

Some Difficulties

The view presented in this study has emphasized human freedom as cause of both spiritual decisions and natural events of good and evil. The question arises whether this interpretation contradicts the doctrine that man's own prudence is nothing, and that Divine Providence does everything good. In the book *Divine Providence* an entire chapter is given to the subject: "There is no such thing as man's own prudence. It only appears that there is, and there ought to be this appearance; but the Divine Providence is universal because it is in things most individual."<sup>236</sup> What is meant by man's own prudence being nothing?

Man's *own* prudence is defined as coming not from God, but from his *proprium*, or what is his own.<sup>237</sup> This kind of prudence is not really prudence at all, because wisdom, to be wise, must come from God rather than from self. In this sense man's "own" or "proprial" prudence is nothing, because the prudence of him who thinks he is wise from himself is in fact folly. But "proprial prudence" does exist, and indeed is the means by which evil and falsity, and thus hell, are appropriated to the man who believes in his own prudence rather than in Divine Providence. Similarly the Writings can say that evil "has no reality" in that it "has no power and no spiritual life,"<sup>238</sup> but it certainly does exist! "Evil, regarded in itself, is not nothing, although it is the nullity of good."<sup>239</sup> Proprial prudence is indeed a factor in human life, but it produces nothing good and has nothing to do with genuine prudence.

Divine Providence, not man's own prudence, is the source of everything good.<sup>240</sup> When man does good by means of a free choice of good, the essence of his choice is love which he receives from the Lord. It is the Lord's good, even though he chooses it. His own prudence did not lead him to it. The Divine led him to it, and good from the Divine inflowed so that he could choose well. Man cannot justly take credit for the reception of good and should ascribe to the Lord everything that may be good with him, because it was inflowing good that inspired the choice of good.<sup>241</sup> Thus Divine

<sup>236</sup> DP 191-213; see also 308-321.

<sup>239</sup> CL 444:3

<sup>237</sup> See DP 206, 310-316.

<sup>240</sup> See DP 191-213; also 298.

<sup>238</sup> DP 19

<sup>241</sup> See AC 5952, 8516:2, 8517e.

Providence does everything good, and man's own prudence does nothing of good, though it may appear to do good. If man's own prudence really does nothing at all and has no freedom to do evil, then we must ascribe evil to the Lord.

This does not suggest that man should slack his hands and wait for the Divine Providence to do everything. Rather man should seek to be truly prudent, from God not from self. As *Divine Providence* sums up, "If, therefore, you wish to be led by the Divine Providence, use prudence as a servant and steward does who faithfully dispenses the goods of his master. This prudence is the talent which was given to the servants to trade with, of which they must render an account."<sup>242</sup> Genuine human prudence is something to be acquired and used in the service of the Lord. This true prudence is not proprial prudence, but man's free reception of the Divine Providence, and thus it is really Providence. Man is free to be led either by it or by his proprial prudence.

The teachings about man's own prudence do not call human freedom into question, but rather turn man to a living acknowledgment of the Lord as source of all truth and good. This does not denigrate the doctrine of human freedom and responsibility. Rather it redefines man's freedom as essentially a choice between trusting proprial prudence and accepting prudence from God. For when prudence is used as a wise servant would use it, it is Providence.

But perhaps all this doctrinal elaboration is fallacious. It can be argued that the appearance that we are free in our actions and free to affect others, is a necessary appearance, but not really true. Perhaps we are meant to *believe* we can, by our free actions, affect others, whereas in actual fact we cannot.<sup>243</sup> Man's life appears to be his own, but it is not really his own; that also is a necessary appearance, but not a true one. Might it also be a false but necessary appearance that we are free in our actions?

It must be admitted that this is possible, but there are substantial arguments against this interpretation. The appearance that all life is from self is indeed a necessary appearance, but investigation of the truth in this case does not destroy, but liberates and saves. Even while he feels life is his own, man is supposed to know and

<sup>242</sup> DP 210

<sup>243</sup> Something similar has been argued concerning man's permanent life in hell—that no one lives to eternity in hell, but he is supposed to believe he may.

acknowledge the truth that all life is the Lord's. The celestial perceive this truth, and the more they acknowledge that good and truth and all life are the Lord's, the more they feel life to be their own. That all life is the Lord's, the angels even love to be so.<sup>244</sup> The Writings frequently invite and indeed command man to acknowledge this truth. Man is thus told to acknowledge that the appearance of self-life is not the truth, even though it is a necessary appearance.

