understanding:

# LORD

Love Wisdom

Will Understanding

The love and wisdom in our soul is too high for our perception, and therefore it needs to be accommodated to us. In this accommodation, the relationship between will and understanding remains constant:

Affection

(Interior) perceptions

(exterior) thoughts

From this simple diagram we can see how the Lord is the origin of all our conscious affections with their related perceptions and thoughts.

People in the natural world, feel their life's love as if it is there own, and thus also feel their thoughts as if the thoughts originated from within themselves, and we feel pleasure at thinking and feeling.

"From this it is clear what it is in a person that is called good, and what it is that is called truth; also what it is in a person that is called evil and what it is that is called falsity; namely, that that is evil to him which destroys the delight of his affection and that false which destroys the pleasure of his thought derived from it" (@DP 195).

Thus not only do we feel our thoughts and feelings as our own, but we interpret them according to their impact on our loves, affections and delights. The appearance is that all this happens within us. We think according to our feelings:

"Now since it is a person's mind and not his body that thinks, and thinks from the delight of his affection, and since a person's mind is his spirit, which lives after death, it follows that a person's spirit is nothing but affection and thought derived from it" (@DP 196).

Thus we see the beginning of the explanation as to why our prudence is nothing but an appearance. The explanation begins with the concept that we think in spirit according to our ruling love. Each person's ruling love is different, and that would account for the many different thoughts people have. Also, the ruling love is not fixed in this world, which explains why people's thoughts develop and change.

This lays the ground work for the explanation, but still does not explain the appearance. But having laid this ground work, we can move on to the next proposition:

THE AFFECTIONS OF A PERSON'S LIFE'S LOVE ARE KNOWN TO THE LORD ALONE.

We can know our thoughts because we can see them. But, as we have just seen, our thoughts are the product of love, and love we cannot know!

"Since, then, a person sees his thought, but cannot see his affection, for this he feels, it follows that it is from sight, which is in the appearance, that he concludes that one's own prudence does all things; and not from affection, which does not come into sight but into feeling" (@DP 198).

The thought process, which we call prudence, is really an effect arising from a cause. We can only reflect on our feelings as they arise, and even then, we reflect on our external affection "while this delight is in harmony with the delight of some bodily sense" (@DP 199). The external affections of thought show themselves in bodily sensation, for example, when we feel drawn to something, or when we like or dislike something, and because they find expression in our senses, we can think about them, and find ways of either fulfilling or rejecting them.

But the inner affections are hidden from our view, and yet these inner affections are what produce the external ones. The Lord governs us through these inner affections, thus governing us in secret to preserve the external appearance of prudence.

Our prudence, then, is the most external descent of the Lord's presence with us: think of it according to the following chart:

Directly influenced by the LORD

Will Understanding

Ruling Love

Inner Affections Concepts

Outer Affections Thoughts

(Prudence)

Conscious level in people

As we can see, the prudence we so highly esteem is the most outer degree of life passed to us from the Lord. The danger is believing that our prudence is in the be all and end all of our lives, is that in doing so we cut out the Lord's direct influence in the higher, subconscious regions of our lives. He is active in those parts of our minds.

## THE LORD ARRANGES OUR AFFECTIONS

The Lord's presence in the inner affections and ruling love is something we are not conscious of, but, on reflection makes a great deal of sense. We are taught that the Lord's Divine Providence is in all things, thus it is a universal providence:

"But reflect within yourself what universal providence is when the individual things are taken away. It is anything more than a mere word? For that is said to be universal which is constituted of individual things taken together, just as that is said to be general which exists from particulars" (@DP 201).

In other words, the Lord's Providence enters into all things in creation, and in doing so, it enters into the most individual things, for example, our affections and the thoughts drawn from them. @DP 201 stresses the point that the Divine Providence is in every detail of human prudence:

"But the case really is that the Divine Providence is in the most individual things of nature and in the most individual things of human prudence, and from these it is universal" (@DP 201[e]).

The argument is that if the Lord was not in every detail of our prudence, then He could not be universally present, and that concept is inconsistent with our belief in the Lord. However, this subject raises other issues as well.

## DIVINE FORESIGHT

If the Lord is present in every detail of our prudence, it follows also that He leads us continually as well. This can be understood because prudence is the thought deriving from our external affections,

which from a series of degrees are ruled by our life's love. Only the Lord knows this love, and from His government of it, leads us in every detail of life. Thus the Lord leads us on every plane of life, including in our thoughts (@DP 202).

Immediately this raises questions of human freedom: if we are free to choose or reject God, how can that be reconciled with the concept that God is present even in our thoughts. Would this not remove our freedom, and so defeat the Five Laws of Divine Providence?

The answer is no. The Lord is present in our affections and thought, but still leaves to us the vital task of decision making. This is where the appearance of prudence comes in: the Lord leads people every "fraction of a moment" (@DP 202).

"This the Lord does in accordance with the laws of His Divine Providence; and it is accordance with these laws that it should appear to a person that he leads himself; but the Lord foresees how he leads himself, and continually makes suitable adaptation" (@DP 202).

The subject of Divine Foresight and involvement in human prudence has baffled scholars for centuries. But in Divine Providence we are given a new insight.

The Lord created each of us to have the appearance of living from ourselves. This is the "as of self" principle, and its most external form is human prudence. At the same time, the Lord is present within every detail of our lives, including being within our prudence.

How does this work? The Lord sees the choices a person makes, as he or she makes it. Then He adapts it to serve the ultimate good for that person. Thus the Lord sees the persons choice made in freedom, and accepts that choice, for preserving freedom is one of the greatest acts of Providence.

Thus the Lord does not "control" the future - He does not predetermine what a person should do, but rather bends bad choices into good, and strengthens good choices.

The result is that each person is most fulfilled: those who choose a life of evil find a home in hell, and those who choose good are taken up into heaven. Our choice.

## **HUMAN PRUDENCE SEPARATED FROM THE LORD**

We have spoken at length about the origin of prudence, and the book DP has shown us clearly that our prudence is an appearance. It should be borne in mind that it is a real appearance, that is, something not detectable without thought. A similar appearance would be that of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west - we see it every day, and unless someone had figured out that the world was round, we would still believe it. It is a "real" appearance. The same is true of our prudence. We have to have the appearance that our life is our own, for this is the foundation of the reciprocal conjunction we have with the Lord.

But what happens when we live only in the appearance? The last section of this chapter deals with this issue.

When people are unwilling to ascribe their prudence to the Lord, then they ascribe it to themselves. The result is a denial of the Lord, for if one is unwilling to admit that the Lord is present in one's life, then, by default, one denies Him. The thoughts giving rise to this kind of reasoning is called "man's own prudence," as separated from the prudence which involves an acknowledgement of the Lord. A person's own prudence

"... is from a person's proprium, which is his nature, and is called his soul from his parent. This proprium is the love of self and the consequent love of the world ... It is the nature of the love of self to regard self only, and to regard others as insignificant or of no account. If it respects some it is only so long as they honor and pay court to it..." (@DP 206)

All prudence will be determined by the love which brings it into being. From the description of the unregenerate person's proprium, one can see that the kind of prudence spawned from it is utterly divorced from concepts of charity, or the willingness to be led by the Lord.

This human proprium has to be compared to the leadership of the Lord, which "enters with the affections of neighborly love, ... can cause a person to see that there is a heaven..." (@DP 207). People who acknowledge the Lord become angelic, while those who acknowledge only their own leadership pervert goodness and truth, and become forms of hell (@DP 208).

It is up to the individual to choose which path he or she will pursue, for in the pursuit of heavenly or hellish prudence, the Lord can then be present leading the good and lessening the effects of the evil.

"From this it follows that if a person as from his own prudence did not dispose all things pertaining to his function and life he could not be led and disposed from the Divine Providence; for he would be like one standing with his hands hanging down, his mouth open, his eyes closed and holding his breath awaiting influx. He would thus divest himself of the human... without this appearance a person would not have the power to receive and to reciprocate, and thus would not have immortality" (@DP 210).

Thus in designing the human race, the Lord provided that we should have complete freedom in spiritual matters. His presence in our lives is substantial, but it is also hidden from us:

"The reason why the Divine Providence operates so secretly that scarcely anyone knows of its existence is that a person may not perish..." (@DP 211)

From heredity we are opposed to the Divine Providence. Should we feel His presence, we would reject it:

"If a person felt this he would be enraged and exasperated against God, and would perish; but while he does not feel this he may be enraged and exasperated against men, and against himself, and also against fortune, without perishing" (@DP 211).

In this way the Lord can lead us in freedom. At times we become aware of the Lord's providence, but call it fortune, as if it were something different from the Lord. The appearance that we have prudence is so strong that we take it for granted. Yet the wise person will acknowledge the Lord's presence, leadership and guidance in all things of life.

# Lecture Six - The Divine Point of View

## INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we dealt with the presence of the Divine Providence in our prudence. Human prudence drawn from the proprium looks downwards towards worldly things. On the other hand, the Divine Providence, which directs and guides our prudence, ignores worldly things, and looks continually upward towards spiritual things. Thus chapter 6 of Divine Providence stresses this essential difference between our priorities and those of the Lord:

"The Divine Providence regards eternal things, and not temporal things except so far as they accord with eternal things" (@DP 214 - heading).

In order to understand how the Lord brings about a conjunction of temporal and eternal things, one needs to first understand the terms, and secondly to understand the process by which the Lord in His Divine Providence, leads us in our freedom and prudence, to the point at which we see the natural things of this world as serviceable to our spiritual development.

## TEMPORAL THINGS

Countless people, possibly all of us, spend a great deal of time and energy gathering up things in this world. We work to get ahead, strive for possessions, long for recognition. Yet all these are temporal things.

The word "temporal" comes from the Latin "tempore" which means "in time". We often talk of "temporary" things, and this should give us a clue as to the theological sense of the word. Theologically "temporal" things are those relating to the world of time. Thus the term has come to mean things belonging to this world, as opposed to the spiritual world. When we die, we leave the things of this world behind us and enter into a new life. It is well known that we "cannot take it with us" thus the things we have acquired are temporary, belonging to the natural world.

In the New Testament the Lord warns us against putting too much stock in temporal things. He says:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19,20).

In the book Divine Providence we are given a clear view of the kinds of things which inspire people in this world:

"Temporal things relate to dignities and riches, thus to honors and gain in this world" (@DP 215).

The passage goes on to show us how all things relate in some way or another to either dignity, riches, honor or gain. But the things themselves are neutral, it is how we use them that is the spiritual problem. If we use them for selfish ends only, then the effect of them will be one thing, and if we use



them for the sake of use, the effect will be another. In this chapter these two uses are treated separately from each other.

## DIGNITY AND RICHES

The love of dignity and riches has been gradually subverted as the human race turn away from the Lord. Initially people regarded dignity as an expression of love, and riches as a way of serving the family. But in time, the concept of dignity became vested more in the person, as in a king or an emperor, and from this an abuse crept in: dignity was something to be protected, and to be lorded over other people. A similar thing happened to the concept of riches. Riches at first served the family, but gradually the importance of wealth for its own sake crept in. Thus a lust of dominion over others, and a lust for possessing other peoples things became dominant in the human race:

"These two loves are like blood-relations; for he who wishes to rule over all things wishes also to possess all things; thus all others become servants, and they alone masters" (@DP 215).

From this we can see how in the subversion of dignity and riches the human race nurtured and fed a viper in its bosom. As the sense of usefulness was lost, so the loves of dignities and riches for their own sakes crept in:

"The love of dignities and honors for their own sake is the love of self, and this in its essence is the love of ruling from the love of self; and the love of riches and wealth for their own sake is the love of the world, and in its essence is the love of possessing the goods of others by any device whatsoever" (@DP 215).

Thus we can see that when these loves run rampant, they give rise to evils of every kind. We can blame our crime rate on these two loves. Instead of looking to use, the person looks inward to selfishness and gain, thus giving his or her proprium an outlet.

Consider the following passage:

"... in the love of self dwells a love of doing evil. The reason for this is that the person does not love his neighbor but himself only; and he who loves himself only sees others as outside himself, or as insignificant or of no account, and he despises them in comparison with himself, and thinks nothing of inflicting injuring upon them" (@DP 215).

Love of Dignity and Honor for It's Own Sake:

- \*love of self which is the love of ruling over others.

- \*love of world which is the love of possessing good of others.

- \*willingness to take another's possessions by any means. (@DP 215)

Love of Dignity and Honor for Sake of Use:

- \*love for the sake of and love of uses.

\*love of the neighbor

\*all other loves are subordinate. (@DP 215)

Thus we can see the quality of the difference between loving worldly and natural things from a love for them and from a love for the uses they perform. Loving worldly things is the source of the evils of this world:

"It is from this cause that he who is in the love of ruling from the love of self thinks nothing of defrauding his neighbor, committing adultery with his wife, slandering him, breathing revenge against him even to death, treating him cruelly, and similar evil doings" (@DP 21).

Human nature, as it relates to natural and worldly things, and divorced from spiritual things, is such that it does not admit the Lord's presence. Thus when the Lord looks at our lives, this side of us is closed off to Him. He can only be present in those things in us which belong to Him, and which receive Him.

The result is that while riches, dignities and honors are in themselves neutral, the passion with which they are pursued are not: it derives ultimately from hell or from heaven. One sobering thought about the pursuit of riches, dignity and honor, is that if a person pursues them from a selfish motive, and yet does not commit the heinous acts of self love, nevertheless, those acts are potentially there:

"I will add, that all who are in the love of ruling from a love of self, whoever they are, whether great or small, are as to their spirit in hell; and that all who are in that love are in the love of evils of all kinds, and if they do not commit them, still in their spirit they believe them to be allowable, and therefore they commit them in the body when dignity and honor and fear of the law do not stand in the way" (@DP 215).

People who are in love of ruling others, and who put on the facade of goodness, interiorly deny God. Their words of piety are on their lips only, and not in their hearts.

"It is otherwise with the love of dignities and riches for the sake of uses; for this is a heavenly love, because ... it is the same as love to the neighbor. By uses are meant goods; and therefore by doing uses is meant doing goods, and by doing uses or goods is meant serving others and ministering to them. Although those who do so are in the possession of dignity and wealth, still they regard them only as means for performing uses, thus for serving and ministering" (@DP 215).

One problem we face is that from our human perspective we cannot know other people's motivations: we don't know if they are accumulating wealth, or running for public office because they are in the love of self or the love of ruling, or if they are in the love of uses.

In one sense this gives us great freedom, because if we could know a person's motivation, then either all who were evil would succeed, and those in good would be destroyed, or vice versa. It is even difficult in our own selves to know what our own motivations are:

"The difference between these loves can hardly be recognized by a person, because a person does not know whether he is led by the devil or by the Lord. The person who is led by the devil performs uses

for the sake of self and the world; but he that is lead by the Lord performs uses for the sake of the Lord and heaven (@DP 215).

Thus we can see how the pursuit of wealth, dignity and honors are things belonging to our external lives, and are only touched by spiritual things if we act from a true use. The Lord cannot regard this part of us, but He does regard the motivations we have in pursuing them: if we perform uses, then He is conjoined to us in the uses, if we indulge our love of self, then He cannot be present in that.

The Lord doesn't care if we are rich and powerful, or poor and alone. His concern is less with the circumstances of our lives than with what we do under those circumstances.

## ETERNAL THINGS

While the Lord's providence does not regard temporal things, it does regard eternal things. Temporal things are the things relating to this world, but eternal things relate to our spiritual life: they are the things relating to love and wisdom (@DP 216). These eternal things are true blessings (@DP 216).

The difficulty people have in this world is telling the difference between spiritual and natural blessings. For many people natural riches, dignities and honors are blessings.

"The natural man, however, unless enlightened by the spiritual man, that is, unless he is at the same time spiritual, does not see that honors and wealth may be blessings and may also be curses, and that when they are blessings they are from God, and when they are curses they are from the devil" (@DP 216).

Blessings and Curses

## CURSES

\*Can't keep a person out of hell.

\*They are curses when people set their heart on them.

\*They lead people astray.

\*They excite the proprium.

\*They are fleeting.

\*They perish.

## BLESSINGS

\*People do not set their hearts on them.

\*Lead to love of uses, not of self.

\*They lead to heaven.

\*They are permanent.

\*They focus on use, not on person.

\*They attribute honor to the Lord.

From this brief comparison between eternal and temporal things, we can see that temporal things tend to lead downward, while spiritual things lead us upward towards heaven and the Lord. If we study @DP 217 carefully, we find that the main point of difference between temporal things being blessings or curses is the attitude we have towards them. If a person thinks that the work revolves around him or her, that the dignity and honor pertains to him or herself, and that the riches rightly belong to him or herself, then that person confuses him or herself with the work being done. That person then takes the goodness of the use as his own.

