

The Divine Proceeding (*Divinum Procedens*) is the Divine, not as it is in Itself (*in Se*) but as it goes forth to sustain the creation and to redeem and save mankind. It is synonymous with the Divine Operation, the Divine Providence, and generally with the Holy Spirit.

The New Church man may easily fall into the notion that the Divine Proceeding is, so to speak, a Thing or Object, instead of an activity, even as the Christian Church has long regarded the Holy Spirit as a Divine Person. It is therefore most important to see that the term, *proceeding*, is not a noun but part of a verb—a present participle. This emphasizes the fact that our attention is to be focused on the Divine as It is operating rather than on the Divine Being in Itself.

Yet, if we are to have any concept at all of the Divine Proceeding, our starting point must be the Divine Being or Esse. “This Esse, which is the Divine Itself which is Jehovah, is the all of all things which are and exist” (*DP* 157). Nothing can be said of this one and only Infinite Being, except that IT IS (*AC* 10619). Thus, the only name by which the Lord as He is in Himself can be called is, “I AM WHAT I AM” (*Exodus* 3:14). The Divine Esse is the Infinite, the only Life or Being. Yet, “we are because God is” (*DP* 46).

But nothing of the Divine Esse can be transferred or communicated to any creature, that is, to anything finite. Nor can it even be *predicated* of

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anything finite. “Esse cannot be predicated of those things which cease to be” (AC 726). “That which is temporal relatively *is not*, because being finite, it is no more” (AC 8939, 10409, 10775). Hence also it is said “the Lord’s Esse can never be communicated to any one, but only to the Lord’s Human; this has been made Divine Esse, that is, Jehovah” (AC 3938).

The Divine Esse is the only Esse—Esse in Itself. “It cannot be said that His *Esse* is from Itself, because the expression *from itself* implies something prior, and therefore time; and time is not applicable to the Infinite, which is called *infinite from eternity*; it also implies another God who is God in Himself, thus it implies God from God, or that God formed Himself; in which case He would neither be uncreate nor infinite, for He would thus have made Himself finite, either from Himself or from another. From the fact that God is *Esse* in itself it follows that He is Love in itself, Wisdom in itself, and Life in itself, and that He is the Itself, the source of all things, to which each thing must have relation in order to be anything.” (TCR 21).

If our concept of the Divine were limited to what we can comprehend of the Divine Esse, we could have no real worship. We would then be attempting to worship an invisible and utterly incomprehensible God, One of whom we could say no more than that He is. There is, therefore, the need for the Divine Esse to stand forth to our finite view, to be presented and manifested to the rational sight of man. This “standing forth” of the Divine is what is meant by the Divine *Existere*, the word *existere* itself coming from “*ex*” (out) and “*sisto*” (to stand).

“Esse refers to the soul; *existere* to the body” (AC 10738, 10823, 2621). Consequently, with specific reference to the Lord, “the Divine Soul of God-Man is what is meant by the Divine Esse, and the Divine Body by the Divine *Existere*” (DLW 14). The reason for this statement is obvious; the soul of man never stands forth except in the body produced by it. “Esse is not in a form, and thus has no quality unless it exists” (DLW 15). This is true of man because it is first true of the Lord; wherefore He said, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18).

The Divine Human is, therefore, the Divine *Existere*. “The Human went forth from the Esse of the Lord’s life, and became the *Existere* from that Esse” (NJHD 298).

This Human was first of all the Divine in the heavens. "Without influx through heaven, by which it becomes Divine Existere, Divine Esse could not have been communicated to any angel" (AC 4724). "The Divine Human from eternity was the Divine truth in heaven, thus the Divine Existere, which afterwards in the Lord was made the Divine Esse from which is the Divine Existere in heaven" (NJHD 305).

Existere also is predicated of the Lord; but only when He was in the world, where He put on the Divine. But since He has become the Divine Esse, existere can no longer be predicated of Him, except as a something that proceeds from Him. That which proceeds from Him is that which appears as the existere in Him; yet it is not in Him, but is from Him, and causes men, spirits, and angels to exist; that is, to live. In man, spirit, and angel, to exist is living (and his living is eternal happiness. The happiness of eternal life is that to which in the supreme sense eternity, which is from the Lord's Divine being, corresponds). (AC 3938:3)

Lest a cursory reading of this last passage should give rise to the idea that the Divine Existere is the *esse* of man, it should be emphasized that, as the passage itself really states, it is the cause of man's existence. This accords with the teaching that "man's esse is nothing else than the receiving of the Eternal, which proceeds from the Lord" (AC 3938:2).

We would note, in particular, the teaching that before the Advent the Divine Existere was the Divine in the heavens: that while the Lord was in the world, His Human was the Divine Existere; and that since the Glorification, by which the Divine Itself and the Human became One, or what is the same, the Divine Existere became the Divine Esse, the Divine Existere "could no longer be predicated of Him except as something proceeding from Him" (AC 3938:3). What it is that proceeds from the Lord's Divine Human will be discussed below.

