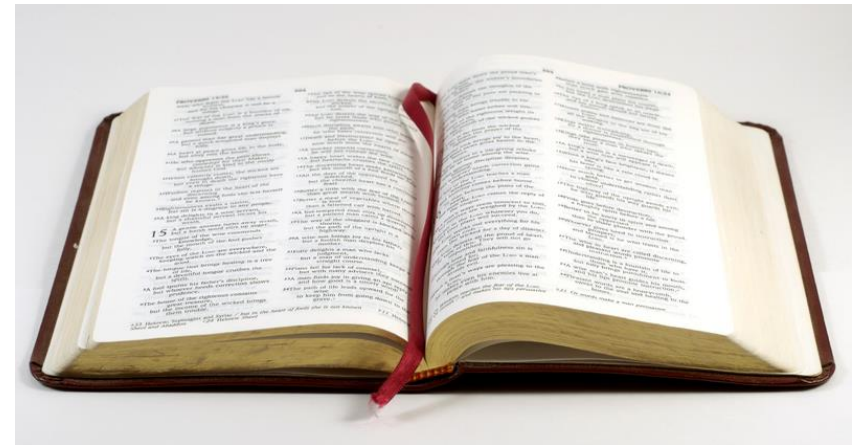


The Laws of the Divine Providence

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. We need confidence that we are trying to do what the Lord says. In what sense is the expression true: "The Lord is telling me to do this"?
2. How do we open the door for the Lord to lead us to good affections?
3. Can you give examples of how the will leads the understanding?
4. Can YOU give somebody an affection for the Word?
5. What does the Lord provide to the sincere novitiate reader of the Word? To the reforming adult? The regenerate? Can we tell the difference?
6. We read, "For every nation the Lord provides a universal means of salvation." (AE 1180:3). Explain how this is still possible even though they don't have the Word.
7. How does the concept of jihad or holy war corrupt Islam? Or how has this concept been corrupted in Islam?



Led by the Word, as if by himself

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

Week 4

Outline of the chapter in Divine Providence

- I. Man is led and taught by the Lord alone.
- II. Man is led and taught by the Lord alone through the angelic heaven and from it.
- III. Man is led by the Lord by means of influx, and taught by means of enlightenment.
- IV. Man is taught by the Lord by means of the Word, and by doctrine and preaching from the Word, thus immediately by Himself alone.
- V. Man is led and taught by the Lord in externals to all appearance as of himself.

affections produce thoughts they produce all things of man, because these constitute his life.

Moreover, this is known in the world. If you hold a man in his affection you hold him bound, and lead him wherever you please, and a single reason is then stronger than a thousand. But if you do not hold man in his affection reasons are of no avail, for his affection, when not in harmony with them, either perverts them or rejects them or extinguishes them. It would be similar if the Lord should lead man by means of thoughts immediately, and not by means of affections.

Again, when a man is led by the Lord by means of affections, it seems to him as if he thought freely as if of himself, and spoke freely and acted freely as if of himself....

AE 1177:3. To be enlightened by the Lord through heaven is to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is the Divine that proceeds from the Lord as a sun, from which is heaven. From this it is clear that the Lord teaches the man of the church mediately by means of the Word according to the love of his will that comes from his life, and according to the light of his understanding that he gains by means of knowledge; and that this cannot be otherwise, because this is the Divine order of influx.

AE 1176:3. Because it is important that the blindness arising from ignorance, or the thick darkness arising from absence of light, should be dissipated, it is permitted to see: (1) That the Lord teaches no one immediately, but mediately through those things in man that are from the hearing and sight. (2) And yet the Lord provides that man may be reformed and saved by those things that he adopts as his religion. (3) And for every nation the Lord provides a universal means of salvation.

MAN IS LED BY THE LORD BY MEANS OF INFLUX AND TAUGHT BY MEANS OF ENLIGHTENMENT (DP 165).

AE 1173:3. The Lord flows into the interiors of man's mind and through these into its exteriors, also into the affection of his will and through that into the thought of his understanding, but not the reverse ... To flow into the affection of the will and through that into the thought of the understanding is first to inspire a soul, and through that to form all other things; for the affection of the will is like a soul whereby the thoughts of the understanding are formed.