This is very different from a person doing the same tasks who does not confuse him or herself with the work at hand. In these instances, the person attributes the ability to do the work to the Lord, and gives glory to the Lord. The wealth brought in is not considered as the primary motivating factor, rather, the use performed is the main motivator.

Thus we see two people doing the same work, but from different points of view: from one point of view the work done actually leads the person away from the Lord, and is thus a curse. From the other, it leads the person to the Lord, and so is a blessing.

TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL THINGS ARE SEPARATED IN A PERSON, JOINED BY THE === LORD

We have alluded several times to the fact that the Lord looks at those things in us which are eternal, and not those which are temporal. The temporal side of us is that relating to this world, and things in time and space. But the Lord does not regard these things: He looks at the eternal. This, however, raises a question in our minds, because everything pertaining to us is temporal:

"Temporal and eternal things are separated by a person, but are conjoined by the Lord. This is so because all things pertaining to a person are temporal, and from these a person may be called temporal; while all things pertaining to the Lord are eternal, and from the Lord is called Eternal" (@DP 218).

We have already seen that temporal things are perishable, and it can be argued that all things we do are perishable, because we are finite. On the other hand, the Lord is infinite, and the infinite cannot be joined with the finite.

How then does this reconcile this with the concept of God whose providence is universal, and is present in most minute details - as we saw in the last chapter? The answer is that the Lord, in His providence is able to bring these together.

To understand this, let us revisit the concept of temporal and eternal things:

- Temporal things are proper to nature, time and space, and have an end. They also find a place in

the things belonging to people which belong to his own will and understanding, thus to the proprium (@DP 219).

- Eternal things are things proper to God, and in a person are things which appear to belong to a person, but really belong to God. They are beyond time and space, thus without limit or end. They are devoid of the proprium (@DP 219).

As far as our proprium is concerned, we are temporal, and since the proprium can produce nothing that is not temporal, therefore said that "nothing can proceed from a person but what is temporal" (@DP 219). Nothing truly good, derived from the Lord can be produced by our proprium:

"For the infinite [or eternal] cannot proceed from the finite [or temporal - ex. proprium]: it is a contradiction to say that it can. Still, the infinite can proceed from the finite - not from the finite but from the infinite through the finite. On the other hand, the finite cannot proceed from the infinite; and to say that it can is also a contradiction. The finite, however, can be produced from the infinite, but this is a creating, not a proceeding."

So we are led to understand that the Lord's presence in our lives is not present in the proprium, but rather in the passage of the infinite through the finite. Thus when we lift our minds above temporal things, and above the lusts of our proprium, we are able to lift it into the level of heaven, and so the infinite can pass through us, coming forth into uses.

If this were not so, then no one would be able to perform uses, yet uses in themselves are not, cannot be, performed from the proprium, they are only performed from the presence of the Lord in our lives.

Our pursuit of temporal things, especially of riches, dignity and honor, leads us away from spiritual things, for, as we have seen, they open our proprium love of self and our delight in ruling over other people. Thus we are told that left to themselves, "Temporal things separate eternal things from themselves" (@DP 219). In a sense we cannot help doing this, because our proprium loves are in opposition to the Lord, thus turning from Him to other loves within us which feed the love of self and dominion.

But because we all incline towards evils of every kind, and because from ourselves we have no ability to shun evil, it follows that the Lord leads us out of temporal states by means of His Divine Providence. The first is the appearance the Lord gives us that goodness is our own.

"The Lord conjoins a person to Himself by means of appearances. For it is an appearance that a person from himself loves the neighbor, does good and speaks the truth, and unless these things appeared to a person as from himself he would not love the neighbor, do good and speak truth, and therefore would not be conjoined to the Lord.

The second through the Word, for the Word teaches us about the Lord, shows us the nature of evil, and instructs us how to rise above the proprium and thus, from the Lord's power, subdue it.

Thus the Lord shows us how to put off temporal things, where He cannot be, and come into eternal things, where He is. He does this:

- AT DEATH a person puts off the temporal things taken on in this world, and is introduced into interior and higher things. He retains "only the interior natural things which are suitable and in harmony with spiritual and celestial things, and which serve as containment. This is effected by the rejection of temporal and natural ultimates, which is the death of the body" (@DP 220).
- THE LORD CONJOINS HIMSELF TO TEMPORAL THINGS BY MEANS OF USES: as a person leaves this world, he leaves behind the natural things he did, but retains the uses he performed, these are "spiritual things that are similar in their external aspect or appearance, but not in their internal aspect or essential nature" (@DP 220).
- THE LORD CONJOINS HIMSELF TO USES BY MEANS OF CORRESPONDENCES.

The whole of the Divine Providence is geared to this goal, of bringing a person into heaven through the implantation of eternal things. If we only spend our lives in this world in pursuit of riches, dignity or honor for its own sake, without consideration of the uses we perform, we close ourselves off from heaven. But, if in the pursuit of uses we achieve riches, dignity and honor, and see these only as external trappings of use, then still we open heaven to ourselves.

The Lord can conjoin Himself to us within this sphere of uses, and in doing this He fulfils the goal and aim of creation: a heaven from the Human Race. Each person is created for no other reason to go to heaven, yet by creating us with freedom to accept or reject the Lord, we can choose the fleeting glory of temporal things, closing heaven to ourselves, or we can choose the permanence of Divine blessings. The choice is our own.

# Lecture Seven - The Problem of Reception

## INTRODUCTION

The entire thrust of the work Divine Providence is that the Lord created the human race in order for them to populate the heavens. All the laws of providence work towards this end. If the Lord has His way, each one of us would be an angel in heaven. However, He created us free to accept or reject Him, free to turn to good or evil. He protects this freedom with the entire force of His Divine love and wisdom. Thus we are told:

"It is well known in the Christian world that the Lord wills the salvation of all, and also that He is Almighty. Therefore many conclude from this that He is able to save everyone, and that He saves those who implore His mercy..." (@DP 221)

The Lord has no greater wish than to save each and every person. But it is not true that He can save each of us. The reason lies in the freedom He has given us: freedom to accept or reject. This freedom is what makes us human, it is what establishes the reciprocal conjunction between people and the Lord. In a sense it is what establishes heaven.

It also establishes hell. Hell is the unfortunate result of the process of salvation for those who turn away from the Lord. It is the flip side of the coin.

## SALVATION ACCORDING TO MEANS

It is often thought that the Lord saves people who simply pray to Him. One occasionally encounters people who attempt to get one to sign a form committing themselves to the Lord. The signature on that form, then, is "proof" of salvation. In the book Divine Providence, we are shown how a mere verbal commitment is not sufficient. The Lord's salvation is more complex than that.

Consider the following passage from New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines:

"To repent with one's lips but not in one's life is no repentance. Sins are not forgiven by repentance with the lips, but by repentance in life. A person's sins are continually being forgiven by the Lord, for He is absolute mercy. But the sins cling to a person, however much he thinks they are forgiven, and the only way to have them taken away is to live in accordance with the commandments of true faith. The more he lives thus, the more his sins are taken away, and the further they are taken away, the more they are forgiven" (@NJHD 165).

The point here is that the Lord saves people by "means", and the "means" are the Laws of Providence. He cannot and will not override these - no matter how loudly we implore Him.

A person is led to heaven by a process in which he or she learns truth from the Word, and then, through a life of repentance and use, turns away from sin and incorporates the truth into life. The truth as a guide to life becomes the good of life, replacing the previously held evils. Thus a person is purified and renewed, and lead into heaven. The Lord does not work apart from this process.

Individual people, however, try to circumvent this process. People learn truth, and instead of incorporating it into their lives, they turn their backs on it. Understanding this helps us to understand properly the process of salvation, but it is only by living the Word in our lives that brings us into heaven. It is the process of living truth which gives the Lord the means to save us:

"The means by which a person is led by the Lord are what are called the Laws of Divine Providence; and among these is that a person is admitted interiorly into the truths of wisdom only so far as he can be kept in them right on to the end of life" (@DP 221).

## WISDOM DOES NOT SAVE

If it were possible for the Lord to save us simply by having us learn a formula, then certainly He would, because it would be so simple. However, we know from experience, that we can know many things which we do not love, and from which we often turn. Thus while the Lord allows us to learn His Word, He protects us by making sure that it does not penetrate to the interiors of our minds until we can be kept in that truth to eternity.

Part of the process of protecting us from profanation is to build a protective barrier in our minds so that we cannot truly acknowledge truth the moment we hear it, for if we did, and later turned from it, then we would profane the truth. Thus we can see in the light of angels, but not feel the heat of their love until we are sure to stay in it to eternity:

"A person may be admitted into the wisdom of spiritual things, and also into the love of them, and yet not be reformed" (@DP 222).

Our minds are created in such a way that we can learn the very things known by the angels, as in fact we are doing now. But this knowledge does not necessarily change our lives. It is only when from a love of truth that we change, and live according to that truth, that the Lord can give us a lasting spiritual love of goodness and truth.

Truth itself does not change us: there are many people who read the Word, know it by heart, and are yet unaffected by it. It is possible for us to model ourselves according to the truth in external forms, and not change from our proprial loves in inward form. When this happens

"the internal in its essence is infernal, and the external in its form appears spiritual, and yet, as has been said, the external derives its essence from the internal [which is hellish]" (@DP 224).

When the person dies, the external falls away, and the hellish internal is left. Thus the learning, the external acknowledgment of truth amounts to nothing. The person is shown to have been a hypocrite.

"From these considerations it is now clear that while a person lives in the natural world he can be admitted into the wisdom of spiritual things, and also into the love of them; and that this happens and can happen both with those who are wholly natural, and with those who are spiritual; but with this difference, that the spiritual are thereby reformed but the nature by the same means are not" (@DP 225).



Thus the Lord protects us from the power of His truth. If He foresees that we will be kept in His truth to eternity, He allows the truth to affect us internally, but if He foresees that we will not remain constant in his truth, then we do not receive truth internally. This protection is very important, for if we learned truth, and it becomes spiritually our own, and later turn from it, we commit profanation, which destroys our ability to enter heaven. And, since the Lord's goal in creation is a heaven from the human race, He protects us from this profanation at all costs.

## PROFANATION

The reason for this protection is profanation: a spiritual disease in which a person, by turning away from the Word, actually closes heaven to him or herself. The worst kind of profanation is that of a person who is admitted into the interior things of truth, and then departs from them:

"If a person afterwards departs from these and turns aside into what is contrary, he profanes holy things. There are many kinds of profanation... but this kind is the most grievous of all; for profaners of this kind after death come to be no longer men" (@DP 226).

## PROFANERS AFTER DEATH

The description of profaners after death shows us the Lord's real mercy in trying to protect us from this fate worse than death:

- \*they are no longer people
- \*they have fantastic hallucinations
- \*they are sexless
- \*they appear like skeletons

"The real cause [of profanation] is that when a person at first acknowledges Divine things and believes in them and afterwards departs from them and denies them, he mingles what is holy with what is profane, and when these have been mingled together, they cannot be separated without destroying the whole" (@DP 226)

As one can see, profanation is the total reversal for the Lord's goal for the human race - it is the opposite of the life of fulfillment and happiness found in heaven. Because of this the Lord goes to great lengths to protect us from it - although if we choose to profane, the Lord will not prevent it.

How does profanation arise? @DP 227 gives a step by step account drawn largely from principles taught earlier in the book. Let us examine the highlights:

- What ever a person thinks, speaks and does forms the will, whether good or evil, belongs to him and remains to eternity. (This principle was dealt with in #78 - 81 "What ever a person does forms freedom according to his thought is appropriated to him as his own and remains with him.)
- The Lord by His Divine Providence continually foresees and disposes, that evil may be by itself and

good by itself, and thus that they may be separated. (see # 14 - 16 "The Lord does not suffer that anything should be divided; therefore it must be either in good and at the same time in truth, or in evil and at the same time in falsity.")

- This cannot be done if a person first acknowledges truths of faith and lives according to them, and afterwards departs from them and denies them. When this happens goodness and evil cannot be separated, for they are joined together in the person.
- He then mingles good and evil to such a degree that they cannot be separated: "if the evil cannot be separated from the good and the good from the evil the person can be neither in heaven nor in hell." (@DP 227)

This is where the problem of profanation then arises: for where shall the person be?

"Every one must be either in one or in the other; he cannot be in both, for in that case he would be now in heaven and now in hell; and while in heaven he would be acting in favor of hell, and while in hell he might be acting in favor of heaven" (@DP 227).

As one can imagine, this would raise great difficulties for the person - it would lead to great spiritual pain and distress. But the greatest problem is that the humanity of the person would be destroyed:

"Since the good and the evil in every one must be separated, and in such a person they cannot be separated, therefore he is destroyed as to everything that is truly human" (@DP 227).

The person ends up with no freedom to choose between good and evil, and no reason. Thus there is nothing left in the person which makes him or her truly human.

Because this is such a dire spiritual peril, the Lord protects people against it at all costs. There are certain protections built into ignorance, especially that a person cannot profane holy things if he/she does not know them. This kind of not knowing truth, however, is not a matter of not knowing details, but rather a matter of not knowing the full import of the truths one has learned.

If ignorance itself was a protection, then there would be no point in learning truth at all. Profanation comes from mingling holy things with "what is profane," and this is done by those who receive and acknowledge, and then turn away.

There are greater and lesser degrees of profanation:

## SEVEN TYPES OF PROFANATION

Type of Profanation	Description	Biblical Ref.
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More or less grievous	depend- ing on acknowledgement of holiness of Word.	
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Understanding and Understanding	introduces Luke 12:48: acknowledging Div. truth to thought. Ack- John 9:41 truth, and living nowledge ment introduces contrary to it. truth to the will. If truth is in the will, but not acted on, it is profanation.	
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Apply sense of the Confirmation of falsity is described by Letter to confirm evil a denial of truth. Con-  
"bloods" in loves and false firmation of evil is a Word. eg. principles. rejection of good. Thus Isaiah 1:15  
the Word is adulterated.

Speak pious and holy This is hypocritical. The things, counterfeit external act covers an affections of  
love inner rejection of Lord and for spiritual things, Word. Hypocrisy is more yet in heart do not or less  
serious according believe nor love them. to the degree of confirmation against God and outward  
reason- ing in favor of Him.

Attribution to them- Isa 14 selves what is Divine. Rev 17

Acknowledgment of the The condition of all such is Matthew 12:32 Word, yet denial of that they call  
upon the Father, Divinity of the Lord. and not upon the Lord. Profanation lies in the fact that the

Lord is one.

#### **WARNING**

Big mess here; scanned columns ??

Those who first ack- This is the worst profanation. Revelation 3:14,15 nowledge Divine truth This  
mingles holy and profane Matthew 12:43-5 and live according things so they cannot be to it, but  
afterward separated. Therefore person depart from it and can be neither in heaven nor deny it. hell.  
Ceases to be human.

The protection against all these types of profanation, therefore, is fro the Lord to ensure that we will  
only be allowed to accept truth on a spiritual level of our lives if He can see that we will be held in  
those truths to eternity:

**THEREFORE THE LORD ADMITS A PERSON INTERIORLY  
INTO THE TRUTHS OF WISDOM**

**AND AT THE SAME TIME INTO THE GOODS OF LOVE  
ONLY SO FAR AS HE CAN BE**

KEPT IN THEM RIGHT ON TO THE END OF HIS LIFE (@DP 232).

# Lecture Eight - The Laws of Permission

## INTRODUCTION

Beginning in Chapter Eight, the book, Divine Providence, takes a different course than chartered before. Having laid the groundwork of why and how the Lord created us, and having considered the things the Lord regards in us, the thrust of Divine Providence now turns to the concept of human evil.

The issue of human evil has plagued Christianity almost from its inception. Many explanations have been offered, but these in turn bring up the question of why and how evil came into being. It is sometimes implied that the Lord created evil, or that He is in someway responsible for it. Reading Divine Providence so far, however, shows us that the Lord never created evil. Each and every thing in creation, and in His government of it, is orderly, because the Lord is order itself. But, if the Lord did not create evil, where did it come from?

The answer lies in the way of creation. While the Lord did not create evil, He did create each of us with a potential for evil. He did this by creating us with a free will. The first law of Divine Providence is that people should act from freedom according to reason. The Lord does everything in His power to protect this freedom, including making provision for times when people exercise freedom for evil ends. People have the freedom to turn towards Him or away from Him. By turning from Him, we embrace a godless state, which, by definition is evil. Since the potential for evil is present in creation, it followed that as a part of the Divine Constitution, the Lord provided for the treatment of those who choose evil. These laws are the Laws of Permission.

There are no laws of permission by themselves or separate from the laws of the Divine Providence: they are indeed the same. When, therefore, it is said that God permits, this does not mean that He wills, but that He cannot avert on account of the end, which is salvation (@DP 234).

Evil comes into being because the Lord does not prevent people, who, acting according to the freedom instilled in them, choose a life of evil. If He does prevent evils, then the entire concept of freedom is undermined, consequently the entire structure of Providence collapses.

The aim of Providence is a heaven from the Human Race, and this aim is so powerful that the Lord never turns from it. By allowing people freedom, the Lord allows, or permits the abuse of freedom. However, when people chose to act in evil ways, the entire power of providence then comes into action to maintain the individual's true freedom, with the aim of leading him or her back to a heavenly life:

Therefore, as every moment of its operation or at every step of its progress, when it perceives a person to deviate from its end, it [i.e. providence] directs, bends and disposes him in accordance with its laws by withdrawing him from evil and leading him to good...this cannot be done without permitting evil (@DP 234).

This introductory passage ends with the following, and important, reminder:

Moreover, nothing can be permitted without a cause, such a cause is only to be found in some law of

the Divine Providence which explains why it is permitted (@DP 234).

Misunderstanding of the nature of the laws of Permission has lead a great many people away from believing in God, and, if a person wished to, as unfortunately some do, one could deny God altogether. Consider the following reasons in Divine Providence # 236 and 237 why people, when they see evil, conclude that Providence does not exist. We should note in advance that the reasons people give for not believing in God or Providence are based on external things, thus the effects of certain things. A belief in providence can lead one to see that each of these objections can be explained:

#### Biblical Reasons

- Adam and Eve lead astray.
- Cain killing Abel.
- Worshipping the Golden Calf.
- David's sins.
- Solomon establishing idolatry.
- The profanation of the kings of Israel.
- Crucifixion of the Lord.

#### Observations from the World

- The sight of wicked people who are not punished.
- The triumph of evil over good in business.
- Wicked people being granted honor, wealth and power.
- Murder of innocent people.
- The character of some esteemed leaders.

#### Observations of Different Religions

- Many people are ignorant of God.
- Islam is very strong.
- Christianity is comparatively small.
- People claim to be gods.
- People make salvation consist of certain phrases or actions.
- There are many heresies, and Judaism exists.

In addition to the above things, which draw people away from believing in Providence, there are several important theological things generally unknown which would help understand why there are so many apparent paradoxes in the world. However, since these things are unknown, the ignorance of spiritual truths leads further away from belief. The following passage gives four examples of areas where the Christian Church is generally ignorant of the Lord's teaching:

- The whole Christian world has acknowledged three Gods, not knowing that God is one in Person and in Essence, and that He is the Lord.
- It has not been known that in every particular of the Word there is a spiritual sense from which is derives its holiness.
- It has not been known that to shun evils as sins is the Christian religion itself.
- It has not been known that a person lives as a person after death. For people say to themselves, and to one another, Why does the Divine Providence, if there is any, now reveal such things for the first time? (@DP 239)

From the combination of observation of the teachings in the letter of the Word, from the world around us, and from generally not knowing the truth, we can see the dilemma of many people in the world around us. Because they do not understand the spiritual origins of things, they can only judge by external things, and from this, when they see good and evil mixed together, and evil often triumphing over good, they are led to question whether providence actually exists.

In a sense the questions people ask are quite natural - we can only judge things from our personal knowledge. Similarly, we can also only judge things on the grounds of personal experience. If a person learns that God is just, but sees an obvious lack of justice in the world, then that person is likely to question the justice of God, and perhaps even the existence of God.

It is to answer some of these questions that the book, Divine Providence, having established the aim and purpose of creation, and having stressed that God created people with spiritual freedom, now turns to address some of the questions raised by those whose ignorance and circumstances in life have made them question.

## **ANSWERS TO THOSE WHO USE BIBLICAL ISSUES TO QUESTION THE LORD**

- Why did God allow the serpent to lead Adam and Eve astray and not intervene?

The answer to this question is that Adam and Eve were not two people. In the Arcana Coelestia we are shown that they represent the Most Ancient Church, which having been created good, were nevertheless created with spiritual freedom. Unfortunately they used this freedom to turn away from the Lord, and thus the Most Ancient Church fell (@DP 241).

- Their first son, Cain, killed his brother Abel, and God did not withheld him at the time by speaking to him, but only after the deed cursed him.

The answer to this also lies in understanding the spiritual sense of the Word:

"Since by Adam and his wife is meant the Most Ancient Church,... so by Cain and Abel their first sons, are meant the two essentials of the Church, which are love and wisdom, or charity and faith. By Abel is meant love and charity, and by Cain wisdom and faith, in particular wisdom separated from love, or faith separated from charity; and wisdom as well as faith when separated is such that it not only

rejects love and charity, but even destroys them and kills its own brother..." (@DP 242)

From this perspective we can see that the Word is not speaking of two brothers, but a state within people. Thus to argue that the Lord stood by and let Cain kill Abel is a misunderstanding of the Word. In reality, the Lord does everything in His providence, as we have seen earlier, to unite love and faith within a person. However, because we are created with freedom, the Lord allows those who insist to fully separate faith and charity, thus Cain kills Abel within us. The curse of Cain, involves the spiritual state into which those come after death who separate faith from charity... (@DP 242)

- The Israelitish nation worshipped a golden calf in the desert, and acknowledged it as the god which led them out of the land of Egypt. Yet Jehovah saw this from Mount Sinai nearby, and did not seek to prevent it.

Again, this story, understood from the perspective of the internal sense, shows us that the Lord was indeed present in His providence. The children of Israel had carried idolatrous ideas from Egypt with them, and, in order to deliver them from this, they had to be allowed to see the evil as evil, and suffer because of it. The Lord, however, led them away from this evil, into a state of true worship (@DP 243).

- David numbered the people, and in consequence a pestilence was sent upon them, by which so many thousands of men perished, and God, not before but after the deed, sent the prophet Gad to him and announced punishment on him.

The answer again rests in the workings of Divine Providence. Remember two laws of providence:

- a. It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should not be compelled by external means to think and will, and thus to believe and love, the things of religion, but should persuade and at times compel himself to do so (@DP 129).

If the Lord had warned David before his actions (which he knew to be wrong) David would have lost his freedom. The second law to consider is as follows:

- a. It is a law of the Divine Providence that a person should be led and taught by the Lord from heaven by means of the Word, and doctrine and preaching from the word, and this to all appearance as of himself (@DP 154).

David knew the teaching of the Word, and yet choose to go against it. Thus he exercised his freedom and reaped the consequences of that action.

But what about the seventy thousand who died as a result of David's disobedience? It is sometimes argued that they died innocent. However, DP points out that their punishment was not because of David's evil, but from their own. Thus each person is the cause of his or her own punishment (@DP 244).

- Solomon was permitted to establish idolatrous worship.

Again a knowledge of the internal sense shows that Solomon represents the Lord, and that his seven hundred wives and concubines represent the many various and different churches which exist in the

world which the Lord came to redeem (@DP 245).

- Many kings after Solomon were permitted to profane the temple and the holy things of the church.

This represents the departure from and profanation of the church by people who turned from it.

- That nation was permitted to crucify the Lord.

This represents the final state of the Jewish church when all goodness and truth had been destroyed.

In all these above examples, if seem merely from an external, seem to show the Lord ignoring people when they were about to commit evil, and then punish them afterwards. The question, legitimately, is asked why He did not intervene. The answer lies in the common element of each of these things: the Lord always acted according to His providence, which stipulates that if people move outside of the boundaries of good, then certain consequences would follow. If He had intervened, then those individuals would have lost their freedom, and so their complete humanity.

The Lord never intervenes in people's lives to the point of removing or preventing evil. To do that would be to deny the essential points of the Laws of Providence, which is that a person must act in freedom according to reason, and nothing, including the Lord, will interfere with that.

It is not correct, therefore, to assume that because evil exists in this world that the Lord either created it, or that He does not act against it. As said earlier, the Lord permits evils for the sake of an end, which is salvation, and therefore allows evils to happen to the degree that He can bring some sort of good out of it.

## CONFIRMATIONS FROM THE WORLD

People who choose to question the Lord and Providence, look beyond the Word for confirmation that the Lord either does not care, or does not exist. The world around us offers many examples of people whose lives are evil, and yet who seem to enjoy wealth, fame, power and the natural glories of life in this world. Divine Providence, as before, examines the issues one by one.

- Every worshipper of himself and of nature confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he sees in the world so many wicked people, and so many of their impieties in which some of them even glory, and yet no punishment of such by God (@DP 249).

This point raises a real issue for many people. One often hears people ask Why doesn't God strike so and so down? How can God let such evil exist? Questions like these, without the guidance of Divine Providence are impossible to answer. But the answer given is clear:

All impieties and also the glorying in them are permissions, the causes of which are laws of the Divine Providence. Every one may freely, indeed very freely, think what he will, both against God and in favor of God. He who thinks against God is rarely punished in the natural world, because there he is always in a state subject to reformation; but he is punished in the spiritual world after death, for then he can no longer be reformed (@DP 249).



This passage raises interesting points for us:

- a. Our freedom is inviolate.
- b. Punishment would take away our freedom.

If we think about this, we are reminded that human freedom is the Lord's greatest gift to us. It is what sets us apart from animals, and also which allows us to have a reciprocal conjunction with the Lord. If the Lord punished us, He would take away that freedom, because He would interfere with our ability to repent and be reformed, which can only happen from our own free choice.

So it seems as if people are getting away with impiety, but in reality that person is on one of two roads: either he will reform, or he will not. If he reforms he loses the punishment. If not, the punishment is meted out in the spiritual world, because that then becomes the only way in which the person can be kept in a state of order.

Evils as they exist in the world, then, do not happen in isolation, but as a part of the general working of Divine Providence:

That the Laws of the Divine Providence are causes of permissions will also be clear from the following: Evils are permitted for the sake of an end, which is salvation; and from this: the Divine Providence is continual with the wicked and with the good; and lastly from this: the Lord cannot act contrary to the laws of His Divine Providence, because to act contrary to them would be to act contrary to His divine Love and Wisdom, and thus contrary to Himself (@DP 249).

Thus the Lord permits evil, and removes it from people by certain procedures or means, also prescribed in providence. These means allow the person the maximum of personal freedom to think, feel, act and do as he or she wishes.

The Means of Delivering People from Evil

- On a spiritual level: the Decalogue.
- On a moral level: fear of loss of honor, reputation and gain.
- On a civil level: fear of laws, penalty, loss of life. (@DP 249)
- The worshipper of himself and of nature confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he sees the impious advanced to honors and become great in the state and leaders in the church, and that they abound in riches and live in luxury and magnificence, while he sees the worshippers of God living in contempt and poverty.

A person who uses this kind of reasoning to turn away from the Lord is one who bases the essence of life in material things. But, Divine Providence asks, what then are dignities and wealth to the wicked but stumbling blocks? (@DP 250)

A good person, by contrast, does not set his or her mind on these things. In reality, wealth and dignity are illusions that soon lose their ability to uplift a person. In @DP 250, some penetrating questions are asked about the relative happiness of people. The conclusion is that wealth, dignity and so on are not

in themselves creators of happiness. Happiness can only lie in the Lord's kingdom, which

"...is a kingdom of uses, and where there are but few who perform uses for the sake of uses, He causes worshippers of self to be raised to the higher offices, in which everyone is moved to do good by means of his own love" (@DP 250[3]).

Thus we see that the Lord's Divine Providence looks to the greater good, and, in the absence of any one good, the Lord uses selfish people. Wealth and dignity, therefore, is as much a curse as a blessing, it brings no happiness in itself.

- The Worshipper of himself and of nature confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he reflects that wars are permitted and in them the slaughter of so many people, and the plundering of their wealth (@DP 251).

Again, people who use this kind of reasoning against the Lord, do not understand the true nature of things:

It is not from the Divine Providence that wars occur, because they involve murders, plunderings, violence, cruelties and other terrible evils which are diametrically opposed to Christian charity (@DP 251).

Wars arise because people are essentially selfish, and desire to rule over other people. Both individuals and nations are of this character, and, while individuals can be kept in a state of order by civil laws, it is often difficult to keep nations in order by international law. Therefore the evil burning to be allowed out must be permitted to run its course, until people turn away from it.

There is a further reason why wars are permitted: because all wars in this world correspond to spiritual battles in the next. All wars, both natural and spiritual, however, are governed by the Lord's Divine Providence, which is sometimes described as the fortunes of war.

**NOTE**

This passage, @DP 251, on war gives a good and clear explanation of the subject of war. There are many other passages in the Writings which expand and elaborate on this. Attached as Appendix A is a brief outline on some of the other teachings about war.

- The worshipper of himself and of nature confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he reflects according to his perception that victories are on the side of prudence and sometimes not on the side of justice, and that it makes no difference whether the general is an upright person or not.

One of the hard facts of life is that the good guys don't always win! Sometimes justice looses out. However, we often get this perception because we judge from the natural world, and causes lie in the spiritual world. The Lord knows both the past and the present, and so is able to connect things. Remember the statement that the Lord does not allow things to happen unless He is able to bring some good out of it.

It makes not difference whether the general is an upright person or not, because, as was established above (n. 250) the wicked perform uses as well as the good, and the wicked from their own zeal with more ardor than the good (@DP 252).

Therefore there is not point in fretting about the spiritual quality of people since we cannot make spiritual judgments anyway.

## DIFFERENCES OF RELIGION

At this point the focus of the chapter changes to considering the many differences in religion. Many people turn away from the concept of Divine Providence because they see many different religions around them:

"But, I pray you, listen. All human beings that are born, however many and of whatever religion, can be saved, provided only that they acknowledge God and live according to the commandments in the decalogue... With such persons there is the fear of God and love of the neighbor... Because such persons have regard to God in their life and do no evil to the neighbor, they are led by the Lord..." (@DP 253)

This is one of the key points of New Church doctrine concerning salvation. In many other places in the Writings we are shown that people are brought into heaven, not because of what they believe, but because of what they do with their belief. However, many churches teach that only Christians, or even only their particular brand of Christian, is allowed into heaven. Therefore when people hear these assertions, and yet see a multitude of religions in the world, they turn away from the Lord.

- The merely natural man confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he regards the religious conditions of the various peoples, observing that there are some who are totally ignorant of God, and some who worship the sun and the moon, and some who worship idols and graven images (@DP 254).

When people put the onus of spreading religion in the world entirely on their own shoulders, they make a great mistake: the Lord, in His providence, has provided that religion is able to reach all people:

For a knowledge of religion does not come to a person from himself, but through another who has either learned it himself from the Word or by tradition from others who have learned it, as that there is a God, that there are a heaven and a hell, that there is a life after death, and that God must be worshipped in order that a person may be made happy (@DP 254).

Thus religion is present all around the world, in a different form in each part of the globe. The diversity of expressions of basic religious truth, however, it may seem a stumbling block to us, is not so to the Lord:

When once a religion is established in a nation the Lord leads that nation according to the precepts and dogmas of its own religion; and He has provided that in every region there should be precepts similar to those in the Decalogue... Moreover, most nations remote from the Christian world regard those laws not as civil but as divine and hold them sacred (@DP 254).

Heaven is divided into many societies, which provides for the wide diversity of people there.

There are a few who are totally ignorant of God. If these have lived a moral life they are instructed by angels after death and receive in their moral life something spiritual (@DP 254).

- The merely natural man confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he sees that the Mohammedan<sup>3</sup> religion is accepted by so many empires and kingdoms.
- It is preferable to use the term ISLAM

Islam is a stumbling block for many people, especially when they consider that there as many, if not more, Muslims than Christians in the world. Today Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world.

The stumbling block, however, is removed, when one realizes that the Lord raised up Islam to stamp out idolatry, and to bring truth in an adapted way to people:

"By the Divine Providence of the Lord this religion was raised up and adapted to the genius of the Orientals ... to the end that it might destroy the idolatries practiced by so many nations and give the people some knowledge concerning the Lord before they entered the spiritual world. This religion would not have been received by so many kingdoms with power to extirpate idolatries if it had not been suited and adapted to the ideas of thought and life of them all" (@DP 255).

Thus once again we see that stumbling blocks to belief in the Lord's Divine Providence are only problems if we look at them from natural and materialist points of view. If we turn to higher causes and reasons, we are shown clearly that the Lord's providence is in charge of all things, and nothing happens without a reason.

- The merely natural man confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he sees that the Christian religion is accepted only in a smaller part of the habitable globe, called Europe, and is in a state of division there (@DP 256).

Again, this is judgment from external things. It does not matter if Christianity itself is small, because on a spiritual level the light shed from the Word is received in all other religions. The Word is the Lord's presence among us, and is received by anyone who believes it is holy. The division within Christianity is not of the Lord's making, but arises because people interpret the Word differently.