What is important to see at present is that, while no quality can be applied to the Divine Esse or Infinite Life, certain qualities comprehensible to man, can be applied to the Divine Existere. These are what make it stand forth. The "standing forth" of the Divine is the Divine Existere, but the qualities themselves are the Divine Essence.

The Divine Essence is the Divine love and the Divine wisdom.

A distinction has been made between the *Esse* of God and the essence of God, because there is a distinction between the infinity of God and the love of God, infinity being applicable to the *Esse* of God, and love to the essence of God, since the *Esse* of God is more universal than His essence; just as the infinity of God is more universal than His love; and for this reason the word infinite is an adjective that is applicable to the essentials and attributes of God, which are all called infinite; as we say of the Divine love that it is infinite, of the Divine wisdom that it is infinite, also of the Divine power; not because of any pre-existence of the *Esse* of God, but because it enters into the essence as joined to it, cohering with it, determining and forming and also exalting it. (TCR 36)

Further, we are taught

the essence of God consists of two things, love and wisdom; while the essence of His love consists of three things, namely, to love others outside of Himself, to desire to be one with them, and from Himself to render them blessed. And because love and wisdom in God make one, the same three things constitute the essence of His wisdom; and love desires these three things, and wisdom brings them forth. (TCR 43)

From the fact that “love desires these three things, *and wisdom brings them forth*” (ibid., emphasis added), we may see that it is the Divine wisdom (or what is the same here, the Divine truth) that proceeds and affects man.

Since the Lord as a sun is Divine love, and Divine love is Divine good itself, the Divine that goes forth from the Lord, which is His Divine in heaven, is called, for the sake of distinction, Divine truth, although it is in fact Divine good united to Divine truth. This Divine truth is what is called the Holy that goes forth from Him. (HH 140)

The Divine love and the Divine truth therefrom are related to each other as the fire of the sun and the light therefrom in the world, love

resembling the fire of the sun and truth therefrom light from the sun. Moreover, by correspondence fire signifies love, and light truth going forth from love. From this it is clear what the Divine truth that goes forth from the Lord's Divine love is—that in its essence it is Divine good joined to Divine truth, and being so conjoined it vivifies all things of heaven; just as in the world when the sun's heat is joined to light it makes all things of the earth fruitful, which takes place in spring and summer. It is otherwise when the heat is not joined with the light, that is, when the light is cold; then all things become torpid and lie dead. With the angels this Divine good, which is compared to heat, is the good of love; and Divine truth, which is compared to light, is that through which and out of which good of love comes. (*HH* 13)

That the Divine proceeding from the Lord is the Lord and is His sphere, which appears as a sun, we are taught in the following passage.

That the Divine proceeding is the Lord may be illustrated by this: About every angel there is a sphere that is called the sphere of his life; this spreads abroad to a great distance from him. This sphere flows out or proceeds from the life of his affection or love; it is therefore an extension outside of him of such life as is in him. This extension is brought about by means of the spiritual atmosphere or aura, which is the aura of heaven. By means of that sphere the quality of an angel in respect to affection is perceived at a distance by others. But about the Lord there is a Divine sphere, which near Him appears as a sun, which is His Divine love, and from this that sphere proceeds into the whole heaven and fills it and constitutes the light that is there; this sphere is the Divine proceeding from the Lord, which in its essence is Divine truth. (*AE* 392:2).

We also read that the Divine Proceeding (or the Holy Spirit) is the Lord's presence with man by means of truth. "The Holy Spirit is not any other than the Lord; and to go forth" and "to proceed" is nothing else than to enlighten and teach by the presence, which is according to the reception, of the Lord. After death very many people put away the idea they had formed in this world about the Holy Spirit, and receive the idea that it

is the Lord's presence with man through angels and spirits, by and according to which the man is enlightened and taught. (L 46:4).

But "the Divine truth does not proceed immediately from the Divine itself, but from the Lord's Divine Human" (AC 4724). In a passage quoted above, we were taught that "when (the Lord) became the Divine Esse, Existere could no longer be predicated of Him except something proceeding from Him" (AC 3938). Since the Glorification, therefore, "the Divine called the Father, and the Divine called the Son, are the Divine *ex Quo*, and the proceeding Divine is the Divine *per Quod*" (L 46:2). The meaning here is that the Source (*ex Quo*) of the Divine truth which goes forth and enlightens man is the Divine Esse in the Divine Existere, or the Divine Existere made Esse. When the Lord had glorified His Human, or when the Divine Existere became one and the same as the Divine Esse, that Human could no longer be said to be God-forthstanding, because It was the Divine Esse. It was the Infinite *in Se*, and thus above finite apprehension. Only what proceeded out of it could make God manifest to human thought. Hence *Existere* is now to be predicated of Divine Proceeding (AC 3938, 4692, 7796, AE 972), for this is the Divine truth or the Holy Spirit, that goes forth from the Divine Human and affects man, causing him to exist. This is why it is said in the Gospel, of John that "the Holy Spirit was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (7:39). Again, in the same Gospel, the following sayings of the Lord are recorded:

It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. (16:7) [Emphasis added]

I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. (16:12, 13)

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, . . . He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (14:26)

Consequently, after the Resurrection, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:20).