And so it is with all appearances: we are invited to investigate and be freed by the truth. If there were an appearance that was supposed to remain, while the truth about it was supposed to continue hidden, then the problem arises that the truth is harmful to man, and that to believe in falsity is good. This seems to contradict everything that the Writings teach about good and truth. How can a false appearance be preferable to the truth? Truth is Divine. Truth is the means of approaching the Divine, and if we say we should believe in falsity, and should not see the truth, then there would seem to be a serious obstacle between us and the Lord. Doubt would also be cast upon everything the Lord says: maybe many other teachings are simply appearances, untrue, and maybe the truth really is not good for man. Yet the universal teaching is that truth is the form of good. Man is supposed to understand the truth, or else his faith remains historical, natural and persuasive. Truth is the path to good. It is a fact that for certain ages, times and states, appearances are necessary.<sup>245</sup> But rational adults who can be regenerated by the Lord are invited again and again to see the truth and to put away fallacious appearances. The truth makes man free—genuinely free—by opening him to the freedom of heaven.<sup>246</sup>

This is why I cannot believe it is a false appearance in the Writings that we are free in our actions and free to affect others. If the appearance is false, then investigation of the truth in this case would not liberate and free, but imprison man in a pit of self-centered isolation. For example, let us suppose that every free decision we make will ultimately be for the best in others (because it is only an appearance that we are free to affect others, and in fact Providence does everything). Then our decisions matter only for ourselves. They appear to affect others, but this is fallacious. Does not this make the whole of religion and the life of charity and use self-

<sup>244</sup> DP 42, 43, 158; AC 1387

<sup>245</sup> See TCR 109, 786; Coronis 51; AE 948:3.

<sup>246</sup> John 8:31, 32

centered? If all our decisions relating to other people have no effect on them, because everything is determined by Providence, then an enormous part of our lives seems to become meaningless, and the effect of seeing the truth is to turn us into ourselves. If we are responsible only for our own inner attitudes, then any time we consider a policy or action we are correct to reason, "It won't make any difference; the best will surely happen; the only thing that matters is that my own attitude be proper and good." Confronted with a disobedient child, father or mother should concentrate not on what is best for the child, since that does not make any difference to the child, but on his own motive only; whether he spansks, or reprimands, or lets the matter slide does not matter. Only one's own motive matters.

Is it possible to live this way? Such a belief about the irrelevancy of what we do to others would seem to encourage us to be totally self-centered. Man cannot try to improve his motive without believing that his decisions have effects, and if he believes that nothing he does can affect others, how can he get out of himself? To correct his motive, man must think more about his neighbor's good than his own. But if what we do does not affect our neighbor, we cannot honestly direct our lives to the good of the neighbor. How can we plan good for him if we know our actions will not make us better vehicles for good? How can we shun evil against him if we know we can not really be harmful to him? We could shun evil *motive* as a sin against God and as harmful to ourselves, but not evil *action* because we would correctly say, "Nothing I do can really hurt him; I will concern myself only with my own inner feelings." But in order to correct our inner affections and motives we must also plan to do goods and shun evils so that the neighbor will be benefited as ourselves.<sup>247</sup> If we do not believe we can be of use to the neighbor through our decisions, we live in total isolation.

Thus if it is a fallacious appearance that we are free to affect others, it is an appearance that cannot endure investigation; the truth would destroy religion and charity and make man self-centered in any age, time or state, because man must live in the appearance that he can affect others. If this is a fallacious appearance, the consequence is that the truth is harmful to man under virtually all circumstances, and how can the truth be harmful to man? If any truth is such that it should never be investigated, it separates us from God in a most terrible way.

<sup>247</sup> Matt. 7:12

Something similar might be said to the suggestion that the whole subject is a Divine mystery: we cannot understand it, we never will, and it is useless to try. "I believe I am free, I feel free in natural things and free to affect others, but I also believe Providence does everything, and for the best." It is true that we cannot understand everything at once, and we must learn patience with our feeble intellects. The Writings do, however, frequently urge us to try to understand the truths of faith. In fact the whole of the Writings of Swedenborg are a clarion call to see the truth and be freed by it. Again and again they return to the theme that now spiritual darkness and ignorance are dispelled, and man is permitted—indeed urged—to enter with his understanding into the mysteries of faith—not from his self-intelligence, but from the explanations given in Divine revelation.<sup>248</sup>