- The merely natural man confirms himself against the Divine Providence because in many kingdoms where the Christian religion is received there are some who claim for themselves Divine power, and desire to be worshipped as gods, and because they invoke the dead (@DP 257).

It cannot be denied that He has permitted them for the sake of the end, which is salvation. For it is known that without the Lord there is no salvation; and since this is so it was necessary that the Lord should be preached from the Word and that the Christian Church by that means should be established (@DP 257).

Many of the leaders of the church, however, turned away from the Lord's teachings, and instituted many things in conflict with the Word. The Lord allowed this, because if He had not allowed it, those same people would have profaned Him and the Word. Thus He gave them the latitude to focus their

minds on things unrelated to Him, and protected them from profanation.

- The merely natural man confirms himself against the Divine Providence from the fact that among those who profess the Christian religion there are some who place salvation in certain phrases which they must think and say and not at all in good works which they must do (@DP 258).
- The merely natural man confirms himself against the Divine Providence by the fact that there by been and still are so many heresies in the Christian world, such as Quakerism, Moravianism, Anabaptism and others.

These two confirmations are basically similar, because those who raise them are often raising the question of why the Lord does not interfere with people, and put them straight on matters of religion. Looked at from an external point of view, this may seem a desirable thing. Nevertheless, seen in light of the Laws of Providence, we can see that the Lord never interferes with people's beliefs, for to do so would be to go entirely against His own laws, which the Lord never does.

Yet it has been provided with everyone, no matter in what heresy he may be with respect to his understanding, may still be reformed and saved, if only he shuns evils as sins and does not confirm heretical falsities in himself. For by shunning evils as sins the will is reformed, and through the will the understanding, which then first emerges out of darkness into light (@DP 259).

Even the worst heresy generally does not blot out the essentials of religion, which are necessary for salvation. These are:

- An acknowledgement of the Divinity of the Lord.
- An acknowledgement of the holiness of the Word.
- The life of charity (@DP 259).
- The merely natural man confirms himself against the Divine Providence by the fact that Judaism still continues.

DP 260 sheds interesting light on this:

"This nation has been preserved and dispersed over a great part of the world for the sake of the Word in its original language, which they more than Christians hold sacred; and in every particular of the Word is the Divinity of the Lord.... This is the end which the Divine Providence has in view in preserving and dispersing them over a great part of the world" (@DP 260).

## THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY ITSELF

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to belief in the Lord and Providence is the nature of the Christian religion itself. In the previous section we look at external aspects of Christianity, but now turn to more internal aspects, that is, the nature of the dogmas of Christianity which create problems for many people.

- A doubt may be raised against the Divine Providence from the fact that the whole Christian world

worships one God under three Persons, that is, three Gods, and that hitherto it has not known that God is one in Person and in Essence, in whom is a Trinity, and that this God is the Lord (@DP 262).

The objection many have to Christianity is over the nature of God: how can one God be three, and three one? Over the centuries, many people have tried to answer these questions, and many have turned from the church because of the inadequacy of the answers given. However, the fault lies not with the Lord but with people themselves (@DP 262[7]). Read @DP 262 carefully and try to understand the argument put forward about how and why the separation of the Lord into three came about.

- A doubt may be raised against the Divine Providence from the fact that hitherto it has not been known that in every particular of the Word there is a spiritual sense from which it derives its holiness.

This knowledge did not come to the fore for two reasons:

- The spiritual sense would have been profaned.
- Genuine truths could not be revealed until the Last Judgment had come (@DP 264).

The Catholics would have profaned the Word because they came into a love of dominion, centralized in the Pope, and in their system of opening and closing heaven. Protestants, would have profaned it by adapting the internal sense to the doctrine of faith alone. Thus the Lord protected the Word from profanation, and thereby also protected the people themselves from profaning.

- A doubt may be raised against the Divine Providence from the fact that hitherto it has not been known that to shun evils as sins is the Christian religion itself (@DP 265).

The reason this has been unknown is because people have blotted it out of the Word by the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

The circumstance that the Christian world for the most part did not know this is from the Law of the Divine Providence that everyone is left to act from freedom according to reason... also from the law that no one is taught immediately from heaven, but mediately through the Word, and doctrine and preaching from the Word ... and also from all the laws of permission, which are also laws of the Divine Providence (@DP 273).

- A doubt may be raised against the Divine Providence from the fact that it has not been known that a person lives as a person after death, and that this has not been disclosed before (@DP 274).

This has not been disclosed because in those who do not shun evils as sins there lies interiorly concealed a belief that a person does not live after death; and that therefore it is a matter of no moment to them whether it is said that a person lives after death or whether it is said that a person will rise again at the day of the Last Judgment (@DP 274).

## CONCLUSION

From these considerations it can be seen that there are many reasons why a person should confirm

him or herself against the Divine Providence. Each of these propositions approaches the subject from a different angle, each more interior than the last. Most of them show that confirming thought against the Divine Providence, is done from an external and materialistic reasoning.

In the first group we examine those who think against the Lord for allowing the wicked to prosper within biblical settings, the second group turns inwards slightly to the subject of religion, and is disturbed by wickedness in daily life. The underlying proposition of these two objections is that the Lord should somehow have intervened and prevented the evil, and, because He did not, they will not believe in Him. The answer, however, is that the Lord allowed these evils to come about because to intervene would have been to go against His own laws of providence. Thus, rather than take away a person's freedom, and thus his humanity, the Lord would rather allow that person to exercise free choice and take the consequences of it.

In the next groups, we see people who turn away from the Lord for more religious reasons: why are there so many religions, why is Christianity so small, and why is Christianity so ignorant.

In answering these accusations, the Lord shows us that the externals of religion are by no means a stumbling block to a person's spiritual development. It doesn't matter what church a person belongs to. In a sense Divine Providence here indicts the questioner because of the negativity of his questions. All people can be led to God, and the Laws of Providence work equally well in all religions.

As to the state of the Christian Church itself, DP has some strong words. The Lord did not hold back the internal sense, or higher knowledge about Himself because He wanted to keep Christians in a state of darkness. The reason was because He needed to protect them from themselves and their own propensity towards profanation. Thus what externally seems to be a hard thing on the part of the Lord, is actually an act of great tenderness and mercy.

Anyone can, if they wish to, deny the Lord's Divine Providence. There are countless reasons one could conjure up to show that the Lord either does not exist, or is unfair, or has no regard for people. But each and every one of these reasons is based on external thinking. If one thought internally, one would come to see that the Lord allows evils for the sake of the end, which is salvation, and this in itself, is merciful.

# Lecture Nine - Evils Permitted for a Reason

## INTRODUCTION

In the previous lecture we looked at the concept of Divine Permission. It was said in the opening passage that when the Lord permits,

"... this does not mean that He wills, but that He cannot avert on account of the end, which is salvation" (@DP 234).

In this lecture we will explore this concept further. For many people the idea that God allows evil for the sake of an ultimate good is hard to understand. But, in order to understand this, one must come to an understanding of what people are like, and how the Lord leads us to salvation. Thus the chapter begins:

"If a person were born into the love into which he was created he would not be in any evil, nor indeed would he know what evil is; for one who has not been in evil, and consequently is not in evil, cannot know what evil is" (@DP 275).

The only example of people not born into evil is that of the Most Ancient Church before their fall. Even the Lord Himself was born into evil, not into actual evil, but, by inheritance from Mary, into an inclination of evil.

What would a person be like if he was not born into evil? The passage continues:

"The love into which a person was created is the love of the neighbor, so that he desires his neighbor's welfare as much as his own, even more than his own, and enjoys the delight which springs from that love while he acts kindly to him, much the same as a parent feels in acting kindly to his children" (@DP 275).

People in this state could contribute to an ideal world - where would be no crime, nor violence, nor wars. Life would be a continual expression of peace.

But unfortunately, people have turned away from this ideal. "The love of the neighbor was turned into the love of self" (@DP 276). Love of self is absolutely opposite loving the Lord and the neighbor. Consider this description from the True Christian Religion:

"The love of self consists in wishing well to oneself alone, and to no others except for the sake of self; not even to the Church, to one's country, to any human society, or to a fellow citizen. This love consists also in doing good to these, but only for the sake of one's own reputation, honor and glory; and if one does not see that these will be secured by so doing, one says in one's heart, 'what does it matter? Why should I do this? What advantage will it be to me?' And then nothing is done. Hence it is evident that he who is in the love of self does not love the church, his country, society, his fellow-citizen or anything truly good, but only himself and what he possesses" (@TCR 400).

People born into the love of self turn themselves away from the Lord and from heaven. The light of



heaven cannot penetrate that person's mind (@DP 276).

Why, then, does the Lord people to come into this dreadful selfish love? Would it not be better for the Lord to remove some of people's freedom and bring them directly into a state of loving the neighbor? The answer is that to do that the Lord would violate every principle of creation and providence.

Thus evils, especially love of self, are permitted for the sake of an end: that a person may be saved.

## PEOPLE ARE IN EVIL

One of the things that is most difficult for people to accept is that they are evil. Not necessarily in active evil, but each one of us is evil in our own right. The source of this evil is what the Writings call "hereditary evil." The result of it is

"... that a person cannot do good of himself, for evil does not do good except such good as has evil within it" (@DP 277).

Thus all the good we do, to the degree that it arises in ourselves, is polluted with hereditary evil. Consider this very similar teaching from the Doctrine of Life:

"If a person wills and does goods before he shuns evils as sins, the goods are not good. This is because ... he is not in the Lord before he does so" (@DLife 24).

Where does our evil come from? Hereditary evil. The inclination towards evil is passed from one generation to the next,

"... and in this way it is increased and grows as it were to a great accumulation, and is transmitted to offspring. Hence it is that there is nothing sound in a person, but he is altogether evil" (@DP 277).

It should also be mentioned here that there is a difference between "hereditary evil" and "original sin." The former is a transmission of inclinations towards evil from one generation to the next. This inclination can be increased or lessened by regeneration - thus a regenerating person will hand on a weakened inclination, and a degenerating parent a stronger inclination. Original sin, however, is an error of thought found in the former church which holds that all people are born into actual sin, as opposed to an inclination to sin, because of the fall of Adam in Eden. According to standard teachings, original sin will doom a person to hell unless he is baptized and or reborn. Hereditary sin, however, damns no one to hell, we end up there when we make our tendencies towards evil our own through a life of evil.

How then, are evils removed from a person?

"That a person must be withdrawn from evil in order that he may be reformed is evident without explanation; for he that is in evil in the world is in evil after his departure from the world; and therefore if evil is not removed in the world it cannot be removed afterwards" (@DP 277).

# HOW EVILS ARE REMOVED

It is on this point that the teaching concerning the permission of evils hangs: with the acknowledgment that people are born into an inclination of evil, and with the acknowledgement that the evil must be removed before one enters the next world, it follows that evil cannot be removed unless we are conscious of them.

While it true that we are not damned on account of our hereditary evil, but because of actual evil, yet it is also true that hereditary evils pollute our actions, preventing us from doing things that are truly good. Therefore hereditary evils must be allowed to be exposed, so that we can recognize them as evil and shun them.

"This does not mean that a person is to do evils in order that they may appear, but that he is to examine himself, not his actions only, but also his thoughts, and what he would do if he were not afraid of the laws and disgrace; especially what evils he holds in his spirit to be allowable, and does not regard as sins; for these he still commits" (@DP 278).

Self examination is the first step of repentance. In the book *The True Christian Religion*, we are shown that repentance begins in and depends on self examination. In this chapter of *Divine Providence* the need and importance of self examination is outlined:

People are given the ability of understanding in order to examine themselves.

"In order that he may see this his understanding has been furnished with higher and lower thought, or interior and exterior thought, to enable him to see from higher or interior thought what his will is doing in the lower or exterior thought" (@DP 278).

This means that we have the ability of rising above our feelings, and to examine them in the light of truth. If we did not have this ability, we would never be able to dissociate ourselves from our evils, with the result that if something felt good, our understanding would label it good, and we would not hesitate to commit the act, even though it may have been most evil.

It should also be noted that the task of the understanding is to examine the things we "believe to be allowable." Remember @DP 81, which states:

"The evils which a person believes to be allowable, even though he does not commit them, are also appropriated to him; since whatever is allowable in the thought comes from the will, and then there is consent. When therefore a person believes any evil to be allowable, he loosens an internal restraint upon it, and he is withheld from doing it only by external restraints, such as fears; and because his spirit favors that evil, when external restrains are removed he does it as allowable; and meanwhile, he continually does it in his spirit" (@DP 81).

Self examination must be thorough. @DP 278 points out some of the many pitfalls people fall into in examining themselves:

- People who label themselves as sinners without any clear idea of what their sin is. A person who does this often believes that sins are washed away - but in reality he or she has never identified a

sin in him or herself, and therefore cannot have them removed (@DP 278).

- Some religions see no use to self examination or repentance (@DP 278). This is especially true of people who believe in a religious conversion or being born again, who believe in salvation through faith alone.
- Some people are so engrossed in the world that they place no importance on spiritual matters (@DP 278).
- Then there are those who are in active sin:

"These are they who acknowledge God and worship Him according to the customary ceremonials, and who convince themselves that any evil which is a sin is not a sin; for they disguise it by fallacies and appearances, and so hide its enormity" (@DP 278).

With these people the sin is suppressed, and therefore smolders in them like a fire:

"for evil that is denied and outlet increases and does not abate until the whole has been destroyed" (@DP 278).

- Some evils are unknown, and as a result cannot be removed without the person searching himself, and then acknowledging and confessing the sin. We cannot really fight against evils we do not see or recognize.

Because of self examination, the Lord permits evils so that they can be brought to our view and so shunned. If we had no measure of sin in our lives, we would never recognize the vast distance separating us from the angels. Thus the Lord permits evil, not because he wants us to do evil, but so that from seeing evil in others and in ourselves, we can become conscious of them, and search them out in ourselves, and shun them.

The concept of how the Lord removes evil from us is one distinct to the New Church. The Christian world abounds with concepts and theories of how evil is removed. This varies from the sacramental inbalancing of evil by performing good works, which, through a balance of good and evil in us, will hopefully tilt towards good, and the evil will loose its power and disappear. In the Protestant world, it is largely believed that one's evils are remitted through an act of placing faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ.

In @DP 279 these concepts are examined and refuted:

- "It is an error of the present age to believe that evils are separated and indeed cast out when they are remitted" (@DP 279). Evils are not cast out:

"They all remain, and when after repentance they are remitted, they are moved from the centre to the outskirts" (@DP 279).

One way of understanding this is to consider that when a person is in actual evil, the evil occupies the centre of his or her mind. It is the focus of thought. However, during the process of repentance, the person loses interest in the evil, and they eventually become dormant in the mind. They are still there, but are as if asleep, they certainly no longer occupy the centre.

This is quite a different concept from the idea that evils are washed away. We cannot never be "washed" of our evils, they are part of us, and indeed, are part of the makeup and definition of our personalities.

- "It is an error of the present age to believe that the state of a person's life can be changed in a moment, so that from being wicked he can become good, and consequently can be brought out of hell and straightway transferred to heaven, and this from the immediate mercy of the Lord" (@DP 279).

People cannot be saved in a moment, because the Lord saved people through a system - people must repent and voluntarily turn away from evil.

This then, brings us back to our consideration of why evils are permitted: because during our life in this world we are kept in a state of continually turning away from evil, and of fighting it. This could not happen if we were unable to see evil, to intellectually and emotionally reject it, and fight against it as if from our own power - recognizing that the power is really the Lord's.

- "Those who entertain this belief do not in the least know what evil is and what good is." For many people evil is some sort of grand evil, as perhaps Hitler was evil. Many people do not see evil in their daily actions, and so know very little about it. Thus the Lord allows evils to appear, because if He did not, no one would recognize it, and would simply wait for the Lord "to save them", believing themselves washed clean.
- "Those who believe in instantaneous salvation and immediate mercy do not know that affections, which belong to the will, are nothing but changes of state of the purely organic substances of the mind, and that thoughts which belong to the understanding, are nothing but changes and variations in the form of these substances, and that memory is the permanent record of them" (@DP 279).

In other words, those who believe in instant salvation have a very simplistic idea of what spiritual things really are. They don't understand the structure and functions of the mind, nor do they understand the spiritual things which occur in the mind, with the result that they believe that faith alone will change and save them. Thus the Lord allows evils to surface emerge into people's lives so that by seeing evil they might still be repelled by it and turn from it.

There are also people, mostly Catholics, who believe that a person is saved through the sacraments of the church. These people are also in error, because ultimately they also believe that the Lord washes away their sins on account of, or as a reward for their belief.

The Lord can only remit sins when a person through the acts of repentance and reformation, actually fights against them. Then the Lord breaks the stranglehold the evil has on a person, pushes them to the "edge" of the person's mind, and they cease to be a bother.

"Thus the permission of evil is for the sake of the end, namely salvation" (@DP 281).

# WHY EVILS APPEAR

As we look at the world around us, we become very aware of evil: atheism, blasphemy, impious and wicked things abound, such as things fraudulent, lascivious, revengeful and others. The list is long.

Remember that all people are born into evils of many kinds (@DP 281). These evils greatly influence the way people think, speak and act. Initially it might seem a good idea for the Lord to simply impose His will:

"It will now be shown what a person would be like if he were not permitted to think in accordance with the delights of his life's love. He would no longer be a person, for he would lose his two faculties called liberty and rationality, in which humanity itself consists. The delights of these evils would occupy the interiors of his mind to such a degree that they would open up that door. Then he would not be able to do otherwise than speak and commit such evils, and thus his insanity would be manifest not only to himself but also to the world, and he at length would not know how to cover his shame" (@DP 281).

If evils were not permitted by the Lord they would build up such pressure within us that they would burst forth in all their grotesqueness, and the race would be engulfed.

To protect us from this state, the evils are permitted to emerge gradually under more controlled circumstances. Society imposes various restraints from without, and faith provides some from within, so that gradually the person is brought to the point where he or she rejects that evil, through the process of repentance, and so lessens the pressure from within. In this way the Lord allows a person to let off spiritual steam.

It is interesting to note that the Lord could have just changed people, and why He does not:

"It would have been possible for the Lord to heal the understanding in every one, and so cause him to think not evil but good, and this by means of fears of various kinds, by miracles, by conversations with the dead, and by visions and miracles" (@DP 282).

Note that these means would all have transgressed the Lord's own Divine Laws of Providence - and so to do so would have violated His own creation. But there is another reason as well:

"But to heal the understanding alone is to heal a person outwardly only; for the understanding with its thought is the external of a person's life, while the will with its affection is the internal of his life. Therefore, the healing of the understanding alone would be like palliative healing, by which the interior malignity, shut in and prevented from coming out, would destroy first the near and then the remote parts until the whole would become mortified" (@DP 282).

Therefore evils are permitted, because if they were not, no one would be able to be saved. By a sight of evil we are shown what goodness is on a spiritual, moral and civil level, and so the Lord heals us of our evils - He provides us with an understanding not only of evil, but of the process of rejecting it, and through its rejection He implants a love of goodness in a new will, one not polluted with hereditary evil, but one open to Himself, from which, when we act in accordance with it, we do good.

# Lecture Ten - Good and Evil

## INTRODUCTION

In the past few chapters we have examined the relationship of Divine Providence and evil. In chapter 8 we were shown that evil does not have its origin in the Lord's will, but because He created us with freewill, the Lord therefore permits evil as an expression of freedom. For Him not to have permitted the existence of evil would have been to deny human freedom, and thus undercut the entire structure of Divine Laws we call "Providence".

The permission of evil, however, does not mean that the Lord wishes evil - to the contrary. In Chapter 9 it was established that the Lord only permits evil for the sake of an end, or goal, and that goal is human salvation. Thus the Lord permits us to come into evil states in order that our evils might become obvious to us, and through seeing them in ourselves or in others, we might become so disgusted with them and their effects, that we turn away from them to the Lord. Thus evil can be used by the Lord to contribute to our salvation.

In continuing with this subject, we are shown that when a person is in a state of evil, that is, in a state focused away from the Lord and on self, the person is under the Laws of Divine Permission, which are a part of the Laws of Providence. The Lord deals with all people in the same way, but when a person turns towards evil, the person comes into conflict with the laws of providence, and thus instead of experiencing them as positive or affirmative, the person experiences them negatively or as punishment.

Thus for every law of providence with the good, there is an opposite for the evil. The change of the law is really a changed perception of the law, for an evil person will feel the Lord's presence differently from a good person. We can get a concept of this from our own behavior in this world: an innocent law abiding citizen senses the police as a positive presence, maintaining law and order, and protective of the citizenry. A guilty criminal, however, has a different concept. He or she views the police as a menace, out to undermine and punish the criminals activities. Thus the police are a threat to criminals.

This different perspective of Divine Providence comes from the fact that the Lord in creating people made them as full human beings:

DP 285: "In every one, whether good or evil, there are two faculties, one of which constitutes the understanding, and the other the will."

These two faculties, or abilities represent the Lord's presence in all people

"... indeed in the most individual, things of a person's understanding and thought and also of his will and affection, and consequently in the most individual things of his speech and action. If you remove these faculties from even the most individual thing, you will not be able to think or say it as a person" (@DP 285).

It is because of these two faculties that a person is human, and because they belong to the Lord, and

not to us, they can never be removed. Thus all people, good and evil alike, have the Lord within themselves, present in their ability to think rationally and act in freedom from that rationality. This is the first of the five laws of Divine Providence, and it is a law that can never be violated.

From this point we can come to the main thrust of this chapter: the fact that the Lord in His Divine Providence is equally with the wicked and with the good.

## THE LORD IS NOT IN EVIL

For many people, the concept that evil is a product of human freedom, plus the fact that human freedom is Divinely given, and most carefully protected, leads to the concept that the Lord is the source of evil. Nothing, however, can be further from the truth. The Lord is present with all people from creation. But the process by which a person takes that presence and twists it into evil is a process entirely human. In the process of turning the Lord's presence into evil, the person in effect removes him or herself from the Lord.

How does this process work? Remember that "the Divine Providence is in the most individual things of a person's thoughts and affections" (@DP 287). However in recalling that Divine Providence is "in the most individual things of a person's thoughts and affections" consider the following:

- a. "the Lord by means of His Divine Providence arranges the affections [of the whole human race] into one form, which is the human form. It will be seen ... that this is the universal end of the Divine Providence" (@DP 201).
- b. "But reflect within yourself what universal providence is when the individual things are taken away... If it should be said that the Divine Providence is a universal government, while nothing is governed, but things are merely maintained in connection, and matters pertaining to government are disposed by others, can this be called a universal government?" (@DP 201)
- c. "Providence with God is called prudence with men... But the case really is that the Divine Providence is in the most individual things of nature and in the most individual things of human prudence, and from these it is universal" (@DP 201[e]).
- d. "The Divine Providence of the Lord is universal from the most individual things because He created the universe in order that there might exist in it an infinite and eternal creation from Himself; and this creation exists that the Lord might form from men a heaven which should appear before Him as one who should be the image and likeness of Himself" (@DP 202).
- e. "Hence it follows that unless a person were led by the Lord every moment, yea, every minutest fraction of a moment, he would depart from the way of reformation and perish..." (@DP 202)

The Lord is present with a person from and by means of creation, for it is by this presence that He is able to fulfill the end of all creation, that is, a heaven from the human race. It is obvious, therefore, that He is present with both the good and the evil.

Because the Lord is present with us, everything that is us, that is, all our thoughts and feelings, also have their origin in the Lord. If they did not, then we would live from ourselves and not from the Lord. Thus we are told "that a person can think and will nothing from himself, but that everything he thinks

and wills, and consequently says and does, is from influx" (@DP 287). The next passage begins:

"All the angels of heaven confess that no one can think from himself but only from the Lord; while all the spirits of hell assert that no one can think from any other than himself" (@DP 288).

This concept has profound connotations for our sense of selfhood. If all our thoughts and feelings flow into us from the Lord, how then do we explain the presence of evil without ascribing it to the Lord Himself?

The solution to this problem lies in looking not at the origin of thought and feelings, but at the way in which the influx from the Lord is received by people:

"... all thought and affection, even with spirits of hell, flow in from heaven [the origin of the influx]; but that the good with flows in is, in hell [the recipient] turned into evil and the truth into falsity, thus everything into its opposite" (@DP 288).

The freedom to receive or not to receive the Lord's influx is the first law of providence, and so is inviolable. It is up to the individual, therefore, to determine what he or she is going to do with the Lord's influx.

People, however, do not live in isolation from each other, especially in the spiritual world. Influx from the Lord is passed through heaven, through the world of spirits, before it reaches us. But influx also passes into and connects the hells together. Thus no one is an island, we are connected by influx, and therefore we think and feel in agreement with our spiritual associations. Swedenborg relates:

"I was told from heaven that, like others, I believed that I thought and willed from myself when in fact there was nothing from myself, but if there was good it originated from the Lord, and if evil it originated from hell" (@DP 290).

The fact of this influx of thought and will is covered with the appearance of self life, for without the "as of self" we would have no ability to think rationally, nor to choose in freedom. Thus in order to maintain the integrity of the five laws of Providence, the Lord shrouds the reality of inflowing thought with the freedom of the appearance of self life.

But to come back to the issue of how this influx is turned to evil:

"Everything that a person thinks and wills, and consequently speaks and does, flows in from one sole Fountain of life, and yet that one Fountain of life, which is the Lord, is not the cause of a person's thinking what is evil and false" (@DP 292).

The origin of evil, therefore, is the reception of this influx according to our freedom, based on the appearance of self life. To explain this concept, Swedenborg uses the image of the sun:

\*it flows into good and evil trees.

\*it flows into good seed and also into tares.

\*it warms the eggs of both doves and vipers.



The matter at issue, therefore, is the recipient vessel of the Lord's heat and light. Understanding this principle allows us to understand the following three points:

- People are in fault if they do evil. If all thought and feeling flow into us from the Lord, and yet we turn it to evil through our reception of it, then we are faulty receptors:

"Nevertheless, the fault is in him who receives, because he receives it as his own; and he neither knows nor desires to know otherwise" (@DP 294[2]).

- It seems that evil originates from the Lord.

"Anyone can see that evil and falsity do not originate from good and truth, and consequently not from the Lord, but from the recipient subject and object which is in evil and falsity and which perverts and inverts that which flows in" (@DP 294[4]).

- "the Lord alone causes everyone to think and to will in accordance with his own peculiar quality and in accordance with the laws of His Providence" (@DP 294[e]).

Thus we can see that the Lord is present equally with the evil and with the good. But that does not mean that He supports and encourages the evil. Evil itself is a perversion and inversion of good. Thus the two are completely opposed to each other, having different ends and goals.

## CONFLICT OF GOOD AND EVIL

Up until now we have been made aware of the universality of good, because it is the presence of the Lord in all things. In order, however, to understand the conflict between good and evil, it is also necessary to understand something about the nature and quality of evil itself.

- Evil is complex:

"In a person's sight every evil appears as one single thing... and it is not known that in every evil there are innumerable things, exceeding in number the fibres and vessels in a person's body" (@DP 296).

If good is an image of heaven, then evil is an image of hell "and hell consists of myriads of myriads of spirits, and every one there is in a form like a person, although a monstrous one..." (@DP 296).<sup>4</sup> Because, as we have seen earlier, all things in the spiritual world are connected, each evil spirit is connected to the next by bonds of hatred, anger, revenge and so on. Thus one evil spirit represents a whole range of spirits. It is from this fact that one evil in this world contains within it many evils.

- Myriads of myriads = millions

For example consider the evils present in a single sin, say the act of adultery: \* adultery itself \* Lying to one's spouse \* cruelty to spouse \* Pure selfishness \* useless sensation \* Self delusion of fun

The list can go on and on. Every evil has a whole sub-list of evils contained within each thought, feeling or act. From this we can begin to get some idea of the connectedness of hell.

In the combat between good and evil, evil has to be fought on all its levels in order for good to truly win:

"Hence it follows that all these in their order must be restored and changed by the Lord in order that the person may be reformed; and this cannot be effected unless by the Divine Providence of the Lord, step by step from the earliest period of a person's life to the last" (@DP 296).

- Evil multiplies itself:

"A wicked person from himself continually leads himself more and more deeply into his evils... the real reason why the wicked person immerses himself more deeply in evil is that as he wills and commits evil he advances into infernal societies more and more interiorly and also more and more deeply. Hence also the delight of evil increases, and so occupies his thoughts that at last he feels nothing more pleasant" (@DP 296[3]).

In a sense, evil is a trap: it lures one into it, and then when the person is caught up in the evil, it strengthens its hold over the person, until eventually the person loses any desire to give it up. One useful comparison to this is the natural vice of smoking: a first time smoker may well not enjoy the experience. But after a while it becomes first a conscious habit, then a deeply engrained habit, and finally the person is hard-pressed to imagine a smoke-free life. There are many stories of people battling to give up smoking. Evil follows a similar pattern on a spiritual level, except that evil of life leads a person into a closer and closer association with hell:

"It is not known, however, that this increase of delight comes from a person's penetrating into infernal societies more and more interiorly and more and more deeply as he commits the evils from will and at the same time from thought" (@DP 296).

In order for evils to be really binding on us, both the will and thought need to be present - will alone does not make one evil. Evil requires both parts of the mind to be active, especially when the thought, from set evil purpose puts aside the concepts which should have held the person back. Thus:

"If he then also thinks that the evil is contrary to the precepts of the Decalogue, and considers these precepts as Divine, he commits the evil of set purpose, and thereby plunges to a depth from which he can be led out only by actual repentance" (@DP 296[5]).

- Even so, evil is governed by Divine Providence.

In spite of the conflict between good and evil within a person, and apart from the fact that a single evil act, done from intention, binds us to all hell, the Lord never abandons us. Evil, as we saw earlier, is a permission, that is, the Lord does not will evil, but He allows or permits us to be evil as an expression of our free choice. He also allows evil for the sake of an end, which is the salvation of the human race. Thus He allows evil in order to withdraw us from it.

"Now since everything that a wicked person wills and thinks is of permission the question arises, what then is the Divine Providence here, which is said to be in the most individual things with every one, both wicked and good?" (@DP 296[8])

The Divine Providence is this:

- It permits evil for the sake of salvation
- It keeps evil continually under view
- It separates evils from a person and purifies the person
- It removes by unknown ways things which interfere with salvation.

Thus the Divine Providence is continually working towards a person's salvation:

"This is the Lord's continual Providence with the wicked and is, as has been stated, a continual permission of evil to the end that there may be an unceasing withdrawal from it" (@DP 296[8]e).

But how do we fit into this picture, after all, the person in this world is the field upon which this battle is fought: hell in us leads us to twist and pervert Divine influx, leading us deeper and deeper into hell. The Lord, by comparison, allows this to happen to enable us to see evil and be repelled from it, thus He is able to gradually remove the delight of evil from us.

In one sense the person in this world is caught between these two forces:

"man knows scarcely anything of these operations because he does not perceive them. The chief reason why he does not perceive them is that the evils pertain to the lusts of his life's love and these evils are not felt as evils but as delights to which no one pays attention" (@DP 296).

Would we pay attention, then, to our evil thoughts, loves and actions if we did not come to some realization of the evil which is within them? Would we turn from evil if we did not learn the truth, and see the consequences of evil? Thus the Lord provides countless ways of ridding us of evil.

- The Lord gets rid of evils in us:

"The withdrawal from evil is effected by the Lord in a thousand ways that are most secret" (@DP 296[10]).

A general description of how the Lord purifies a person is outlined:

- a. lusts are introduced into a person's spirit by companies of evil spirits.
- b. these lusts then enter the exterior thought and give the person a degree of satisfaction (i.e. the person enjoys the thoughts or feelings)
- c. the lusts then mingle with sensual delights (i.e. the person then begins to act out the evil)

It is at this point that the person, in bringing evil into act, makes those evils his or her own. But it is also at this point that the Lord can begin to lead a person away from them. This likewise is a process:

- a. a person becomes aware of conflicting thoughts. (Imagine an adulterer who begins to think about the ideals of marriage.)
- b. the person begins to desire the alternative.

c. thus the person can be led to separate him or herself from the evil.

This process, however, only works with those who are willing to cooperate with the Lord:

"With a wicked person no separation, purification and removal is possible other than of the more grievous from the less grievous evils. With a good person, however, there can be a separation, purification and removal not only of the more grievous but also of the less grievous evils. This is effected by the delights of the affections of the good and true, of the just and of the sincere, into which he comes so far as he regards evils as sins, and so shuns and turns away from them, and still more if he fights against them. These are the means by which the Lord cleanses all who are saved" (@DP 296[12]).

Throughout this process the Lord ensures that all we are conscious of in this world is the most general view of sin. We are never able to see all the hidden multitudes of spirits, because if we could, we would be overwhelmed and incapable of being ourselves salvable. Thus the Lord hides the reality of evil from us, and leaves us to cope with the external sin and its [not inconsiderable] consequences.