The assumption of a Human and the glorification of it did not, and could not, bring about any change in the Divine Esse. He who is *Life in Se* is changeless; the Infinite cannot change. But a change was wrought in the *mode* by which the Lord ruled heaven and earth; or, in other words, the Divine proceeded in a different way. This change is explained, in the Writings as follows:

In the Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, before His assumption of a Human in the world, the two prior degrees existed actually, and the third degree potentially, as they do also with angels; but that after the assumption of a Human in the world, He put on over these the third degree, called the natural, thereby becoming Man, like a man in the world; but with the difference, that in the Lord this degree, like the prior degrees, is infinite and uncreate, while in angel and in man they are all finite and created. For the Divine which, apart from space, had filled all spaces penetrated even to the ultimates of nature; yet before the assumption of the Human, the Divine influx into the natural degree was mediate through the angelic heavens, but after the assumption it was immediate from Himself." (DLW 233)

In proceeding by means of this immediate influx, "the Infinite and Eternal in Itself must needs look to what is Infinite and Eternal *from Itself* in things finite" (DP 52). At first sight this appears to contradict what was said in *True Christian Religion*, number 21, to the effect that there can be no Divine from Itself. In fact, the same teaching is repeated in the work, *The Divine Providence*, just four numbers before the passage quoted (see number 48). But there is no conflict if we notice that in the passage where it is said that there can be no Divine from Itself (a *Se*), the subject is the Divine Esse or Being. Obviously, there can be no such Divine from Itself, because as the passages themselves show, *Esse a Se* presupposes a prior Esse, which is impossible. In this sense, then, there can be no *Divine a Se*. But once the idea of the Divine Esse *in Se* has been established, it is permissible to think of that Divine going forth as a sphere or activity, having certain

effects upon finite things. This is the Divine (or Infinite) *a Se* in created things (DP 52). To say that the Divine from Itself is *in* created things does not mean that it is contained by them. The created or finite things are defined as referring especially to men, spirits, and angels (DP 52). There is no need to emphasize the point that none of these can “in any way *contain* the Infinite. But they are so created that they may be acted upon by the Divine and respond freely. Thus is the Divine from Itself, the Divine Proceeding, *in created things.*”

The matter may be better understood if we consider what is meant by *influx*. The Writings warn against any such crude concept of influx as that of a liquid into a vessel (TCR 695:4). The dominant idea to have is that of the action of what is higher or more interior upon what is lower or exterior. Thus when it is said that the Divine inflows into man the meaning is that the Divine acts upon man, or is “conjoined with him by contiguity” (DP 57). The Divine which thus, as it were, touches man, is not the Divine *in Se*, for that would destroy man. It is the Divine proceeding, the Divine sphere, the Divine *a Se* in created things. Thus we read that the “Infinite and Eternal *a Se* is the Divine, proceeding, or the Lord in others created from (ex) Himself, thus in men and in angels: and this Divine is the same with the Divine Providence” (DP 55).

Now, the statement is that “the Infinite and Eternal in Itself must needs look to what is Infinite and Eternal from Itself in things finite” (DP 52). The same passage explains that this is “to look to the Divine, that is, Itself, in (men, spirits, and angels), as a man looks at his image in a mirror.” The same is said in other words: “The Infinite and Eternal, which is the same as the Divine, looks to all things in the finite infinitely, and conjoins Itself with them in accordance with the degree of reception of wisdom and love in them” (DP 53).

We have already seen that the reception by man of influx from the Lord involves the idea of being acted upon by the Divine Proceeding. Thus the “reception of wisdom and love” just spoken of, refers to the response on the part of man to the Divine Influx or Operation. The Divine *in Se* regards it as an *effect* of the Divine from Itself (*a Se*) acting upon created things. It is the *effects* wrought by Its own activity that the Divine *In Se* regards.