AE 1177:2. The Lord flows in through heaven into that which is at the time under man's view; and the influx in everyone is continual and universal even to the minutest particulars.

DP 165. [Man] is led by his understanding and according to it, only when his love or his will forms his understanding; and when this is done, it can also be said of his understanding that it is led; but even then it is not the understanding that is being led, but the will from which it is formed.

AE 1175:4-5. Why man is led by the Lord by means of affections and not by means of thoughts shall now be told. When man is led by the Lord by means of affections he can be led according to all the laws of His Divine providence, but not if he should be led by means of thoughts. Affections do not become evident to man, but thoughts do; also affections produce thoughts, but thoughts do not produce affections; there is an appearance that they do, but it is a fallacy. And when

WHEN MAN IS LED AND TAUGHT BY THE WORD, HE IS LED AND TAUGHT BY THE LORD HIMSELF.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

John 1:1-4

AC 10321. As the Word is a revelation from the Divine, it is Divine in general and in particular, for that which is from the Divine cannot be otherwise.

DP 172:2. The Lord is the Word because it is from Him and treats of Him.... That the Word is from the Lord is not denied by anyone in the Church; but that the Word treats of the Lord alone is not indeed denied, neither is it known.... Now since the Word is from the Lord alone and treats of the Lord alone, it follows that when a man 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? ...From beginning to end... all things of the Word have communication with heaven; and as the Lord is heaven, this means that all things of the Word have communication with the Lord Himself.

DP 172:3-4. Every man is a man not from his face and body but from the good of his love and the truths of his wisdom; and because a man is a man from these, every man is also his own truth and his own good, or his own love and his own wisdom; and without these he is not a man. But the Lord is Good itself and Truth itself, or, what is the same, Love itself and Wisdom itself; and these are the Word which in the beginning was with God and which was God, and which was made flesh.

DP 172:5. To be taught from the Word is to be taught by the Lord Himself because it is to be taught from Good itself and from Truth itself, or from Love itself and from Wisdom itself, which are the Word.... Everyone is taught according to the understanding appropriate to his own love; what is taught beyond this does not remain. All those who are taught by the Lord in the Word are instructed in a few truths while in the world, but in many when they become angels.

AC 128. He who would be wise from the Lord, and not from the world, says in his heart that the Lord must be believed, that is, the things which the Lord has spoken in the Word, because they are truths; and according to this principle he regulates his thoughts. He confirms himself by things of reason, of knowledge, of the senses, and of nature and those which are not confirmatory he casts aside.

DP 154:1-2. The appearance is that man is led and taught of himself; but the truth is that he is led and taught by the Lord alone. Those who confirm in themselves the appearance and not at the same time the truth, are unable to remove from themselves evils as sins; but those who confirm in themselves the appearance and at the same time the truth, are able to do so... and they become worshipers of the Lord; for the Lord raises them up from their proprium which is in the appearance, and brings them into the light in which is truth and which is truth; and He enables them to perceive interiorly that they are not led and taught of themselves, but by Him.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. "It is solely a universal affirmative, with which man is imbued as to truths by the Lord, as that the Word is the Word, that the Lord is the Lord, that Providence is in the most singular things. When one is in this principle, although he is but obscurely aware of its existence, innumerable affirmatives are insinuated by the Lord" (SD 4533). How does this relate to reading the Word?
2. Can you give an example of reading the Word to prove something, versus reading to learn how to apply it to life?
3. Can you really see the spiritual sense if you aren't looking to apply what you see?
4. "There are many means by which man, as he progresses in his early years, is prepared for the church and introduced into it; but the means whereby the church is established in man are acts of repentance" (TCR 510). How do you encourage your children to read and apply the Word every day?
5. "If the Word is read even by a little child, the Divine things therein are perceived by the angels" (AC 2899). What does reading the Word "do" for children? Does it still "do" it for adults?
6. How do you inspire and help those who are slow readers? (Adults also can have difficulty with reading.)

self-intelligence to investigate the spiritual sense of the Word. For through some correspondences with which he is acquainted he may pervert the meaning of it, and may even force it to confirm what is false, and this would do violence to Divine truth, and also to heaven.

AC 1776. It may seem a paradox, but still it is most true, that the angels understand the internal sense of the Word better and more fully when little boys and girls are reading it, than when it is read by adult persons who are not in the faith of charity. The cause has been told me, and is that little boys and girls are in a state of mutual love and innocence, and thus their most tender vessels are almost heavenly, and are simply capacities for receiving, which therefore can be disposed by the Lord; although this does not come to their perception, except by a certain delight suited to their genius.

AC 3690:2. All the histories of the Word are truths more remote from essential Divine doctrinal things, but still are of service to little children and older children, in order that thereby they may be by degrees introduced into the interior doctrinal matters of truth and good; and at last to Divine things themselves; for within them, in their inmost, is the Divine. While children are reading them and are affected by them from innocence, the angels who are with them are in a happy celestial state, being affected from the Lord with the internal sense, consequently with those things which the historical facts represent and signify; and it is the celestial happiness of the angels that flows in and causes the delight with the children.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. We get to know others by what they say and do. Can you apply this comparison to getting to know the Lord?
2. How does prayer help us get to know the Lord and His Word?
3. "To those who are in a life of love and charity it is given from the Lord what they are to ask; therefore they ask nothing but what is good, and that is done for them" (AE 325:8). When you pray how does the Word determine what you pray for?
4. "Without the Lord, by means of the Word, there is no salvation" (LJ 55). Can this thought help when you are tired and just reading words? What other thoughts help?
5. "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Jehovah" (Psalm 111:10). How does this apply to reading the Word?
6. Since the Word is the Lord, should we handle it differently from other books?
7. If we read and study the Word in digital form how should we set it apart?
8. What are some natural knowledges and reasons that confirm and support your beliefs?

A man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven.

John 3:27

DP 164. All, men and angels alike, are in the Lord and the Lord is in them according to their conjunction with Him, or, what is the same, according to their reception of love and wisdom from Him.

DP 165. Hence it may be evident that the Lord rules the universal angelic heaven... as the soul rules the body; and since the whole human race is ruled by the Lord, it is ruled not through heaven but from heaven by the Lord, and consequently from Himself, because He is heaven.

AE 1174:2. The affections of man, from which are his thoughts, have extension into societies in the spiritual world on every side, into more or fewer of them according to the amount and quality of the affection. Man as to his spirit is within these societies, and to them he is attached as it were with extended cords, which determine the space where he can walk.

AE 1175:3. The societies of heaven are not thoughts but affections. Consequently to be led by means of these societies is to be led by means of affections, that is, to be led by means of affections is to be led by means of societies.

DP 174:2. If [man's] affection is evil he is conveyed through infernal societies; and if he does not look to the Lord he is carried into these societies more interiorly and deeply. And yet the Lord leads him as if by the hand, permitting and withholding as far as man is willing to follow in freedom.

The words which I speak to you are spirit, and are life.

John 6:63

AC 9025:4. Memory or general truth is truth from the literal sense of the Word. And as this varies, and as it were contradicts itself, according to the appearance, it must sometimes invalidate the spiritual truths which are of the doctrine of the church. These are invalidated when the thought comes into doubt from passages in the Word which are in conflict with each other.

SS 5. The spiritual sense of the Word is not that sense which shines forth from the sense of the letter while one is studying and unfolding the meaning of the Word with intent to confirm some tenet of the church. This is the literal sense of the Word. The spiritual sense does not appear in the sense of the letter, being within it as the soul in the body, as thought in the eyes, and as affection in the face, which act as a one, like cause and effect. It is this sense chiefly which renders the Word spiritual, not for men only, but for angels also; and therefore by means of this sense the Word gives communication with the heavens.

HH 310. If this sense were known to man, and if man in reading the Word were to think in accordance with some knowledge of it, he would come into interior wisdom, and would be still more conjoined with heaven, since by this means he would enter into ideas like the ideas of the angels.

SS 26. No one can see the spiritual sense except from the Lord alone, nor unless from Him he is in genuine truths... To this sense a man can do violence if he has a knowledge of correspondences, and wishes by means of it and from

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. Three things are necessary in drawing doctrine from the letter of the Word: a knowledge of correspondence, the doctrine of genuine truth, and enlightenment.
2. Water corresponds to truth. Try to see different aspects of truth in the water cycle.
3. Look for some correspondences in a familiar story such as Psalm 23. Would you understand them if you didn't also know some genuine truths that applied?
4. How does looking for what you should *do* affect what you see?
5. Think of one or two "Aha!" experiences you have had from your reading.
6. "The ultimates of the Word are its props and supports, indeed, each word is a prop and support to its celestial and spiritual truths" (SS 35). Do we sometimes "hang on every word" in a conversation? Is it the words or the thought behind them?
7. In conversation do the words you use correspond to your thoughts? Affections? Both?
8. Give some examples of the power in ultimate actions, such as a hug.
9. Do you see the fullness, holiness, and power in a wedding ring as a symbol? What other powerful symbols or correspondences can you think of?

AE 1174:3. The Lord does this without the man's knowing it, because if man knew it he would disturb the continuity of that process by leading himself. It is enough for man to learn truths from the Word, and by means of truths to know what good is, and from truths and goods what evils and falsities are, in order that he may be affected by truths and goods, and not be affected by falsities and evils.... In this and in no other way can man be led from one affection into another in freedom and as if of himself. This is done by leading according to the affection of truth and good when man acknowledges the Lord's Divine providence in every particular; and it is done by permission according to an affection for evil and falsity when man does not acknowledge such a providence.

DP 158. [The angels of the third heaven] say that they live from the Lord and not from themselves; and they not only say this but they also love it and desire it to be so. Nevertheless, they are still to all appearance as if they lived from themselves; indeed, this appearance is stronger with them than with other angels.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. What is the key to really understanding the Word? What role do the angels have?
2. "Man is led and taught by the Lord alone from heaven and not... through any angel there" (DP 171). What would happen to freedom if angels told us what to do?
3. Is the influence of the other world a real concept for you? Can you explain affections and free will in any other way?
4. How can we begin and maintain affection for the Word and the habit of daily reading?
5. Most of us easily say that we receive all life from the Lord, but do we fit the celestial description, "to love and desire that it be so"? How does our attitude affect what we receive from the Word?

SS 41. They who are in Divine truths, and in the faith that the Word within, in its bosom, is Divine holiness – and much more they who are in the faith that it is from its spiritual and celestial senses that the Word is Divine holiness – see Divine truths in natural light while reading the Word in enlightenment from the Lord. For the light of heaven (in which is the spiritual sense of the Word) flows into the natural light in which is its sense of the letter, and illumines man's intellectual called the rational, and causes him to see and recognize Divine truths, both where they stand in plain view, and where they lie concealed. With some these Divine truths flow in along with the light of heaven; sometimes even when they are not aware of it.

SS 49. The power of Divine truth is directed especially against falsities and evils, thus against the hells. The fight against these must be waged by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word. Moreover it is by means of the truths in a man that the Lord has the power to save him; for man is reformed and regenerated and is at the same time taken out of hell and introduced into heaven, by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word. This power the Lord took upon Himself, even as to His Divine Human, after He had fulfilled all things of the Word down to its ultimates.

SS 20:3. As Divine things present themselves in the world by correspondences, the Word has been written exclusively by means of them... that which is from the Divine, descending into nature, is turned into such things as correspond to Divine things, and which they then store up and conceal in their bosom.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE SENSE OF THE LETTER OF THE WORD, AND IS TO BE CONFIRMED THEREBY (SS 50).

SS 53. The reason for this is that there and not elsewhere the Lord is present with man, and enlightens him and teaches him the truths of the church. Moreover the Lord never operates anything except in what is full, and the Word is in its fullness in the sense of the letter.

SS 32. The Word – which is in a special sense a Divine work for the salvation of mankind – in respect to its ultimate sense which is natural and is called the sense of the letter is the Basis, the Containant, and the Support of the two interior senses.

SS 34. The human race is the basis, containant, and support of the heavens; and the Word is among men and in them.

SS 39. In the sense of the letter of the Word Divine good and Divine truth are in their fullness, in their holiness, and in their power.

SS 40. The truths of the sense of the letter of the Word are in part not naked truths, but appearances of truth, and are as it were likenesses and comparisons taken from things such as exist in nature, and thus accommodated and adapted to the apprehension of the simple and of little children. But being correspondences they are receptacles and abodes of genuine truth; and are like enclosing and containing vessels, as a crystal cup encloses noble wine, and as a silver plate holds palatable food. They are also like garments which clothe, as swaddling clothes do an infant, and a pretty dress a maiden.

MAN IS TAUGHT BY THE LORD BY MEANS OF THE WORD (DP 171).

And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send; and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I; send me.

Isaiah 6:8

DP 174. Everyone knows that man thinks, wills, speaks and acts to all appearance as of himself, and everyone can see that without this appearance man would have no will and understanding, and thus no affection and thought, and also no reception of any good and truth from the Lord. This being so, it follows that without this appearance there would be no rational conception of God, no charity and no faith, consequently no reformation and regeneration, and therefore no salvation. From these considerations it is clear that this appearance is given to man by the Lord for the sake of all these uses; and especially that he might have the power to receive and to reciprocate, whereby the Lord may be conjoined to man and man to the Lord; and that man through this conjunction may live for ever.

AE 1173:2. The Lord does not teach man truths either from Himself or through the angels immediately; but He teaches mediately by means of the Word, preaching, reading, conversation, and communication with others, and thus by thoughts within oneself about these things. Man is thus enlightened in the measure of his affection of truth from use. Otherwise man could not act as if from himself.... These laws are unchangeable, because they are laws of the Divine wisdom and also of the Divine love; and yet they would be disturbed if man should be taught immediately, either by influx or by speech.

DP 172:6. The fact that this is done mediately by preaching does not destroy its immediate nature. 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.

This, moreover, is in keeping with what preachers know, for they say that they do not speak from themselves but from the spirit of God, and that all truth, as also all good, is from God. They are indeed able to declare the Word and bring it to the understanding of many, but not to the heart of anyone; and what is not in the heart perishes in the understanding; and by the heart is meant man's love. From these considerations it may be seen that man is led and taught by the Lord alone; and that he is taught immediately by Him when this is done from the Word. This is a central truth (arcanum) of angelic wisdom.

AC 10635. All those within the church who are in the good of life acknowledge the Divine in the Word. The reason is that while they are reading the Word there flows into them from heaven a holy feeling, although they do not know that this is effected by means of correspondences; nor is it perceived otherwise than as a general holy influence, in which the mind is kept.

HD 318. Priests ought to teach the people, and to lead them by truths to the good of life, but still they ought to compel no one, since no one can be compelled to believe contrary to what he thinks from his heart to be true. He who believes otherwise than the priest, and makes no disturbance, ought to be left in peace; but he who makes disturbance, ought to be separated; for this also is of order, for the sake of which the priesthood is established.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. How does learning from the Word support freedom?
2. Love is reciprocal and freely given. Apply this to marriage, raising children, and the church.
3. What should we do if we don't "get anything out of reading the Word"? Are we conscious of all that we "get" out of reading the Word?
4. How do the books you read, the TV you watch, and your conversations contribute to the life described in the Word? How do they undercut it?
5. What should you do if you think that you see contradictions in the Word? In the sermons you hear?
6. When you feel out of touch with the Lord, how does reading the Word help? What parts help you most?
7. Do you read the Word to get truth or good/use out of your reading?
8. "The church is where the Word is, and is from the Word; and worship is from those things which are in the Word. Thus such as is a man's understanding of the Word, such is the church in him, and such is his worship" (AC 10707). How does this apply to sermons, hymns, the sanctuary, and what we do on Sunday?