## **HUMAN COOPERATION WITH THE LORD**

Earlier in this study we were introduced to the concept of the reciprocal conjunction between people and the Lord. In the treatment of the first law of Providence we were told that

"The conjunction of the Lord with a person, and the reciprocal conjunction of a person with the Lord, are effected by means of these two faculties [i.e. rationality and liberty]. Conjunction with the Lord and regeneration are one, for so far as anyone is conjoined to the Lord he is regenerated..." (@DP 92)

We have also seen that the Lord is present in our thoughts and feelings, thus in our understanding and will, and by means of these leads us towards heaven. Our responsibility is to respond to the Lord in this leading. It follows, therefore, that before we can be conjoined to the Lord, and thus regenerated, we need to acknowledge that our prudence is nothing, that the Lord is the source of all good, and then submit our lives to His:

"The wicked cannot be wholly withdrawn by the Lord from evil and led in good so long as they believe their own intelligence to be everything, and the Divine Providence nothing" (@DP 297).

Submission to the Lord's Word is the only way one can be freed from evil. There is an appearance that we can do this from ourselves, provided we think analytically about something. Thus there is an appearance that we do not need the Lord. However, this is not a true appearance.

It is true that both good and evil people can think analytically, examine and see the nature of evil. People from themselves can even denounce evil, and turn away from it. But, they cannot be led out of that evil by their own power. The following passage is important to consider in this regard:

"... A person is not able to withdraw himself from evil; because the faculty of understanding and perceiving things, even abstractly, is given by the Lord to everyone, the wicked as well as the good ... and yet a person cannot by means of this faculty deliver himself from evil; for evil pertains to the will, and the understanding flows into the will with light only, enlightening and teaching. If then the heat of

the will, that is, a person's love, is glowing from the lust of evil it is cold as to the affection of good, and therefore does not receive the light, but either reflects it or extinguishes it, or by some falsity devised for the purpose turns it into evil" (@DP 297).

In order to understand this, consider the following concepts:

- a. If a person's will is evil, the person only sees evil, and has no desire to see anything other than evil (@DP 298).
- b. If a person from an evil will sees truth, he then turns it away or falsifies it (@DP 298[3]).
- c. In contrast to this, the Divine Providence "causes a person to see truth and also gives him the affection of perceiving it and of receiving it" (@DP 298[4]).
- d. The Lord delivers us from evil by means of this affection of truth - this is the only way out of evil:

"When the Divine Providence grants the perception of truth and at the same time the affection of it, a person can be withdrawn from evil because truth points out and dictates; and when the will performs what truth dictates it unites itself with the truth and within itself it converts the truth into good; and the truth becomes the truth of its love, and what belongs to the love is good. All reformation is effected by means of truth, and not without it; for without truth the will is continually in its evil, and if it consults the understanding it is not instructed, but the evil is confirmed by falsities" (@DP 298[5]).

Thus we can see the continual battle raging within us between the hells trying to drag us down into hell, and the Lord trying to lift us up into heaven. The battle is fought according, however, to the laws of Divine Providence. Hell is always under the direct oversight of the Lord, and His permission controls the entire process.

#### THE LORD'S GOVERNMENT OF HELL

The concept that the Lord governs hell may come as a surprise to many people who believe that Satan or Lucifer rule hell. But in fact, the Divine Providence is universal, in all things, even in hell. However, the way the Lord governs the hell is quite different from the way He rules heaven.

"The Lord governs hell by means of opposites and the wicked while in the world He governs in hell as to their interiors but not as to their exteriors" (@DP 299).

By doing this the Lord remains true to the laws of providence. By governing a person interiors, He continually works to undermine the evil, to lessen its impact and desirability. But by not governing by means of opposites in a person's exteriors, means that He leaves a person in spiritual freedom, to continue to choose between good and evil.

In order to understand how the Lord governs a person in this way, it is necessary to remember that the Lord created us in such a way that our mind is a miniature form of the spiritual world. Both heaven and hell exist in us, and the laws which apply in the spiritual world apply to us on a mental level (cf. @DP 299).

# CONCLUSION

Thus we can see how the Lord's Divine Providence is equally with the good and with the evil - but present in different ways. With the good He is present in the Laws of Providence, continually leading the person to greater and greater states of goodness. With the evil He is present in the laws of permission, and His presence with them is a continual process of leading them out of evil into a state of good. Thus while the Lord affirms the good in good people, He also affirms the good in evil, but He does not affirm the evil.

Form this we see how the Lord, in Providence created people in order to populate His heavens. His presence affects each person life, but even so, He never dictates how a person should react to Him. He is not the cause nor the source of evil, and certainly never inflicts evil upon anyone. He never punishes, but leads the evil gradually, in freedom away from their evil life.

Ultimately, the person in this world has to make a choice between following the Lord or rejecting Him. If they choose to follow, they have the Lord's help every inch of the way. If they choose to reject Him, He still helps them come to good, and if they steadfastly refuse, then He permits them to remain in that state and reap the consequences.

# Lecture Eleven - The Appropriation of Good and Evil

## INTRODUCTION

In everything we have read about the Divine Providence so far, we can see clearly that the Laws of Divine Providence were provided for the sake of the reciprocal conjunction between the Lord and people. To achieve this, the Lord gave people the appearance of self-life, the "as of self", and this appearance is so strong that without doctrine to inform us, we would know no different but that we live, think, and act entirely from ourselves. We even have the capacity to become atheists, denying the very source of our lives.

Because of the strength of this appearance, the Lord reminds us firstly that there is in reality no such thing as human prudence. All our thoughts and feelings flow into us from the spiritual world, affecting us by placing us into communication with entire societies of angels and spirits. This communication, however, is unconscious, but is nevertheless real, having a tremendous influence on our own personalities and on the choices we make.

The as of self principle is also given to people in order to establish genuine spiritual freedom, without which we would not be able to have the reciprocal conjunction with the Lord. Human freedom, unfortunately, presupposes the concept that people are free to choose to follow the Lord or not. Thus while the Lord Himself is not the creator of evil, evil came into the world through human choice.

The concept of human evil and the role it plays in our lives is vitally important in the entire concept of Divine Providence. Not only does it interfere with our relationship with the Lord and the neighbor, but it also calls into being a response from the Lord.

Thus we are presented with the entire concept of the Laws of Permission: the Lord does not will evil, but because human freedom conceived it, the Lord permits it, but only for the sake of an end, which is salvation. In the permission of the evil, the Lord allows a person, by seeing evil, to be brought to the point at which the person is willing to be led out of the evil, and thus delivered from it. Finally, we are shown how in His mercy the Lord never abandons anyone, but works as closely with the evil, to lead him or her to goodness, as He does to strengthen goodness in the good person.

The permission of evil, therefore, is a part of the mercy of the Lord. It is inconceivable that the Lord would destroy the human race after giving it the freedom to choose not to follow Him. It is entirely conceivable that the Lord would work with the person in evil to bring him or her back into the sheepfold.

Having considered this, one is led to the question of how the Lord regards evil in a person, or, in other words, how does a person become responsible for evil?

The answer to this question is the main focus of Chapter 11.

# HUMAN PRUDENCE

That people become evil is an inescapable fact of life. Each person, with some self examination, can become aware of evil loves and feelings, or thoughts, speech and actions. In a sense evil is a part of our make-up. But how does a small baby, born in innocence end up a mass murderer, or as a devil driven only by self concern?

The answer lies in the way the Lord made people. In creation the Lord gave us, for the sake of human freedom, the appearance of self life. As we have seen in previous chapters, self life is an appearance. During an argument with spirits who believed in the fullness of self life, Swedenborg says:

"To this I could only answer that it is absurd and insane to believe that a person is life from himself, and that wisdom and prudence do not flow in from God, but are in a person..." (@DP 309)

## SPIRITUAL INSANITY

Causes of Spiritual Insanity:

- To only believe things one can understand (@AC 1630)
- To think evil and falsity (@AC 1914)
- To adopt the negative principle (@AC 2568[4])
- To reject heavenly things (@AC 5116[e]) (Especially conjugal love)

These are strong words. Spiritual insanity is a condition prevailing in hell with those who deny the Lord. Why are they insane? Because it is insane to deny the obvious. In this world, it is insane to insist that one is Napoleon, when obviously one is not. In the spiritual world, where the Lord can be present to angels and spirits as the Spiritual Sun, to deny that presence is a denial of the obvious.

The key to understanding spiritual insanity, and thus how one becomes evil, lies in the concept people have of their own prudence. In an earlier chapter the subject of prudence was discussed, and it was shown that there is no real human prudence, but that all prudence is from the Lord Himself. Our prudence is part of the appearance of self life given to us by the Lord to protect and preserve our spiritual freedom.

There are people, however - and probably ourselves included - who choose to act as if their prudence was truly their own:

"They are in their own prudence who confirm appearances in themselves and make them truths, especially the appearance that one's own prudence is everything and the divine Providence nothing, unless it is something universal..." (@DP 310)

The person in this state has no belief in the Lord and His guidance, except in a very general way. He or she may think of the Lord as a sort of force, generally directing life, but not involved in the details. Truth is what they decide is true. Thus they believe themselves to be the source and reference of things in this world.



The basis of this belief lies in the fact that according to the Laws of Providence, no one can feel the Lord's presence. If we could it would take away our freedom. Therefore no one can prove that God exists, or that there is a life after death. We cannot really prove that something is good or evil. For many people, relying on their own reasoning in solving the questions of life is the only solution.

The difficulty arises, however, when people base all their judgment only on things they can sense: if something cannot be seen, touched, tasted, heard or felt, then it has no reality. This effectively rules out our spiritual ideas, values, morals, and especially theological concepts.

But, trusting only in one's sense is spiritually dangerous:

"... every appearance confirmed as a truth becomes a fallacy; and so far as they confirm themselves by fallacies they become materialists; and to that extent they believe nothing but what they can at the same time perceive by one of the bodily senses... Such persons finally become sensual; and if they confirm themselves in favor of nature against God, they close the interiors of the mind..." (@DP 310)

This is the root cause of spiritual insanity - it divorces the mind from the reality of the Lord, and submerges it in the merely natural things. The end result as described can be quite horrifying.

This approach to life is essentially one of denial of spiritual things. Thus a person who relies only on his or her prudence for guidance, will find the way of heaven closed off - not because the Lord closes it, but because the person him or her self does so.

The contrast between a reliance in human prudence and genuine prudence from the Lord is marked. The person who trusts only in self ends up in spiritual insanity, while the person who rises above the senses, and is willing to put trust and faith in the Lord, ends up in a state of angelic wisdom. Placed side by side, the differences between human and genuine prudence gives a very clear idea of the two:

Nature of Human Prudence:

- Crafty and cunning.
- Regard those who worship the Lord as stupid.
- Regard murder, adultery, theft and false witness as of no account.
- Think people are like animals.
- Have warped idea of angels and spirits.
- Confirm themselves in the love of self.
- End up in hell.

(From @DP 310)

Nature of Genuine Prudence:

- They think interiorly (and believe others think in the same way).
- They perceive evils as sins and shun them.

- They seek wisdom.
- They speak simply and sincerely.
- They are images of heaven.

(from @DP 311)

"Everyone may know that the character of a person is determined by what he is interiorly; and consequently that he is a person who is interiorly what he wishes to appear to be exteriorly, while he is an effigy who is a person only exteriorly and not interiorly. If you think, as you speak, in favor of God and of religion, of righteousness and of sincerity, you will be a person, and the Divine Providence will then be your prudence, and you will see in others that one's own prudence is insanity" (@DP 311[e]).

## HOW PRUDENCE IS THE SOURCE OF EVIL

In creating the human race, the Lord, as we have seen, provided for total spiritual freedom, yet He did not create evil. People who choose to misuse their human appearance of prudence, and who rejected genuine spiritual freedom, create evil. When people follow this route, they deny themselves the acknowledgment of the reality that they are recipients of life, and therefore they take on the responsibility of both good and evil within themselves: "Man from his own prudence persuades himself and confirms that all good and all truth originate from himself and are in himself; and in like manner all evil and falsity" (@DP 312).

At first this may seem like theological quibbling, but the difference it makes in the reality of life, both natural and spiritual, is amazing.

If a person believes good to originate within him or herself, then good and evil, truth and falsity cease being objective things, and become purely subjective. Therefore, instead of looking at the use of things, one looks at the impact of things, and, when one views the world from this latter perspective, the world takes on a very different series of properties.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that whether a person believes in spiritual things or not, the spiritual things continue to exist and impact the mind. The problem is, that with those whose thought is based only on the sensual things of this world, the kind of spirits who are present with them, are also in the same frame of mind.

The character of people's thoughts in this state is described in DP 314:

- They believe that information solely flows into them from their senses, and their thoughts are reactions to this information. However, this is inverted, because our senses are governed by our inner thoughts and feelings - the way we see the world around us is largely due to our own inner being.
- They do not know that thoughts have reality and substance.
- They cannot understand the nature of LIFE itself, believing it to be something ethereal.

"These things are set forth that it may be seen how a person is infatuated by his own prudence, as he forms all his conclusions from appearances and from fallacies based on them" (@DP 315).

A person, therefore, who relies on his or her own prudence to explain issues of life, will end up having a warped perception of reality. Mainly the problem lies in their self-centered notion that all things begin and stop in their own reasoning process. This is a very limiting position to hold in life, because it prevents a person from rising above the mere appearances of things, to the grander view. By analogy, consider how much we have learned since Galileo proved that the earth was not the centre of the universe, but actually revolved around the sun. The limitation of ancient science would have limited our ability to explore space and reap the benefits of the wonderful technology developed for that exploration.

"All who are led by the Divine Providence of the Lord are elevated above their proprium and then they see that all good and truth are from the Lord; indeed, they even see that what is in a person originating from the Lord is always the Lord's and never a person's" (@DP 316).

This world view is completely different from that of a person who trusts only his or her own prudence - it is the liberating view of reality, bringing life into perspective, giving it meaning and purpose.

Living only in the appearance of things has an added disadvantage: we determine our spiritual lives by the confirmation of truth and its presence in our activities as good. This is the basic application of the first law of Divine Providence, to act from reason in freedom. Unfortunately, the corollary is also true: as a person confirms falsity, so it too appears in activity as evil, with the result that the person's reason is subverted, and freedom undermined.

It is a basic principle in the work Divine Providence, that anything done in freedom according to reason remains with a person, even after death. Those who trust in their own prudence are not exempt:

"Everything of which a person has persuaded himself and which he has confirmed in himself remains with him as his own" (@DP 317).

## CONFIRMATION

One of the great issues brought up by those who trust in their own prudence is that of confirmation.

"It is believed by many that no truth can be seen by a person except by proof; but this is false" (@DP 317).

The concept of proof is vital to many people. The medieval theologians, Anselm and Aquinas both created "proofs" of God's existence - and both fell short. Some things simply cannot be proved, and therefore cannot be concluded by human reasoning. Most spiritual values fall into this category.

When we consider many of the issues facing modern person, those who trust in their own prudence often seem to make rational and intelligent choices. But consider the issues: pornography, abortion, marital relationships, freedom and many others. All too often these issues are debated without

spiritual input, on the basis of "proved" statistics.

The problem is wrong answers. Statistics and other "proof" often lead to false understanding with devastating results. The problem lies in the general approach, making the solution difficult to achieve.

In spiritual matters, one cannot rely on prudence, one must rise above it to a different plane:

"... in matters purely rational, moral and spiritual truths are apparent in their own light, provided a person has from a right education become in some degree rational, moral and spiritual. This is because every one as to his spirit or that which thinks, is in the spiritual world as one among those who are there; and consequently he is in spiritual light which enlightens the interiors of his understanding, and as it were dictates. For spiritual light in its essence is the Divine Truth of the Lord's Divine Wisdom" (@DP 317).

In other words, in examining the questions which plague us, we do not have to think from and rely on our own prudence. The human mind is capable of being lifted up onto another plane of light.

The difficulty many people face, however, is that they do not allow their minds to be lifted up, preferring to stay on the level of their own prudence. In this state is often easier to confirm falsity than truth - especially if falsity appeals to the appearances of the world around us. By analogy, it was easier to prove the world flat rather than round, or that the sun rotates around the earth than the earth around the sun. It is only when our mind is lifted above mere appearances that we are able to see things as they really are.

The person who bases his or her own confirmations simply on sensual data find himself on a slippery slope into a permanent rejection of goodness and truth. The descent down this slope is described in @DP 318 in the following way:

- It is easier to confirm falsity than truth. Confirmation of falsity is the first step downward.
- Once the falsity is confirmed, truth will not appear (there is nothing more difficult than presenting truth to someone with a closed mind!)
- The person then believes him or herself to be intelligent, but this intelligence is really ingenuity (or cunning).

"None are intelligent but those who perceive truth to be truth, and confirm truth by individual truths continually perceived" (@DP 318[8]).

- At this point the person who confirms falsity is in spiritual danger, because once a person confirms falsity in the understanding, there is pressure to confirm it in the will also. Notice the distinction laid before us:

"There is confirmation that is intellectual and not at the same time voluntary, but all voluntary confirmation is also intellectual" (@DP 318[9]).