Only the Lord can grant true enlightenment, and often man must wait a long time before little by little he comes to see some truth. But to *consent* to an important truth being an unfathomable mystery is to keep oneself in a natural faith of the memory—a faith that does not survive death. Moreover, the question matters in a practical way because it affects how man thinks and lives in all areas of life. The more he understands the relation of Providence and free will, and exactly how Providence operates, the better able he is to live a life of genuine order and use. He has to live in some manner, from some principles or others, whether consciously chosen or not. The beliefs he forms about free will and Providence go a long way towards making up his individual philosophy of living. It is a question that could not be ignored even if he preferred to remain in a state of blind faith.

### **Then How Trust In Providence?**

If we cannot have confidence that everything happens for the best, then what *can* we trust in? What good is Providence if it allows evil and harm to befall man?

In fact there is much we can trust in. If not everything happens for the best, neither does everything happen (as some believe) for the worst! Providence does govern the will of man and preserves freedom, even with the evil. The Lord seeks to turn every evil to

<sup>248</sup> Why man should understand his faith is explained in a great many passages. For a sample selection, see *Faith* 1-4; TCR 508; AC 5432, 10659:3; AE 895, 970:1.

good. No evil is permitted except that good may come from it; we can be sure that every evil has the possibility of some good resulting from it. The pages of Divine revelation—not to mention history and individual experience—offer many examples. The Lord ever bends man away from evil and towards good—never breaking, but bending. Although there is uncertainty about exactly how His government operates in regard to the time of man's death and such natural occurrences as storm and earthquake, still Divine Providence in one way or another is in every least singular of existence, and the Lord is constantly leading us towards Himself and eternal happiness. In short, while He foresees evil, He provides every good.

In other words, the Lord works continually for good in every tiniest detail, and this we should trust in. Without His infinite and universal force for good, there would be nothing. The particulars of the Lord's care of mankind almost pass beyond belief. The Writings show an incredible number of things the Lord does for us—all of which we should trust in. And we can trust that this infinite operation will never cease or be lacking in any way. Only let us not trust that the offences that come are really good; the offences are man's and they are hell.

One more important provision may be trusted in—not by all, but by those who are in good. We have already seen that the evil are given some kinds of success, and that free decisions for evil can bring harm of sorts upon others. Moreover, misfortunes of various kinds sometimes befall man from evil spirits.<sup>240</sup> The evil meant by "what is torn" may afflict man, through no fault of his own.<sup>250</sup> The evil have little assurance of protection from harm from such evils, but the Writings show that the good enjoy a protection that others lack. "All the evil which the evil intend and do *to the good* is turned by the Lord into good...."<sup>251</sup> In regard to worldly success with the good (but not with the evil) it is said that they receive on earth "such things as contribute to the happiness of eternal life; riches and honors for those to whom they are not hurtful; and no riches and honors for those to whom they would be hurtful. Nevertheless to these latter He gives in time, in the place of honors and riches, to be glad with a few things, and to be more content than the rich and honored."<sup>252</sup>

<sup>240</sup> AC 6493, 6494; SD 4562, 4567, 4758m

<sup>250</sup> AC 4167

<sup>251</sup> AC 4493e; emphasis added; see 6574.

<sup>252</sup> AC 8717e; see 6481, 7007; DP 215-217.

The teachings on misfortune suggest that when a sphere of good prevails with man, misfortunes do not afflict him; and when the good suffer from misfortune, the purpose is that through temptation they may be led away from their evils and further into good.<sup>253</sup>

The good, therefore, may know that "for those who trust in the Divine all things advance toward a happy state to eternity, and that whatever befalls them in time is still conducive thereto."<sup>254</sup> "He who lives in good, and believes that the Lord governs the universe, and that all the good which is of love, and all the truth which is of faith, are from the Lord,...can be gifted with heavenly freedom, and together with it peace; for he than trusts solely in the Lord and has no care for other things, and is certain that all things are tending to his good, his blessedness, and his happiness to eternity."<sup>255</sup> It is an important assurance for the good, and the reason they can enjoy it is that "they who are in the stream of Providence are all the time carried along toward everything that is happy, whatever may be the appearance of the means; ...those are in the stream of Providence who put their trust in the Divine and attribute all things to Him..."<sup>256</sup> The Lord is able to protect "all who are reformed"<sup>257</sup> because by life and faith they are in the stream of His Providence.

