

this debate started after Charles Darwin published the On the Origin of Species in 1859. The 5th Law established the truth that we should never perceive or feel anything of the operation of the Divine Providence, but we should know something about its operation and acknowledge it. If we did feel, or see anything of the divine operation, we would no longer feel free to act as of ourselves, and perversely we would want to destroy such influence and banish it from our lives. The Lord certainly understands our rebellious nature! But He cares, that we should have that freedom to choose to believe or not believe. Love that is forced or demanded under threat is not true love. But, hopefully since we have been studying the operation of the Lord's Providence and the freedom in which it maintains us every moment of our life, we should have no problem in acknowledging it and be grateful to the Lord for His eternal love and care, which are so gentle and yet equally all-powerful.

Thank you for staying with me to the end.

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United Search for Divine Providence



Session 16

The Lord cannot act contrary to the Laws of Providence, because to do so would be to act contrary to the Laws of Divine Love.

The operation of the Divine Providence for the salvation of man begins at his birth and continues right to the end of his life, and afterwards to eternity. (DP 331-337)

We have come to our last Session. How many students have we lost along the way? If we did, this is regretful since this closing chapter ties up some of the loose ends and gives us a very pertinent insight into the contemporary debate concerning 'Natural Selection' versus Divine Creation.

Section 1 (331-334) This gives a very personal reassurance to us since we are always curious as to how and when Divine Providence steps into our life. The real answer is that since Providence is eternal, each one of us has always existed in the Divine Mind. No, don't try to understand it - just feel the wonder of it in your heart. Only there can you perceive it and realise that it must be so. The text says that Providence has been with us 'from birth', but clearly conception and gestation are equally involved. The saying "God works in a mysterious way" should now be amended: "God works in an orderly way, His wonders to perform." He is eternally present and aware of all things. In the work we have been studying we have been learning just how He operates, yet without taking our freedom away. But at any time, if we wish, we can say, "No, I can't believe this. There is no evidence for it."

How free is God then, when we are told that He cannot act contrary to

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His Love and Wisdom? If we do not think very deeply, we might think that God can do just anything! Yet He cannot act against His selfless love and wisdom - unlike you and I who at times are prone to do the most foolish things! Yet in our more rational moments we do realise that there are certain things we could not do against our deepest love. So you see, Divine Love is our highest security and source of peace. Because in our hearts we know that God will never turn into a capricious tyrant!

Notice in 332 a reference to the orderly process of the laws of order - from the first creation. Yet so many natural disasters happen! And yet, our turbulent world seems to reflect our turbulent and violent nature! Notice the phrase that everything proceeds with unfailing constancy according to the laws of Divine Providence. A lovely, reassuring phrase! Read with particular care 333 in which it is explained that the Lord foresees everyone's state - whatever it will be, and constantly provides for every eventuality. Especially in providing opportunities for doing good, but never forcing anyone against a personal desire or choice. Whatever we choose His Love will never give up on us. Even if it is a wrong, selfish and evil choice, He will still moderate its consequences.

Section 2 (335-337) We are now thinking about our salvation and eternal life. We cannot think about anything more important! Please read the following passages slowly, allowing some time between each one to feel how they affect you. Realise how close to your heart that Divine voice is. All passages are from John's Gospel: 5:39-40; 6:32-35 and 48-57 and 60-63; 8:12; 10:27-28; 11:25-26. And now you can tackle DP 335-337!

Section 3 (338-339) Why is the concept of instantaneous salvation from immediate mercy impossible? It is the old question of thinking that if God is 'Almighty', then He can do anything He wants. That is our human idea of course, and we forget that whatever the Lord does is always entirely orderly and just. To do something disorderly would bring a universal disaster. We can rest assured that the Lord in His mercy will never break the laws of order and so deprive us of our humanity, that is, of our freedom:

"I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works, and that my soul knows very well." (Psalm 139:16)

But there is an important warning in this section: We can never understand these truths if we persist in thinking naturally. Natural thought cannot comprehend spiritual states. So rejoice in being able to grasp spiritual truths, because they will be with you for ever!

Section 4 (340) Instantaneous salvation is a very dangerous doctrine, which undermines the Christian Church. It is of course very much tied up with the doctrine of Three Divine Persons and the Son's mission is to prevent the Father's 'righteous wrath' from condemning all sinners to hell. Until the Christian Church accepts the unity of God in which the Divine is manifested in the Human of the Lord, the doctrine of salvation will never be able to rest on a firm foundation. And that foundation is the Lord's Divine Love and mercy for all people: however they choose to exercise their freedom.

Prayers without words and Meditation

We have done some of these meditations at the beginning of No 335 in the opening of our heart to the Lord's presence. Recently I have been drawn to the story of the giving of manna, the bread from heaven in Exodus 16 (please read it). Now try to realise that it is not just a story of long ago, but an assurance of a daily gift provided by our heavenly Father. We should begin each day by becoming aware that we have a portion of our daily bread - our life and strength for the next 24 hours. And that strength is not to be used selfishly, or hoarded just for ourselves. If we do that, it will deteriorate. Think about it for a few moments when you wake up and send grateful thanks to the Lord.

Addendum

Recently we have heard or read a lot about the debate on Creationism versus Evolution and Natural Selection. Professor Richard Dawkins has been the main proponent of the scientific view and opponent of the biblical defenders who claim that the world was created in the year 4006BC (something that is definitely not in the Bible!). Dawkins maintains that there is simply no scientific evidence for a Creator. The book we have been studying together clearly shows why the Creator leaves no visible footprints. We discussed this mainly in the 5th Law of DP (175-190). Recall that this work was published in 1764 - therefore long before