In explaining this concept we are given the example of people who intellectually confirm the concept of faith separated from charity, and yet lives of charity, with those who confirm that concept and also

live lives separated from charity. With the first group, there is still hope of salvation, but once the falsity has been confirmed in the will, the falsity becomes rooted in the person's being.

- The person in this latter state comes to believe that his or her own prudence is everything, and the Divine is nothing. In other words, "I know best."
- This final state is the state of hell, because the person completely closes his or her mind to the Lord.

"Everything confirmed by both the will and the understanding remains to eternity because everyone is his own love, and love belongs to the will; also because every one is his own good or his own evil..." (@DP 319)

Thus the danger of confirming our own prudence is very real. Confirming our own prudence at the expense of Divine wisdom is dangerous to our spirit - not only does it fix our thoughts and feelings, but it actually changes the very physical nature of our minds.

In @DP 319 we are introduced to the concept of spiritual gyres, or spirals, which are physical receptors to our spiritual life. These spirals are affected by our habitual thinking patterns:

"In the good those spiral forms are moved forward but in the wicked backward, and those that are moved forward are turned towards the Lord and receive influx from Him; while those that are moved backward are turned towards hell and receive influx from hell. It should be known that in the degree that they are turned backward they are open behind and closed in front; and, on the other hand, in the degree that they are turned forward they are open in front and closed behind" (@DP 319).

Thus even our physical forms reflect our spiritual state. The greater our confirmation of prudence, the more difficult it is to break that state.

## BREAKING THE STATE

The only real way to break our cycle of confirmation and thus of evil in our lives is to rise above the appearances of prudence into the reality of spiritual light. On the lower level it appears as if everything begins and ends in us as individuals. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth.

"If a person believed, as is the truth, that all good and truth originate from the Lord, and all evil and falsity from hell, he would not appropriate good to himself and account it meritorious, nor would he appropriate evil to himself and account himself responsible for it" (@DP 320).

Seeing and understanding this proposition requires a series of steps, which, once understood, help a person to understand not only our relationship to good and evil, but also how the Lord sees us when we are in a state of evil.

- If a person believes that all things originate in him or her, that person ends up separated from the source of all things. The Lord did create us with the appearance of self life. But He also gave us the knowledge of reality, that is, that life is from Himself.
- It may seem impossible to believe that good and truth flow into us from an outside source, but

nevertheless it is the truth. The difficulty some people have with the concept of good and truth, evil and falsity flowing into us, is that it appears as if we are then left without anything of our own:

"Yet a person does think as from himself even though from hell, because the Lord grants to everyone that thought, whatever its origin, should appear in him as his own. Otherwise a person would not live as a person, nor could he be led out of hell and introduced into heaven, that is, be reformed..." (@DP 321[4])

Thus we are able to think in accordance or in opposition to the good or evil flowing into us. Essentially we have the freedom to react to the influx.

- It is really only possible to understand this if we believe in the Lord.
- We are able to see the evil with ourselves as originating beyond us, in hell, and so we have the power from the Lord to shun and reject that evil. When the Lord looks at us, He also sees the reality, and sees that evil present with us is from hell, and is not our own unless we confirm it.
- Therefore the Lord does not ascribe evil or good to us, but to its origin. We however, ascribe it to ourselves when we confirm it in our lives.

## CONCLUSION

This principle, therefore, has major ramifications in our lives. The Lord, in creating us granted us freedom, but did not create hell. People created hell when they turned away from the Lord. On a smaller scale, the Lord sees neither good nor evil in us as if it were our own, for neither are ever ours: we are simply vessels which open our minds to receive good and truth or evil and falsity.

The difficulty people face in this life in coming to grips with the nature of evil is that we often think of a person as being "evil" or as being "good", as if that quality is intrinsic to the person. These states, however, never become part of the person, they always remain outside him or her.

But, by the life we lead in this world, and by the things we choose from either heaven or hell, determine whether we are receptive to the Lord or not. If a person could truly acknowledge that their goodness or evil is not their own, then their confirmation will take place on a very different plane of life - almost as if we could see the very cause of our being, and react to that, rather than to the mundane appearances.

This knowledge has a very freeing effect on a person, because it puts us into perspective, freeing us from the limitations of relying entirely on our own prudence, and gives us instead the freedom to draw on the Lord's power to disperse evil and false influences on our lives.

Thus we see the Lord's mercy in the whole subject of evil. He permits it for the sake of human salvation, constantly working to encourage us towards good. True, He allows us to see and suffer the consequences of our own, and other's evil, but He never punishes nor chastises, only helping us to do what is good and right.

# Lecture Twelve - Salvation and Predestination

## INTRODUCTION

In chapter twelve and thirteen, the Lord's constitution draws to a close. It is in these chapters that the Lord gives His guarantee that His goal of a heaven from the human race can, and will, be fulfilled, within the limitations of human cooperation.

As the picture of Providence unfolds before us, so we are shown how the Lord, having created people for the sake of heaven, endowed them with a complete sense of freedom. This freedom is real in spiritual matters, and nothing whatever can interfere with it. If freedom is to be true, it must be a freedom to choose both good and evil. Thus the Lord respects human choice by permitting evil - even though it is not HIS choice.

The subject and issue of human evil is one which has plagued theologians and philosophers ever since evil began. To avoid ascribing evil to the Lord Himself, various answers have been put forwards, Lucifer being the most common in the Christian world.

From a New Church perspective, the issue of evil is simple: it is a result of badly managed human freedom, a freedom conferred upon people by the Lord. But evil is not the Lord's fault, blame belongs to the human race, individually and collectively.

In providing for freedom and the subsequent evil, the Lord's entire aim of a heaven can seem to be thwarted. If evil is hereditary, and that hereditary cumulative, what mechanism is provided for the deliverance of those who, having fallen into evil, now wish to be reconciled to the Lord.

In orthodox Christianity the solution offered is the image of Christ on the Cross, bearing human sins as an atonement to the Divine Father. But since this concept does not work in New Church doctrine, one needs to look at an alternative which fits into the New Church view of the oneness of God, His grace and compassion, and human freedom.

This is the issue at stake in this chapter. Careful consideration of it will reveal a God of infinite mercy and patience, and yet a God who, in setting out the laws of His government is not going to change those laws.

## REFORMATION

The Lord's Love and Wisdom

It is an absolute point in Divine Providence that the Lord created people to go to heaven, and that nothing, short of a person's own free choice will interfere with that. The five laws of Divine Providence explain this very clearly. There is, however, a further factor preserving our freedom right to the end of life: each person is created into the image and likeness of the Lord, which can never be destroyed:

DP 322: It is a dictate of sound reason that all are predestined to heaven, and no one to hell; for all are

born men, and consequently the image of God is in them.

What constitutes this image within a person?

- To be able to understand truth from Divine Wisdom.
- To be able to do good from Divine Love (@DP 322).

These two abilities are what make a person a person, and separate people from animals.

No animal is able to rise above its natural instincts and reflect on the nature of God. It is true that many animals are very clever. They can be trained to do tricks, and some of them even use tools. But they do not have the ability to think rationally and to act according to that rationality. Thus no cat, no matter how well trained is able to empathize with a mouse - instinct demands a meal, and a meal it will have.

People are different. They share, to some degree, the external parts of their minds with animals. To some degree all education is a matter of training. But humans have the ability to moralize, and, even better, to spiritualize.

People are taught the laws of the country they live in. In obeying these they become civil beings, rather like trained animals. But, to the degree that people make a moral issue about these civil laws, they become moral, which already puts them on a plateau higher than the animals. Thus a civil law may state that it is illegal to steal. A moral person may add a value judgment to that statement and say "It is WRONG to steal." When he refrains from stealing for that reason, he becomes a moral person. When, however, he adds a spiritual dimension to the same law, he becomes a spiritual man:

DP 322: "I will now state how the civil and moral life is a receptacle of the spiritual life: Live these laws not only as civil and moral laws, but also as Divine Laws, and you will be a spiritual man... Hence it may be evident that every one because he is born such that he may become a civil and moral natural man is also born such that he can become a civil and moral spiritual man. This is the key to the route back from evil to salvation. By providing us with this ability the Lord keeps open the ability for people, through obedience and submission to Him, to be saved."

The Lord sends no one to hell, but draws all towards Himself in heaven.

Many people believe in predestination, the concept that the Lord determines some people to heaven and others to hell. This concept, as we shall see in the following pages, is totally at odds with the teachings of the Doctrines. Thus the Lord does everything in His power to ensure that people are saved.

## THE GOAL OF CREATION

Sometimes people wonder why the Lord created people, and why He works incessantly to bring them into heaven. The answer lies in understanding the Lord's motivations, because that understanding not only gives us an answer to the reason for our existence, but also insight into how much the Lord's love for us determined the way we are created.



To explain this in detail, the next section of this chapter is divided into four sub-headings, each a part of the developmental theme of how the Lord's love for us is so great that He gives us every means possible to exercise free choice and be delivered from evil.

- Every person is created that he may live for ever.

This first point is a recapitulation of many similar statements given in this book. It bears considerable thought, however. Since we were created to be able to understand and do the things the Lord teaches us, if we are able to rise through the degrees of life from being a civil to a moral to a spiritual person, then it follows that we are created to be conjoined to the Lord Himself. As we saw in an earlier chapter, this conjunction is heaven itself.

The Lord created us in this way from love:

DP 324: For love desires to communicate its own to another, and even to give from its own as much as it can. What then would the Divine Love which is infinite not give.

In this statement we have the kernel of the truth about salvation. For the Lord, loving people, not for His own sake, but ours, continually gives, and continues to give, even in the face of rejection. The passage quoted above continues:

Can that [love] give and take away again? Would not this be giving what is about to perish? Inwardly in itself this is nothing, as when anything perishes it comes to naught, that which IS not being in it. But the Divine Love gives what IS, that is, which does not cease to be, and this is eternal (@DP 324).

The gift the Lord gave us, eternal and not perishable, is the gift of spiritual life: the ability to see truth and do it, protected by human freedom, preserved inviolate by the laws of Divine Providence. The only part of us which can die is our natural body, "which is taken away by death" (@DP 324). All the rest of us, our thoughts and feelings, our likes and dislikes, our very being, continues to live to eternity, for that is the part of us created into the Lord's image.

In establishing this first point the Lord hammers home to us the reason for our creation. It is only when we forget this first point that people become estranged from the Lord. To remember it is to remember that our life has meaning, that momentary pleasures are transitory - that if we can count to ten and overcome a temptation, our spirits will be immeasurably enriched by the closer proximity of the Lord. This leads into the second point about why we are created:

- Every one is created to live forever in a state of happiness.

In a world full of misery this point is sometimes hard to grasp. It is hard to imagine people suffering in war zones being happy, or people starving hoping for eternal life. In our affluent corners of the world, it is sometimes hard to imagine happiness amid the pressures of life, the stress and taxes and social problems we have to face. Yet the Lord made us to be happy. Divine Providence states this so simply and purely:

DP 324: "He who wills that a person should live forever also wills that he should live in a state of happiness. What would eternal life be without that?"

What would our eternal life be without happiness? It would be the life of hell. Yet this is the very life so many of us choose for ourselves by exercising human freedom in a perverse way: we choose to be angry, stressed, dishonest. We choose to cheat, steal, lie and murder on all planes of life. When we reap the consequences of misery we blame the Lord.

Can we really blame Him? Through out the constitution of His Divine Government He does every thing short of denying our freedom to bring us out of states of evil into states of reconciliation and happiness. There is a surprising statement at the end of this paragraph in Divine Providence, which will be discussed in more detail later:

@DP 324[7]: "Hence it is clear that eternal life is also eternal happiness. This state of a person is the end of creation; and it is not the Lord's fault but a person's that only those who enter heaven are in that state. That a person is in fault will be seen in what follows."

- Thus everyone is created to enter heaven.

@DP 324[7]: "This is the end of creation; but all do not enter heaven because they have become imbued with the delights of hell which are opposite to the happiness of heaven; and those who are not in the happiness of heaven cannot enter heaven, for they cannot endure it."

Heaven is a state of mind, one we experience more fully after death than before, but no less real in each world. In this world a person's ruling love is often clothed with the externals of natural life, with the result that people of various inner qualities life intermixed. After death, however, that mixing cannot be, for there people are conscious of each others sphere, exhaled from their ruling love. The result is that different people repel each other. The Writings give several accounts of people who tried to enter heaven when either their love is incompatible with it, or they are not fully prepared.

This does not alter the fact that the Lord made people to go to heaven, and, as we have seen, the Lord gives each and every person the opportunity to come into that state. Hell only comes about through a person's instrumentality, against the wishes of the Lord Himself.

- The Divine Love cannot do otherwise than desire this, and the Divine Wisdom cannot do otherwise than provide for it (@DP 324[11]).

Everything builds up to this conclusion: that people, created to go to heaven, are assisted in every way possible in order for the Lord to fulfill His desire of a heaven from the human race. This concept is the most powerful in all New Church doctrine, for it established beyond any doubt the foundations of the Lord's relationship with us:

@DP 324[12]: "Now since a person from his birth is endowed with these two faculties by the Lord, and consequently the Lord is in them as in His own with a person, it is clear that His Divine Love cannot but will that a person should go to heaven and there enjoy eternal happiness, and also that the Divine Wisdom cannot but provide for this."

The power of this teaching is most strongly felt when one compares it with other concepts about the Lord drawn from the previous church, such as the idea that God is angry, wrathful, vengeful. Or that the God required the sacrifice of His "son", or that belief alone will bring a person into harmony with

the Lord. All these teachings pale into insignificance in the face of the powerfully true teaching that the Lord, who is love itself and wisdom itself works unceasingly, within His all embracing laws of Divine Providence, to draw people into heaven.

## THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS GOAL

With these thoughts in mind one can now see that while evil, permitted by the Lord, can nevertheless be turned away that good may take its place. The power and force of the Lord's love for each member of the human race - regardless of the external aspects of their own religion. The Lord's providence is universal. One of the most beautiful images of the New Church is of the Lord's love and wisdom reaching all people.

DP 325: Some are of the opinion that the Church of the Lord is only in the Christian world, because there alone the Lord is known and there alone is the Word. Still, however, many believe that the Church of the Lord is general, that is, spread and dispersed throughout the whole world, thus existing also with some who are ignorant of the Lord and who do not have the Word. They maintain that it is not the fault of those men that they cannot overcome their ignorance, and that it is contrary to the love and mercy of God that some should be born for hell when yet they also are equally men.

In this passage we see an example of a phenomenon within the Christian Church: many, especially the laity, do not believe the doctrinal teachings of the church (although many do believe). For many people the teachings of the church are replaced with a kind of inner conviction far closer to reality than many suspect.

The Lord's effort to salvation is universal because it rests on universal principles which cannot be restricted by any particular confession. We saw at the beginning of this lecture that the image and likeness of the Lord in us rests on two points: the first is the ability to think in accordance with Divine truth, the second the ability to carry those thoughts into action. The First Law of Providence provides that this image will not, in fact, cannot, be violated within us.

It also holds true for all religions, for in every religion the individual is challenged to believe in God, be it Jehovah of the Jews, Allah of the Moslems, or the gods of the Hindus. Because a person can conceive of an idea of God, the person is then able to respond, through that concept, to the Lord's presence with them.

DP 326: The acknowledgement of God brings about the conjunction of God with a person and a person with God, and the denial of God causes their separation.

Thought about the Lord, even an imperfect one, brings the presence of the Lord to a person. In the spiritual world

DP 326: "... when anyone thinks about another and desires to converse with him, the other is immediately present. This is general there and never fails. The reason is that in the spiritual world there is no distance as in the natural world, but only an appearance of distance."

Thought about the Lord, therefore, brings the Lord's presence to that person, thus establishing the

image of the Lord within a person:

@DP 326[4]: "From this it is clear that so far as one knows the Lord and from this knowledge thinks about Him, so far the Lord is present; and so far as anyone acknowledges Him from an affection of love, so far the Lord is conjoined to him; but on the other hand, so far as anyone does not know the Lord so far the Lord is absent, and so far as anyone denies Him, so far is He separated from him."

Consideration of this passage strikes one with the realization that the Lord, pressing and urging to be received, nevertheless leaves it up to the individual to take the next step of accepting or rejecting. Thus personal freedom in spiritual matters is preserved at all costs.

Thinking about the Lord, however, is not enough: faith has to be coupled to charity, thought to action. The action seals the thought, making an indelible part of the person's being. The aim of much religious thought is purification from evil for the sake of a conjunction with the Lord, be it Christian, Jewish, Moslem or Hindu.

@DP 326[9]: "These are the general principles of all religions by which everyone can be saved... It has been provided by the Lord that almost everywhere there should be some form of religion, and that in every religion there should be these two principles; and it has also been provided by the Lord that everyone who acknowledges God and refrains from doing evil because it is against God should have a place in heaven."

