

**The Australian New Church College Seminar
May 24th to the 27th 2012**

Introducing the book, "Divine Providence"

The Lord's Providence highlighted in the Word of the Sacred Scriptures
(Not exhaustive)

A. In the New Testament, first of all

Divine Providence over the smallest details

"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Matthew 10:29, 30 (also Luke 21:18)

The Lord's love and care for all irrespective of their state, where they are at, whether in heaven or in hell

"...for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:45

The Lord has the future before Him

"Therefore, I say unto you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?...

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." Matthew 6:25-34

Backing this up, He knows what we need before we ask Him

"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." Matthew 6:8

Life lived within His awareness

"...he is not far from us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said.." 17:28

The Lord's continual focus on what is good

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

He is mindful of the detail of our inner struggles and keeps them within manageable boundaries

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the escape, that you be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

An interesting warning about what is really harmful and, by extrapolation, what is the Lord's uppermost concern

"And 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

Just how aware of us the Lord is

“...and He calls His own sheep by name...” John 10:3

B. And, in the Old Testament

Joseph identifying the Lord’s in His Divine Providence over-ruling the evil his brothers had committed

“But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life...So now it was not you who sent me here, but God...” Genesis 45:5, 8

The incredible Psalm 139, the early part of which reads,

“O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off
You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold,
You know it altogether...”

Verses 1-4

Still in the Psalms

“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry...Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the LORD delivers him out of them all.” **Psalm 34:15, 19**

“Call upon me in the day of trouble (says the LORD), and I will deliver you.” **Psalm 50:15**

“I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me. He shall send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.” **Psalm 57:2, 3**

“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.” **Psalm 91:4**

“For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.” **Psalm 91:11**

And two of my favourites, **from the book of Deuteronomy**

“As your days are, so shall your strength be.” (Chapter 33:25)

“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Chapter 33:27)

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The Five Laws of the Divine Providence as re-worded by Bruce Henderson in his book, "Why Does God Let It Happen?"

The first law is that God allows evil to exist for the sake of our freedom. We must be in a state of equilibrium- between good and evil, heaven and hell – to be free to choose the quality of our lives. Without that freedom, we would not feel life to be our own.

The second law is that we must be free to act from our own will, as long as we are making rational choices. Swedenborg says that people cannot be reformed if they are in states of fear, disease, insanity, or ignorance, when they aren't able to make informed, rational decisions. But as long as we are of sound mind and body, we must be free to choose – even if what we choose is not what God wants for us.

The third law is that we should not be compelled to believe in God, in His providence, or in anything because compulsion takes away freedom. Puppets and robots don't have freedom. Wars have been fought to suppress freedom or to win it, including the freedom to believe as we choose and live accordingly. No one wants to be coerced. God wants for us to make good choices, but he will not – cannot – force us to do so. God's will is that each and every one of us gets to heaven by making good choices, by actually choosing heaven in the way we lead our lives. But he will leave people free to reject him, to embrace evil and to choose hell.

The fourth law is that for us to be truly free, we must be able to see and recognize evil in order to reject it. This is the challenge of freedom. Our culture is a smorgasbord of good and bad choices. We know what it's like to be tempted, but we also know what the healthy choices are. And we know what it is to live with the consequences of good and bad choices.

The fifth law is that the operation of divine providence should never be evident to us, but that we should always know that it is working in our lives. Imagine if you could know how God was leading you. You would feel your freedom was threatened and probably would want to rebel, especially if God was trying to lead you out of a destructive habit while you were still enjoying it and not ready to give it up. We may get glimpses of providence at work when we look back over a chain of events, but not while it is happening.

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On the subject of "Permission" - a so very important teaching when it comes to understanding the existence of evil.

"The Lord foresees and sees all things, and every individual thing; and He provides and arranges the same, though some things arise from His permission, some from His concession, some from His consent, some from His good pleasure, and some from His will."

Arcana Caelestia 1755

"The nature of the Lord's Providence is such that it is linked together with Foresight; the one does not exist without the other. For evil things are foreseen, but good ones are provided; and the evil things that are foreseen are constantly being turned towards what is good by means of the Lord's Provident arrangement, since the Divine end, which has good in view, governs everything. Nothing is therefore allowed to happen except to the end that something good may come out of it. But because a person possesses freedom that enables him to be reformed, he is turned from evil towards good so far as he freely allowed himself to be turned. He is constantly being turned from an utterly dreadful hell, which he makes every effort to cast himself into, to one that is not so bad, if he cannot be led to heaven." **Arcana Caelestia 6489**

"When the wicked suffer damnation and torment the Lord's permission is not like that of one who desires what happens to them. It is like that of one who does not desire it yet cannot help them because His end in view, which is the salvation of the entire human race, is urgent and prevents Him from helping. For if He were to help, that would be doing evil, which is completely contrary to the Divine." **Arcana Caelestia 7878**

"Peace holds within it trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads towards an end that is good." **Arcana Caelestia 8478**

"There are no laws of permission by themselves or separate from the laws of 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. Whatever is done for the sake of the end, namely salvation, is according to the laws of the Divine Providence. For, as was said before, the Divine Providence, keeping this end continually in view, is constantly moving in ways different from and contrary to man's will. Therefore, at every moment of its operation or at every step of its progress, when it perceives man to deviate from this end, it directs, bends and disposes him in accordance with its laws by withdrawing him from evil and leading him to good. It will be seen in what follows that this cannot be done without permitting evil. Moreover, nothing can be permitted without a cause, and such a cause is only to be found in some law of the Divine Providence, which explains why it is permitted." **Divine Providence 234** and from the beginning of Chapter 8, "THE LAWS OF PERMISSION ARE ALSO LAWS OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE".