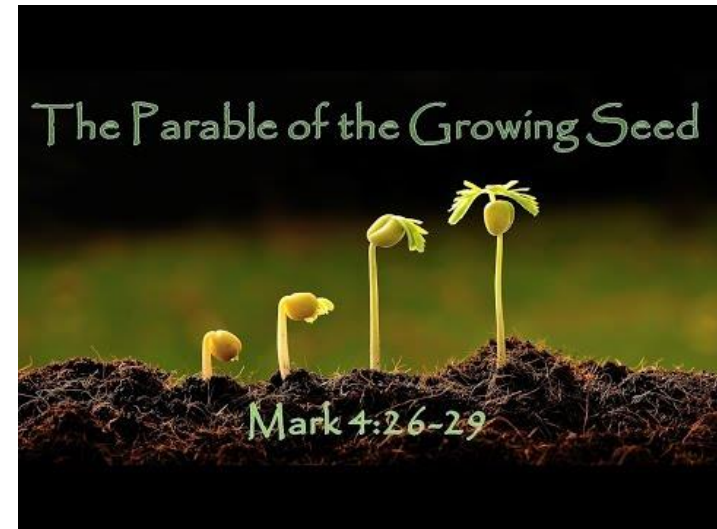


## Questions and Comments

1. We are responsible for learning what is true from the Word, but all we acquire this way is knowledge, not truth. For knowledge to become truth, there has to be an influx of light from heaven, by which we see the truth interiorly and want to live by it. Can you think of a knowledge that became a truth for you?
2. The story of Joseph secretly putting his brothers' silver into their sacks is a wonderful illustration of how much the Lord loves us. He wants to give us lots of precious things, but He is very careful not to diminish our sense of responsibility for our own lives, and thus the delight of living as of ourselves. Can you think of an example of secretly giving a gift to someone—a child, a spouse, or someone else—while wanting to preserve their autonomy and dignity?
3. “But when he reflects, he should acknowledge that these are from the Lord.” What benefits come from acknowledging that all our truths and all the good things we do are from the Lord, rather than from ourselves?
4. Of the five laws we have studied, do you have a favorite?
  - 1) Man must act in freedom, with reason.
  - 2) Man should put away evils in the external man.
  - 3) Man should not be compelled in things of religion but should guide himself.
  - 4) Man is led by the Lord through the Word, to all appearance as of himself.
  - 5) Nothing of Divine Providence should appear, but we should acknowledge it.

## The Laws of the Divine Providence



...and the seed should sprout and grow up, he knows not how.

**Providence is not evident, but man should acknowledge it.**

It is a law of the Divine Providence that nothing of the operation of Divine Providence should be evident to man's perceptions or senses, but still he should know about it and acknowledge it.

**Week 5**

## OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

I. If a man 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.

II. If man saw clearly the Divine Providence he would interpose in the order and tenor of its course, and would pervert and destroy that order.

III. If man saw clearly the Divine Providence he would either deny God or make himself God.

IV. It is granted to man 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.

This booklet consists of **excerpts** from *Divine Providence*, *Apocalypse Explained*, and *Arcana Coelestia*. The chart below shows what you can read if you would like to read a little more.

Day	Readings	More Complete Readings
1	AE 1153:5-8	AE 1153:9, 1154:2-3
2	DP 176-179 parts	DP 175-179
3	DP 180-181 parts	DP 180-181
4	DP 182, 183, 186 parts	DP 182-186
5	DP 187, 189, 190 parts	DP 187-190
6	AC 5664, 5664a parts	AC 5660, 5664, 5664a

of bearing fruit. So it is with such a man.

AC 5664:4. He also aims at nothing else through the truths of faith than uses, which are the practices of charity, which to him are the fruits.

These are the truths which man cannot procure for himself, even in the smallest degree; but they are gratuitously bestowed on him by the Lord, and this in every moment of his life – in fact, if he will believe it, without number in every moment.

But as man is of such a nature as to have no perception of their flowing in – for if he had the perception he would resist, because he would believe that he would then lose his proprium, and with his proprium his freedom, and with his freedom his delight, and would thus become a thing of no value – it is therefore brought about that man does not know but that he procures truths by himself.

This then is what is meant by saying that it will seem as truth procured by them. Moreover, in order that a heavenly proprium and heavenly freedom may be bestowed on man, he must do good as of himself and think what is true as of himself. But when he reflects, he should acknowledge that these are from the Lord.