The human role in salvation

All this leads up to the inescapable conclusion, mentioned earlier, that since the Lord Himself does every single thing possible to bring people to heaven, should a person resist and end up in hell, that conclusion is entirely the individual's fault. The following passage puts this bluntly:

DP 327: "The person himself is in fault if he is not saved. Every rational man, as soon as he hears it, acknowledges the truth that evil cannot flow from good nor good from evil, because they are opposites; consequently that from good there flows nothing but good, and from evil nothing but evil. When this truth is acknowledged it is also acknowledged that good can be turned into evil not by a good but by an evil recipient; for every form converts into its own quality what flows into it... Now since the Lord is Good in its very essence, or God itself, it is evident that evil cannot flow from Him or be produced by Him; but that good can be turned into evil by the recipient subject whose form is a form of evil. Such a subject is a person as to his proprium, which continually receives good from the Lord and continually turns it into the nature of its own form, which is a form of evil. Hence it follows that a person is in fault if he is not saved."

The reason people receive evil is because there is evil in the world, originating in hell and finding its home in people's loves of selfishness and greed. The image of how a person, who is born innocent and yet as an adult chooses evil is parallel to the history of churches in this world.

Churches go through phases of creation, plateauing and finally declining. All church, "in process of time decline and are consummated" (@DP 328). While the story of the various churches which have existed from eternity is important, for the purposes of this study, the reason WHY they turned from the Lord and fell is of paramount importance:

DP 328: "Every religion declines and is consummated by the inversion of the image of God in a person."

As we have seen, people are created into the image and likeness of the Lord, and it is this very form of creation, in all people, which enables a church to be formed within the human breast, and ultimately leads the person to heaven. But, because people are free to abuse the freedom given them by the Lord, the Lord's image itself, though it cannot be removed, can be inverted. When that happens the will and understanding of good and truth seem to be destroyed, for, by turning away from the Lord, the person turns

@DP 328[6]: "... these receptacles away from God and thus turned them towards himself. Consequently they have become closed above and opened below, or closed in front and opened behind. When they have thus been inversely opened and closed, the receptacle of love, that is the will, receives influx from hell or one's own proprium; and so also does the receptacle of wisdom, that is, one's understanding."

When this happens, the church existing in series on earth perished. The same is true for the individual, for communication with the Lord is broken off, leaving communication with hell to run rampant.

The tragedy of this situation is that it is compounded by generations of hereditary evil accumulating within the human proprium, reducing the desire of future generations to respond to the Lord. Unless the Lord provided a way out of that conundrum, the human race would be completely overwhelmed by evil, and would be completely lost to the Lord.

It is indicative of the Lord's mercy that even after an entire succession of churches, the Lord continues to provide a way out of evil and into heaven. It shows us the quality of His love for the human race, and His desire to bring people into the happiness of His heaven. In the face of human rejection, the Lord provides that "... everyone may be saved" (@DP 328[8]).

The means of this provision show clearly how Divine Love knows no boundaries:

- "It is provided by the Lord that there should be a religion everywhere; and that in every religion there should be the two essentials of salvation..."
- "It is also provided that all who have lived well and have acknowledged God are instructed after death by angels, and when those who had observed these two essentials of religion while in the world accept the truths of the church as they are in the Word, and acknowledge the Lord as the God of heaven and the church.
- "Further, there is granted to everyone after death the opportunity of amending his life, if that is at all possible..." (@DP 328[8],9)

## PREDESTINATION

From all this, we are shown how the Lord, in designing a Divine Constitution to govern the human race, builds into it concepts of mercy far beyond our limited understanding. The Lord's desire to save people is unceasing, the powerful draw of His Providence working against inherited and actual evils in each individual. The Lord uses every means at His disposal to bring people into His heaven.

In theological terms once calls this force "Predestination":

DP 329: "Thus all are predestined to heaven, and no one to hell."

A powerful statement in a world where evil, sin and misery seem to be the norm, and happiness and peace elusive qualities.

The issue of predestination in the Christian religion has been a divisive force. In considering the relationship of the Lord and human beings, it is impossible to conceive of any other than that of a continual predestination to heaven. This work shows the nature of the Lord, confirming His Divine love and Divine wisdom:

@DP 330[3]: "The Divine Love through the Divine Wisdom provides the means by which every one may be saved; and therefore to say that there is any predestination except to heaven is to say that the Divine Love cannot provide the means by which salvation may be effected."

The whole thrust of the work Divine Providence, is to show exactly how the Lord sets about the task of saving the human race. Any concept of predestination to hell makes nonsense of the concept we are given of the Lord. In light of the teachings revealed to us, it is foolish to limit the Lord's salvation to a portion of the race, and cruel to suggest that He sends anyone to hell. Both make a mockery of the Lord Himself.

@DP 330[8]: "The Lord is every the Creator and Savior of all; and He alone leads all and desires the death of no one. It is therefore cruel to believe and think that so great a multitude of nations and peoples under His auspices and oversight should be handed over as prey to the devil by predestination."

## CONCLUSION

In this second to last chapter of the book, Divine Providence, we are shown how the Divine Constitution of the Lord brings us a full circle from the way of creating people, through the problem of evil, back to the Divine goal of a heaven from the human race. In it our relationship with the Lord is laid bare, and we are challenged to take responsibility for our own life.

There is no place in this theology to sit idle, awaiting influx to move us. Nor can there be any excuse for our choices. Each of us, as individuals, is called upon to respond to the Lord as we know Him, to learn and obey the teachings of our own churches and religions, and through that come into contact with that powerful salvatory force originating in the Divine Love and carried into being in the Divine Wisdom.

This section of the book draws us inevitably into the realization that while the Lord is the creator, while we, although recipients of His love and wisdom, nevertheless are called upon to exercise the rationality and freedom as if it originates within ourselves.

To exercise these abilities to further our own ends will lead us away from the Lord, and ultimately into hell. But to respond affirmatively, to follow from choice the path we are shown, leads to conjunction,

happiness, wisdom and peace.

# Lecture Thirteen - The Lord Keeps His Laws

## INTRODUCTION

Unlike many human governments, the Lord binds Himself absolutely to the Laws of Divine Providence. He never breaks, nor deviates from them, because they are expressions of His Divine Love in the form of Divine Wisdom. Thus they are expressions of Himself, and, because the Lord Himself does not change, His laws do not change either. Political governments regularly reassess or re-analyze their constitutions, amendment after amendment is debated and either passed or rejected, but the Lord's constitution, because it is perfect and universal cannot be subject to this kind of process.

The entire thrust of Divine Providence is to create a heaven from the human race, but this can only be achieved in a state of order:

@DP 331[2]: "... the Divine Providence is the Divine Order primarily with regard to the salvation of men; and as there is no order without laws, for laws constitute order and every law derives from order that it also is order, it follows that as God is Order He is also the law of His own Order."

Therefore, for the Lord to act against His own laws, would be for Him to deviate from His own order.

One always needs to keep in mind the Lord's goal of creating a heaven from the human race. Considering human character, especially since the fall of the most ancient church, many people are tempted to believe there is no necessity for the Lord to act in this orderly way. Millions of people believe in the process of salvation from the Lord's mercy.

The Lord is merciful, and the Laws of Providence, especially perhaps those pertaining to permissions of evil, bear this out. For the Lord, however, to act out of pure mercy and drag someone into heaven, would not be an act of mercy at all. In the briefest analysis, such mercy would undermine the entire concept of human freedom cultivated by the Lord.

For many people the concept of salvation through pure mercy arises from a lack of understanding the nature of human beings and human evil. We saw earlier that every evil contains thousands of associated evils, each of which exerts a powerful influence on the way we feel, think and act. To request pure mercy, is to deny these deeper evils, for one asks forgiveness and deliverance from conscious evils. Deliverance from surface evil doesn't solve the deeper evils, they too must be allowed their exposure and be removed according to order.

Thus the Divine Providence is maintained by the Lord for the sake of cultivating in a person an aversion to evil, with consequent deliverance from it. The Lord, at all times, is aware of and protective of, the person's freedom of choice.

Thus we are told, by way of the heading of this final chapter:

DP 331: "The Lord cannot act contrary to the Laws of the Divine Providence, because to act contrary to them would be to act contrary to His Divine Love and His Divine Wisdom, thus contrary to Himself."



By contemplating the order of Providence we are given a glimpse into the nature of the Lord Himself. The power of His love for the Human race is so great He will not allow it to be circumvented or disrupted.

Because the Laws of Providence are so powerfully protected, out of love, we are also given the wonderful concept that the Lord's love is unchanging, unconditional and all powerful. The main point of this last chapter, then, is to describe this love in its fullness.

## **DIVINE LOVE IS FOREVER**

If one could put the concept of Divine love into one time-related word, one would say "unceasing." The Laws of Providence, being salvation centered, play an unceasing role in our lives, even when, or maybe especially when, we are not conscious of them.

DP 332: The operation of the Divine Providence for the salvation of a person beings at his birth and continues right on to the end of his life, and afterwards to eternity.

Our lives are spend in the embrace of these laws. Nothing can, or will every alter that. If a person chooses to accept the Lord, the Laws of Providence provide and environment in which that person may grow and develop spiritually. Should one choose evil, the Laws of Permission "which are also laws of the Divine Providence" work unceasingly to stimulate the conscience, and lead the person either right out of evil, or at least into a milder hell. Consider the following passage:

@DP 332[4] "... there must be a constant progression in the reformation and regeneration of men..."

Because the Lord governs and regulates the laws of providence and permission to suit the needs of a particular person, it follows that the Lord knows each and every individual intimately. He knows what kinds of choices we will make, and how we will use those choices:

DP 333: "The Lord foresees a person's state after death, and provides for it from his birth right on to the end of his life. With the wicked the Lord provides by permitting and continually withdrawing them from evils; while with the good He provides by leading them to good. Thus the Divine Providence is unceasing in the work of saving men."

This foresight and leading should not be interpreted as somehow removing individual freedom. The concept of personal choice is the cornerstone upon which the Lord's relationship with people rests. To remove freedom is to take away the most essential characteristic of humanity, so freedom is always protected.

The Lord, however, can see our nature. He knows our frame, and on the basis of that knowledge, directs us, in freedom, to our greatest state of goodness.

DP 333: "... no more can be saved than desire to be saved, and only those desire to be saved who acknowledge God and are led by Him; but those who do not desire to be saved who do not acknowledge God and who lead themselves... This the Lord sees and still leads them..."

Thus the concept of human freedom in no way clashes with the concept that the Lord knows our place in heaven or hell. Should He foresee a place in hell for us, we still have the freedom, and indeed the Divine encouragement, to repent.

The action of Divine Providence is unceasing because it reflects the nature of the Lord Himself. While we live in this world, our minds are closely bound to the natural plane of life, and it is easy for us to think of Providence as only working towards our ultimate salvation. It is important to remember, however, that the Lord created us to live to eternity. Spiritual life is equally governed by the laws of providence:

DP 334: "The operation of the Divine Providence is also said to continue to eternity because every angel is being perfected in wisdom to eternity, but each according to that degree of affection for good and truth in which he was when he departed from the world."

## MEANS AND MERCY

A great many people confuse means and mercy. Mercy in itself implies the Lord's forgiveness and salvation. It also implies an immediate forgiveness. Means, on the other hand, implies a far greater interaction between people and the Lord. It indicates the need for process in the granting of mercy. For many this is a difficult concept.

If, however, one considers the laws of providence, and one pictures the various laws, established by the Lord, maintained within their form and structure, then one can come to see how the Lord's Divine Mercy works: it works through means.

DP 335: There are means and methods of the Divine Providence. Its means are the things from the exercise of which a person becomes a person and is perfected as to his understanding and his will, and its methods are the measures through which such things are effected.

In other words, a person is regenerated by various means, and the methods are the ways in which Divine Providence brings those means into act:

Means

Means belong to the understanding, and so are:

- truths
- ideas
- memories
- wisdom
- increases to eternity

DP 335: "These means are infinite in number and variety, and are more or less simple and compound, and also more or less imperfect perfect. There are also means for forming and perfecting ... civil, ... moral ... and spiritual life."

## Methods

DP 336: "Moreover, the methods by which the Divine Providence operates upon the means and through these to form a person and to perfect him are also infinite in number and variety. They are as numerous as the operations of the Divine Wisdom from the Divine Love to save a person, and thus as numerous as the operations of the Divine Providence..."

The methods are hidden from view.

The means and methods of Divine Providence must be seen in the context of Divine Mercy. The following passage is most important:

DP 337: "The Divine Providence does all things out of pure Mercy, because the Divine Essence itself is pure Love; and it is this which operates through the Divine Wisdom, and this operation is called the Divine Providence. This pure love is pure Mercy because:

- It operates with all men throughout the whole world, who are such that they can do nothing from themselves.
- It operates equally with the wicked and unjust, and with the good and just.
- It leads the former in hell and rescues them from it.
- It perpetually strives with them there and fights for them against the devil, that is, against the evils of hell.
- For that cause it came into the world, and endured temptations even to the last of them, which was the passion of the cross.
- It acts continually with the unclean to make them clean and with the unsound in mind to restore them to sanity; thus it labors continually out of pure MERCY."

## MERCY WITHOUT MEANS

DP 338: "In what has gone before it was shown that the operation of the Divine Providence for the salvation of a person begins at his birth and continues right on to the end of his life, and afterwards to eternity; also that this operation is continually effected through means out of pure mercy. Hence it follows that neither instantaneous salvation nor immediate mercy is possible."

In this statement we are shown how many of the teachings of orthodox Christianity regarding salvation are based on a misconception of the Lord's ways of dealing with people. The belief in instantaneous salvation is a belief that the Lord saves someone purely according to the person's statement of faith, and not according to any real state of faith and charity within the individual. Similarly immediate mercy, meaning mercy without means, is a conception of the Lord's forgiveness in which he forgives sins without requiring any participatory action on the person's behalf. Both these concepts are very common in Christianity. However, in terms of the Laws of Providence, they are untenable. Three reasons for this are given:

- The starting point of reason is wrong: many people confuse natural and spiritual joy, believing that

spiritual joy is the same as worldly joy, and that somehow the Lord can change a person's sense of joy. DP 338:3: "It is therefore believed that heaven can be granted to the wicked as well as to the good, and that their association is then similar to that of the world, with this difference only that it is full of joy."

- This initial viewpoint arises from ignorance: few people are aware of the nature of the life after death, and especially of the nature and impact of the ruling love. If people did know this difference they would know that @DP 338[6] "... no one who is in the delight of hell can be admitted into the delight of heaven, which is commonly called heavenly joy... Consequently mere admission is not the only thing needful, as many in the world suppose; nor is there such a thing as instantaneous salvation, for this implies immediate mercy."
- Interestingly, the official doctrines of the Christian religion recognize this, and "are against instantaneous salvation from immediate mercy, but still it is maintained by the external men in the church" (@DP 338[8]). The truth of this can be seen if one realizes that all church teach repentance from evil, and so teach life.

@DP 338[9]: "Now a person's life is not breathed into him in a moment, but is formed gradually, and is reformed as the person shuns evils as sins; consequently, as he knows what sin is, and recognizing it acknowledges it, and as he does not will it and therefore desists from it, and as he learns also the means which relate to the knowledge of God."

## **INSTANTANEOUS SALVATION AND IMMEDIATE MERCY DESTROY THE CHURCH**

The very belief that the Lord somehow works apart from the means of His Divine Providence destroys a true understanding of the Lord, and thus destroys the church itself.

- By means of it religion is abolished, because it makes religion redundant. If the Lord can simply save those who utter a formula, what need is there of repentance? What possibility is there of growing wise? It means that the human being is left in a state of sin, without any need to do anything, for the Lord, in some sort of mercy will save him. This state can be compared to a parent who always does things for a child, so that the child has no need to learn anything. If one carries this to its logical conclusion, we can see that such a belief destroys religion.
- It induces a state of security. This is a consequence of a belief in pure mercy. If the Lord will automatically forgive, then this can be interpreted as a license to do any evil one pleases, for why should one avoid evil if forgiveness is automatic and guaranteed. Again it makes a mockery of the Lord.
- It ascribes condemnation to the Lord. This final effect of denying the Lord's works through the means of His laws, is to deny the mercy of the Lord. If a person lives a life of evil, and goes to hell, it is perceived that the Lord withheld mercy from that person and condemned him or her to hell. Thus the Lord is portrayed in a light entirely contrary to His true nature.

# CONCLUSION

From these things we can see that the Lord, having established the Laws of Divine Providence, ensures that those laws are never broken. For Him to break them, or set them aside, would be the destruction of His entire being. The Lord’s being, or Divine Love, has three qualities: to love others outside of Himself, to wish to be one with them, and to render them happy (@TCR 43). However, the only way in which He can achieve this end is through the Laws of Divine Providence.