

READINGS ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE

What governs the world we live in and the outcome of our lives?

All the forces operating in creation are contained within, and ultimately serve, an over-arching Divine providence. God is love itself, and therefore the primary goal of Divine providence is our eternal happiness.

We attain happiness by being joined to God, the source of life. It is love that conjoins, and genuine love can be given only in freedom. Therefore, in His providence God always seeks to preserve our uniquely human faculties of freedom and reason. Because humans tend to misuse these faculties for evil ends, it is inevitable that painful things will happen. In providence, God permits evil for the sake of maintaining the freedom upon which our salvation depends, but He never wills it. And in the end, those who follow His way find the peace and joy of heaven.

As a hidden current silently draws a ship in the ocean, so providence leads us out of our self-involvement and the confusion of merely natural thought, and into the order and joy of heavenly life—into the true humanity for which we were created.

*Adapted from the dust jacket of Divine Providence,
Emanuel Swedenborg, N. Bruce Rogers trans., 2003*

The laws of the Divine providence are revealed in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church “in order that what belongs to the Lord may be ascribed to Him (see *Divine Providence* 70) and not to any person. There is no such thing as chance or accident. The Lord created the universe and governs it for the purposes which are Divine and eternal. He could not allow these ends to be threatened by leaving anything to chance.

And yet it seems as if the Divine providence did not exist. We do not see it or feel it, and very often we experience things that seem to testify against it. It is very much the same with a child or young person trying to evaluate the love and wisdom of his parents. “They don’t love me,” is usually said because the parents refuse to give him everything he wants. “They don’t understand me.” Possibly they understand all too well. “They don’t care what happens to me,” may be said later on because the parents encourage independence and responsible judgment. Indeed, the very things that seem to testify against parental love are often the most convincing proof that it is there and that it is wise.

To appreciate this fact, a child would have to look beyond his immediate loves and fears, and this he can scarcely do. It is similar with the Divine providence. To understand it, we must consider the eternal qualities of heaven, and how they can be received by human beings on earth. This the merely natural man will not do, and because he attempts to find a providence that favors his own external loves, and fulfills his trivial ambitions, he ultimately concludes that providence does not exist and that all things are either a matter of chance, or the result of his own prudence.

No person could have discovered the laws of Divine providence. They have been revealed to the New Church so that we may learn to cooperate with the Lord, and enter, even on earth, into the life of heaven.

Adapted from an article on “The Laws of the Divine Providence” by Rev. Frank S. Rose

Teachings from the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church on Divine Providence

1. Divine providence is the government of the Lord's Divine love and wisdom.
2. The Lord's Divine providence has as its end a heaven from the human race.
3. In everything that it does the Lord's Divine providence regards something infinite and eternal.
4. There are laws of Divine providence, which are unknown to people.
5. It is a law of Divine providence that a person act in freedom in accordance with his reason.
6. It is a law of Divine providence that a person put away as if of himself evils as sins in his external self, and that the Lord be able only then to put away evils in his internal self and at the same time in his external one.
7. It is a law of Divine providence that a person not be compelled by external means to think and will, thus to believe and love, matters having to do with religion; but that a person bring himself to do so and at times compel himself.
8. It is a law of Divine providence that a person be led and taught by the Lord from heaven through the Word and through doctrine and preaching from the Word, and this to all appearance as though of himself.
9. It is a law of Divine providence that a person not perceive or sense anything of the operation of Divine providence, but still know about and acknowledge it.
10. One's own prudence is not real and only appears to be, and also ought to so appear; but Divine providence, owing to its presence in the least particulars, is universal.
11. Divine providence regards eternal ends, and not temporal ones except as they accord with eternal ones.
12. A person is admitted no more interiorly into truths of faith and goods of charity than the extent to which he can be maintained in them to the end of his life.
13. Laws of permission are also laws of Divine providence.
14. Evils are permitted for the sake of the end, which is salvation.
15. Divine providence operates equally with evil people as with good.
16. Divine providence does not assign evil to anyone or good to anyone, but one's own prudence adopts each.
17. Every person can be reformed, and there is no predestination.
18. The Lord cannot go against the laws of Divine providence, because to do so would be to go against His Divine love and against His Divine wisdom, thus against Himself.

From chapter headings in Divine Providence