And they approached the man that was over Joseph's house, and they spoke to him *at the door of the house*, and said, "In me [*i.e., please*], my lord, coming down we came down in the beginning to purchase food. And it was, when we came to the inn and we opened our bags, then behold, everyone's silver *was* in the mouth of his bag, our silver in its weight; and we have returned it back in our hand. And we have brought down the other silver in our hand to purchase food. We do not know who put our silver in our bags."

And he said, "Peace *be* to you, fear not; your God and the God of your father gave you a concealed *gift* in your bags; your silver came to me." Genesis 43:19-23

AC 5664. *Gave you a hidden gift in your bags.* That this signifies that it was from Him without any prudence of theirs, is evident from the signification of a "hidden gift," as being the truth and good that are given by the Lord without the man's knowing it....

AC 5664a. *Your silver came to me.* That this signifies that it will seem as truth procured by them.... But as the truth which is of faith is never procured by any man, but is instilled and given by the Lord, and yet seems as if acquired by man, it is said that it will seem as truth procured by them.

AC 5664:3. ...He who believes the truths of faith brings them forth from the heart at the same time as from the lips. For with him the truths of faith are so deeply rooted in as to have their root in the outer memory, and to grow from there toward what is interior or higher, like fruit-bearing trees. And like trees they deck themselves with leaves, and at last with blossoms, for the sake of the end

And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow up, he knows not how. For of its own accord the earth bears fruit, first a blade, then an ear, then full wheat in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he sends in the sickle, because the harvest stands *ready*.

Mark 4:26-29

AE 1153:5. The fifth law of the Divine providence is, That from sense and perception in himself man cannot know how good and truth flow in from the Lord, and how evil and falsity flow in from hell; nor can he see how the Divine providence operates in favor of good against evil. If he did he could not act from freedom according to reason as if from himself. It is sufficient for him to know and acknowledge this from the Word and from the doctrine of the church. This is what is meant by the Lord's words in... Mark [above].

AE 1153:6. The reason man does not perceive the operation of the Divine providence within him is because that would take away his freedom, and thus his ability to think as if of himself, and with it every delight of life. Thus man would be like an automaton, in which there is no reciprocal, and by that, conjunction; also he would be a slave and not free.

The Divine providence moves so secretly that scarcely a trace of it is seen, although it acts upon the most minute things of man's thought and will, which regard his eternal state, chiefly for the reason that the Lord continually wills to impress His love on man, and through it His wisdom, and thus create him into His image. Consequently the operation of the Lord is into man's love and from that into

his understanding, and not the reverse. Love with its affections, which are manifold and innumerable, is perceived by man only by a most general feeling, and thus so slightly that there is scarcely anything of it; and yet that man may be reformed and saved he must be led from one affection of love into another according to their connection from order, a thing that no man and even no angel can at all comprehend.

AE 1153:7. If a man should learn anything of these arcana, he could not be withheld from leading himself; and in this he would be continually led from heaven into hell, while the Lord's leading is continually from hell towards heaven. For from himself man constantly acts against order, while the Lord acts constantly according to order. For man, from the nature derived from his parents, is in the love of self and the love of the world, and consequently perceives from a feeling of delight everything belonging to those loves as good. Nevertheless, those loves as ends must be removed; and this is done by the Lord in infinite ways, that appear like a labyrinth even before the angels of the third heaven.

AE 1153:8. All this makes clear that man would find no help at all in knowing anything about this from sense or perception, but it would do him harm instead, and would destroy him forever. It is sufficient for man to know truths, and by means of truths to know what is good and what is evil, and to acknowledge the Lord and His Divine auspices in every least thing. Then so far as he knows truths, and by means of them what is good and evil, and does what is good as if from himself, so far the Lord leads him from love into wisdom.

## Questions and Comments

1. "And He said, Thou canst not see My faces; because man shall not see Me and live." (Exod. 33:20) Compare other stories in the Word when people saw the Lord in some way. What is different in this case?
2. "...when they see events in some wonderful series, they see the Divine Providence, as it were, from an interior acknowledgment and confess it" (DP 187). Isn't this one of the goals of a New Church study of history? Do you have a favorite example, either from world events or from an individual's life of Providence in action?
3. Think of a situation in which it might be tempting to want to foreknow the future or even change the future. Can you see ways in which things would probably not turn out better if you knew or could intervene? Are there movies about changing the future that don't turn out well?
4. "If he looks at natural things he sees it; if he looks at civil matters he sees it; if he looks at spiritual things he sees it." What we are looking for are signs that there is a loving, wise, all-powerful God taking care of us. It might be fun to look for one example in each of these areas, natural, civil and spiritual.
5. Think of the constants in the life of a family, or a church's worship service, or in a nation's mores, that provide a foundation and freedom for variety and creativity. What are some of the most important ones?

it in the face, that is, before it comes into operation....

