

## THE ORDER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

We read in the Heavenly Doctrine that those who are in the stream of providence are all the time carried along toward everything that is happy...and that those are in the stream of providence who put their trust in the Divine and attribute all things to Him.... Be it known also that in so far as any one is in the stream of providence, so far he is in a state of peace (Arcana Coelestia 8478:4).

1. **The first law of Divine providence is "that a person should act from freedom in accordance with reason" (Divine Providence 71).** The Lord wills that all people should be in freedom - both spiritual freedom, which is the ability to think and will whatever they please, and natural freedom, which is the ability to speak and do whatever they please. The Lord has given human beings two special abilities, one to reason and think, which is rationality, and one to will and do, which is liberty or freedom. And the first law of providence - that people are to act from freedom in accordance with reason - is essentially the fundamental law of regeneration: that people are to do good according to their instruction in truth.
2. **The second law of Divine providence states "that a person should, as if from himself, put away evils as sins in the external person....** The Lord is able, in this way and in no other, to put away evils in the internal person, and simultaneously in the external" (Divine Providence 100). We cannot reform and reorder the things of our natural mind; only the Lord can do this. But the Lord can only do it when we are willing that He should do it. And we must express our willingness in effort, not just in thought, but also in deed.
3. **The third law of Divine providence states "that a person should not be compelled by external means to think and will, and thus to believe and love, the things of religion, but should guide himself, and sometimes compel himself" (Divine Providence 129).** We must feel that our life is our own, that we are responsible for what happens to that life. We must know and feel that our efforts, our strivings, our compulsion of ourselves, are absolutely necessary to the formation of heavenly love and wisdom with us. And the wonderful thing is that we can feel life to be our own and act as if it were our own, and yet acknowledge that the power from which we act is not ours, but the Lord's. The Lord provides all the power, all the good means, and all the heavenly results. We are free partakers of these according to our own efforts and desires to receive and use them. We are even free to reject them altogether.
4. **The fourth law of Divine providence describes how the work of reformation and regeneration (or spiritual rebirth) may be accomplished. It states "a person should be led and taught by the Lord from heaven by means of the Word and by means of doctrine and preaching from the Word..." (Divine Providence 154).** The knowledge of what is right and wrong, good and evil, in spiritual, moral, or even civil concerns, can only be learned from the Word. And this is why the Word, in one form or another - spoken or written - has always existed with humankind. It is why the Word alone can be the sole authority for the church, in heaven and on earth.