The Divine can look only to the Divine; and it can look to this nowhere but in things created by Itself. That this is true is evident from this, that one can look to another only from what is his own in himself. He that loves another looks to him from his own love in himself; and he that is wise looks to another from his own wisdom in himself. He may see that the other loves him or does not love him, and is wise or not wise, but this he sees from the love and wisdom in himself; and therefore he conjoins himself with the other so far as the other loves him as he loves the other, or so far as the other is wise as he is wise; for thus they make one . . . The Lord can have an abode in man or angel and dwell with them, only in His own, and not in what is their own (*proprium*) for that is evil; and if it were good it would still be finite, which in itself and from itself cannot contain the Infinite. All this makes clear that it is impossible for a finite being to look to the Infinite; but it is possible for the Infinite to look to what is infinite from Himself, in finite beings. (*DP* 53:2, 3)

It is therefore a reflection or image of Its own essence that is regarded by the Divine. But this does not imply that there is anything of self-love in the Divine. There would be Divine self-love if it were possible for beings to exist who had something of the Infinite or Divine in them as their very own. It would then be a case of God loving Himself. But the *reception* of love and wisdom by man is never infinite. Although the love and wisdom proceeding from the Lord and affecting angels and man are themselves *infinite*, they can be received and multiplied only *indefinitely*. "That is called indefinite which cannot be defined and limited by number; nevertheless what is indefinite is finite relatively to what is infinite, and so finite that there is no ratio between the two. That truths and goods can increase indefinitely comes from the fact that they proceed from the Lord, who is infinite." (*AC* 6232). Hence, the case is that the Divine regards its own image or reflection and not Itself.

Again, the Divine looks to this image, not because of self-love, but because the happiness of men and angels is reflected in this image. Their happiness is according to their reception of love and wisdom *as if* it were their own. Since the third essential of the Divine love is to make others outside of Itself happy, there can be no question of Divine self-love. It is the happiness of men and angels that is eternally regarded. This, su-

premiely, is the “Divine from the Lord in created things” (DP 52). For “the Lord can have an abode in man or angel and dwell with them, only in His own, and not in what is their own (proprium), for that is evil and if it were good it would still be finite, which in itself and from itself cannot contain the Infinite. All this makes clear that it is impossible for a finite being to look to the Infinite but it is possible for the Infinite to look to what is infinite from Himself, in finite beings” (DP 53 :3).

It has been stated several times above that the finite can never contain the Infinite. And it is also most important to see that the finite does not proceed from the Infinite. “The finite cannot proceed from the Infinite; to say that it can is . . . a contradiction; yet the finite can be produced by the Infinite, but this is creating, not proceeding” (DP 219:2).

A distinction must be drawn, then, between the Divine going forth to create, and the Divine going forth to sustain and regenerate. The things that are produced by the Divine when it proceeds to create, are not Life *in Se* but are deprived of Life *in Se* (DLW 291, TCR 29,33). “What is created from God is not continuous from Him (DLW 55). Everything created has to be from the Uncreate (DLW 44). On the other hand, the Divine going forth to sustain and to regenerate man is the Infinite acting upon created things. From this we may understand why it is said, “as the Divine Itself is the Infinite and the Eternal, all things which are from the Divine are also infinite and eternal” (AC 3404). But the number goes on to say that Divine things, “being infinite, cannot possibly be comprehended by angels, because the latter are finite” (ibid.).

How then, can the Infinite be conjoined with the finite, and the finite with the Infinite? There is no ratio between the Infinite and the finite (AC 2572:4, DP 54) but conjunction is possible “because the Infinite has created all things from Himself” DP 54) and because “there is a ratio between the finite and the Infinite, but from the Infinite in the finite (DP 54).

Because the Lord has made all things from Himself, and because His kingdom is a kingdom of uses, therefore uses are what conjoin (HH 112). “The proceeding Divine which is the real and only Life . . . does not apply itself to man, but solely to the uses in him. These uses, regarded in themselves, are spiritual; and the forms of uses (in the body of man). . . are natural . . . The Divine Life applies Itself to the uses themselves in every series, and by this it gives life to every form” (*Divine Love* IV:2). This may

be illustrated by the reception of light and heat from the natural sun by material substances. The light and heat themselves are not matter, yet they *affect* the material substances (*AE* 1131:4).

The second reason that conjunction is possible is that the “Infinite in finite things can look to nothing else than to the Infinite *a Se*, and . . . this can appear with finite *as if* in them” (*DP* 54). The effects wrought by the proceeding Divine upon created things appear to those created things to be their very own life. Thus it is from the Infinite in the finite that this ratio and conjunction are possible. “The conjunction of the Lord with man, or spirit, or angel is such that everything that refers to the Divine is not from them but from the Lord” (*DP* 53). Consequently, it is acknowledged by the angels that this conjunction is really only an adjunction (*DP* 58, *TCR* 718, *DLW* 60).

So we return once more to our introductory statement: The Divine Proceeding is the Divine, not as It is in Itself, by as it goes forth to sustain the creation and accomplish the redemption and salvation of mankind.

When we consider how much is involved in “sustaining the creation and accomplishing the redemption and salvation of mankind,” we realize that the Divine Proceeding is not a mere empty theoretical term, but is dynamism itself. □