DP 189. The man who has become spiritual by the acknowledgment of God and wise by the rejection of his proprium sees the Divine Providence in the whole world and in all things in it in general and in particular. If he looks at natural things he sees it; if he looks at civil matters he sees it; if he looks at spiritual things he sees it.... He sees it especially in matters concerning the salvation of men, as that Jehovah gave the Word, taught men by it concerning God, heaven and hell and eternal life, and that He Himself came into the world that He might redeem and save men.

DP 190. There are many constant things created in order that there may exist things that are not constant. Such constants are the appointed changes in the rising and setting of the sun, moon, and stars... the seasons... the times of the day... also atmospheres, waters and lands....

DP 190:3. As for the varieties themselves which are produced from what is constant, fixed and certain, they go on to infinity, and have no end; and yet there is not one thing precisely the same as another in all the things of the universe in general and in particular, nor can there be in the succession of things to eternity. Who so disposes these varieties, which go on to infinity and to eternity, that they may be in order but He who created the constant things to the end that the varieties might exist in them?....

These things have been stated because some natural men, even from the constant and the fixed things which are necessary to the end that varieties may exist in them, eagerly seize upon arguments in support of their own spiritual insanity in favor of nature and their own prudence.

### Questions and Comments

1. Thinking of the parable from Mark: Looking back, can you see an example of when you "slept and rose, night and day," unaware of how seeds were growing in you, till much later?
2. It is a law that we cannot know how good and truth nor evil and falsity flow into us; yet if we only believed that they do, then we would not claim credit for good nor blame for evil. Higher angels perceive this clearly. Why must we not perceive it?
3. "The Lord continually wills to impress His love on man." Think of how little we know about guiding a child's affections! Freedom is essential to love.
4. "From the records and examples of life... we know these two things: that consciences do not suffer themselves to be compelled, and that we strive after what is forbidden. Moreover everyone desires to pass from non-freedom into freedom, for this belongs to man's life" (AC 1947). The Lord too wants us to be free. Should we love our neighbor's freedom as our own?
5. Does it feel insulting and demeaning to be told that from himself, man continually acts against order, and feels the loves of self and the world as good? If not, why not?

**Consider the lilies, how they grow; they do not labor, neither do they spin; but I say to you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. And if God so clothe the grass in the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall He clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, and do not be unsettled; for all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:27-31**

DP 176. I. IF A MAN 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 176:2. ...If a man had a lively perception and feeling of being led he would not be conscious of life, and he would then be moved to utter sounds and to act much like a graven image. If he were still conscious of life he would be led like one bound hand and foot, or like a beast of burden yoked to a cart. Who does not see that a man would then have no freedom? If he had no freedom he would have no reason, for everyone thinks from freedom and in freedom; and whatever he does not think from freedom and in freedom appears to him to be not from himself but from another... and consequently he would not be a man.

DP 177. It is the continual operation of the Divine Providence of the Lord to withdraw man from evils. If

**And [Moses] said, Make me see, I pray, Thy glory. And He said, I will make all My goodness pass by over thy faces, and will proclaim with the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will show grace to whom I show grace, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. And He said, Thou canst not see My faces; because man shall not see Me and live. And Jehovah said, Behold, a place with Me, and thou shalt stand up upon the rock; and it shall be when My glory passes by, that I will set thee in a cleft of the rock, and will shelter with My palm over thee, until I have passed by. And I will remove the palm of My hand, and thou shalt see My back; and My faces shall not be seen. Exod. 33:18-23**

DP 187. IV. IT IS GRANTED TO MAN 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. To see the Divine Providence in the back and not in the face is to see it after it operates and not before; and to see it from a spiritual state and not from a natural state is to see it from heaven and not from the world. All who receive influx from heaven and acknowledge the Divine Providence, and especially those who by reformation have become spiritual, when they see events in some wonderful series, see the Divine Providence, as it were, from an interior acknowledgment and confess it. They do not desire to see it in the face, that is, before it comes into operation, fearing lest their will should enter into anything of its order and tenor [*or course, or direction*].

DP 187:2. ...Those who do not admit any influx from heaven but only from the world, especially those who have become natural from confirming appearances in themselves, do not see anything of the Divine Providence in the back, that is, after it operates, but they desire to see

## Questions and Comments

1. “He has taken down the powerful from their thrones, and exalted the lowly.” (Luke 1:52) Why is it necessary that the Lord “continually humbles the proud and exalts the lowly” (DP 183:4)? Can both of these happen to the same person?
2. What is a situation when your merely natural man has wondered or even doubted whether there is a Divine Providence? What answer did your spiritual man eventually provide?
3. What a contrast! Either all things are governed by love and wisdom, or else all things are mostly dead and merely random. DP 182:3 ends, “If you think that what is dead can impart life to itself you are spiritually insane, for life must come from Life.”
4. “It would appear that if anyone saw it clearly he could not but acknowledge it and thus acknowledge God; yet the contrary is the case” (DP 183). Think how the children of Israel responded to the miracles in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and on Mt. Sinai—by worshiping a golden calf.
5. “For man from his hereditary evil is always panting for the lowest hell.” Does this make sense to you?
6. Since the Divine Providence operates as quietly as an imperceptible stream, how do we know that we are not just being manipulated against our will?

anyone were to perceive and feel this continual operation, and yet were not led as one bound, would he not continually struggle against it, and thus either dispute with God, or mingle self with the Divine Providence? If he did the latter he would make himself also God; if the former he would release himself from restraint and deny God....

DP 178. Man is not granted a knowledge of future events, also for the reason that he may be able to act from freedom according to reason.... If he knew the effect or result from Divine prediction, his reason would come to rest, and with it his love; for love with reason comes to an end in the effect, and from that point it begins anew. It is the very delight of reason to see from love the effect in thought—not the effect in its attainment, but before it, that is, not in the present but in the future. Hence man has what is called Hope, which increases and decreases in the reason as he sees or looks forward to the event. This delight is completed in the event, but it thereafter fades away with the thought concerning the event. It would be similar in the case of an event that was foreknown.

DP 179. ...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 any way set themselves against the Divine Providence. This the Lord teaches by many passages in Luke 12:14-48.

## Questions and Comments

1. At this time of year, when the lilies have long since been “cast into the oven,” but we know they'll be back in the spring, do the lilies and other flowers help you have trust in the Lord's Providence for us?
2. What are some thoughts or strategies that help you not be “unsettled”?
3. What is an example of seeking the kingdom of God rather than worldly things?
4. Have you ever had a time when you felt kind of like a marionette, doing things not in freedom but being compelled by outside forces?
5. What is a story in the Word in which someone struggles against God? Did God push him into it by being too obvious in His leading?
6. Imagine if we could never hope for anything because we *knew* what was going to happen. Think of how important anticipation is, for children and adults.
7. “Everyone is permitted to form conclusions about the future from the reason” (DP 179), but not to *know* what is going to happen, including our lot after death. Thus we have an opportunity to put our faith in the Lord. “Saving faith is to believe in Him” (TCR 3:2). Do you have trust that the Lord is saving you?

withdrawal or leading away, he would become angry and, regarding God as his enemy, from the evil of his proprium\* he would deny God. Therefore, in order that man may not know this he is kept in a state of freedom, and consequently he knows no otherwise than that he leads himself.

DP 183:2. ...The Divine Providence does not remove this evil in a moment; for if it were removed in a moment man would cease to live; but the Divine Providence removes it quietly and gradually without man's knowing anything about it. This it does by permitting man to act according to thought which he rationally adopts. Then by various means, rational, civil and moral, it leads him away; and he is thus withdrawn as far as he can be led in freedom. Nor can evil be removed from anyone unless it becomes evident, and is seen and acknowledged. It is like a wound which does not heal unless it is opened.

DP 183:4. That the Lord continually humbles the proud and exalts the humble He Himself teaches in many places in the Word....

DP 186. ... 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 man as silently as an imperceptible stream or favoring current bears a vessel along. Consequently, man does not know but that he is constantly in his own proprium, for man's freedom and his proprium make one. Hence it is clear that freedom appropriates to man what the Divine Providence introduces; but this would not take place if the Divine Providence made itself evident. To be appropriated is to become part of the life.

\*Literally “his own,” that is, a sense of having a life of his own



**He has taken down the powerful from *their* thrones, and has exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.**

Luke 1:52-53

DP 182. III. IF A MAN CLEARLY SAW THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE HE WOULD EITHER DENY GOD OR MAKE HIMSELF GOD. The merely natural man says to himself, "What is Divine Providence? ...Are there not prudence, wisdom, cunning and malice, and are not all things in the world done from these?"

DP 182:2-3. He who in his heart denies the Divine Providence also denies God. It must be thought that either God or nature governs all things. He who thinks that God governs all things thinks that they are governed by Love itself and Wisdom itself, thus by Life itself. But he who thinks that nature governs all things thinks that they are governed by natural heat and natural light; and yet these in themselves are dead, because they are derived from a dead sun.... Can what is dead govern anything?

DP 183. It does not appear to be likely that if man saw clearly the Divine Providence and its operation he would deny God; for it would appear that if anyone saw it clearly he could not but acknowledge it and thus acknowledge God; yet the contrary is the case. The Divine Providence in no circumstance acts together with the will's love in man, but constantly acts against it. For man from his hereditary evil is always panting for the lowest hell; but the Lord by His Providence is continually leading him away and withdrawing him from it, first to a milder hell, then away from hell, and finally to Himself in heaven. This operation of the Divine Providence is perpetual. Therefore, if man saw clearly or felt this

**The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest the sound of it, but thou knowest not whence it comes or whither it goes; so is everyone who is born of the spirit.**

John 3:5-8

DP 180. II. IF A MAN CLEARLY SAW THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE, HE WOULD INTERPOSE IN THE ORDER AND TENOR OF ITS COURSE, AND WOULD PERVERT AND DESTROY THAT ORDER.

DP 180:2. First: *There is such a connection between external and internal things that they make one in every operation.* This will be illustrated here by examples taken from several parts of the human body.

DP 180:3. Take some common sheath in the body, the pleura for example which is the common sheath of the chest, or of the heart and lungs, and... consult anatomists. You will learn that this common sheath... by continuations from itself becoming finer and finer, enters into the innermost parts of the lungs, even into the tiniest bronchial branches and into the very minute sacs which are the beginnings of the lungs; not to mention its subsequent progress through the trachea to the larynx towards the tongue. From these things it is clear that there is a continuous connection between the outermost things and the inmost.... This is the reason that, when this outermost sheath, the pleura, becomes congested or inflamed or ulcerated, the lungs labor from their inmost parts; and if the disease grows worse, all action of the lungs ceases and the man dies.

DP 180:5. ...Now since man is associated with the Lord in certain external operations, and since no one is ever deprived of the liberty of acting according to reason, it follows that the Lord can only act in internals as He acts together with man in externals. Therefore, if man does not

shun and turn away from evils as sins, the external of his thought and will and at the same time the internal become vitiated and are destroyed, comparatively as... [with] pleurisy, which causes the death of the body.

DP 180:6. Second: *If man were at the same time in internals he would pervert and destroy the whole order and tenor of the Divine Providence.*

DP 180:7. If man knew how the stomach digests, how the surrounding viscera absorb their own portion, work upon the blood, and distribute it for all the needs of life, and if he had the disposing of these as he has of external things, such as eating and drinking, would he not pervert and destroy them all? When he is unable to dispose the external, which appears to be a single thing, without destroying it by extravagance and intemperance, what would he do if he had the disposition of the internals, which are infinite in number? Therefore man's internals, lest he should enter into them by the exercise of his will and gain control of them, are entirely removed from the scope of the will, with the exception of the muscles which constitute the covering; and, moreover, it is not known how these act; it is only known that they do act.

DP 181. It is the same in the spiritual things of the mind as it is in the natural things of the body, because all things of the mind correspond to all things of the body....

DP 181:2. ...Consequently, as man disposes the externals so the Lord disposes the internals; and this He does in one way if man, of himself, disposes the externals, and in another way if he disposes the externals from the Lord and at the same time as of himself.

## Questions and Comments

1. **“The wind blows where it will....”** We have a very hard time accurately forecasting the weather beyond one or two days. How much less can we forecast the movements of the Holy Spirit in our lives, bringing us the breath of life!
2. In lots of ways, the Heavenly Doctrine presents a holistic picture of creation and Divine Providence, with everything interconnected and interdependent, like one great ecosystem. Have you ever noticed examples in human life where either trouble or success in one area triggers trouble or success in another, seemingly unrelated area?
3. *Divine Providence* 180 mentions other parts of the body too, including **“the interiors of the organs of generation for propagating, the interiors of the womb for perfecting the embryo.”** It certainly seems that as we learn more, we **“in innumerable ways pervert and destroy in them the order of the course of the Divine Providence”** in relation to these organs in some areas, though in other applications, health sciences certainly help people.
4. How can we improve in disposing the externals of our life **“from the Lord and at the same time as of self”**?