The evil can have no such assurance because they are governed by Providence, but are not in its stream. "Those are not in the stream of Providence who trust in themselves alone and attribute all things to themselves..."<sup>258</sup> Frequently the Writings show that while the good are kept by the Lord in the stream of Providence such that all things conduce to their eternal happiness, the evil cannot be so protected against the hells and against themselves; although no evil is permitted unless a good may come from it, the evil tend to bring upon themselves more and more harm. The sole means of protection are Divine good and truth, and when the evil reject these, they also reject the Lord's protection. This may be illustrated by an explanation of how the Lord protects him who is being reformed:

The good and truth which flow in through the internal render him so safe that the infernal spirits cannot do him the least harm; for that which acts inwardly prevails immeasurably over that which acts outwardly; because what is interior, in consequence of being purer, acts upon

253 SD 4630m

256 AC 8478:4

254 AC 8478; emphasis added.

257 AE 1189:4

255 AC 2 8 9 2

258 AC 8478:4

each and every individual particular of the exterior, and thus disposes the external to its will. But in this case there must be good and truth in the external, wherein the influx from the internal can be fixed; and in this way good can be among evils and falsities, and yet be in safety.<sup>259</sup>

This is said of the good, and it is clear why the evil are without the protection of which the good can be confident.<sup>260</sup>

The degree to which Providence can protect man, then, depends to some extent upon the man himself. "The Lord cannot protect man unless he acknowledges the Divine and lives a life of faith and charity..."<sup>261</sup> "They who are not yet in truths are not in safety because things not true communicate with evil spirits."<sup>262</sup> Those in natural good only, who lack any receptacle for good and truth in the internal man, "cannot be defended by the angels" after death.<sup>263</sup> Thus:

when an evil and infernal spirit assails anything Divine with intent of hurting it..., that evil spirit immediately deprives himself of the Lord's protection; for every spirit, the evil as well as the good, is under the Lord's protection, *and when that is taken away*, he falls into evils and falsities of every kind which are from hell, and at the same time he falls into the hands of those that are from hell, who are called punishers, and these then punish and torment him according to the evil that he has done or has attempted to do.<sup>264</sup>

Every man and spirit is under the Lord's protection, the evil as well as the good; and *to him who is under the Lord's protection no evil can happen*: for it is the Lord's will that no one should perish or be punished. *But so far as anyone is under the Lord's protection he abstains from doing evil, but so far as he does not abstain he removes himself from the Lord's protection*, and so far as he removes himself he is hurt by the evil spirits who are from hell; ...and so far as any are outside of the Lord's Divine protection, that is, so far as they do evil, they come into the power of those who do evil to them by inflicting

<sup>259</sup> AC 6724:2

<sup>262</sup> AC 6769

<sup>260</sup> See also TCR 614.

<sup>263</sup> AC 5032e

<sup>261</sup> HH 577:3

<sup>264</sup> AE 642:2; emphasis added.

punishment and depriving them of such things as belong to spiritual life.<sup>265</sup>

The evil surely feel this is unfair, and ardent democrats may complain that God discriminates against one class of men. But human concepts of justice are finite, and the Divine principle of justice is that "the Divine and its presence have for their sole end the *protection and salvation of the good...*"<sup>266</sup>

In sum, we can trust in a government of eternal and infinite justice—not that everything is good, but that everything is governed justly, and that for those who are in good, all things conduce to their eternal happiness. This is a justice that will always result ultimately in the spiritual world, though not necessarily in this life.<sup>267</sup> Justice results from the judgment after death and in the life eternal. In this life society and man's actions may degenerate and grow more and more hostile to the Divine, but there will always be justice, after death surely, and on earth insofar as is possible.

Very little do the Writings say about the temporal course of the future.<sup>268</sup> Strong ultimate hope for the Lord's Church New Jerusalem is given, but it is not said that the world will get better and better. Some angels predicted that the civilization of Christendom would be negative to the Heavenly Doctrines, and their hopes lay with distant peoples.<sup>269</sup> *Last Judgment* 73 and 74 say little more than that man will be in a more free state to accept spiritual truth. This is perhaps less than we would like, but still is something important to trust in.

From many teachings about the potential of the New Jerusalem there is good reason to believe that ultimately it will extend far wider than today and influence the whole world for good more than we can imagine. Yet the real Providence and justice we should trust in are spiritual, not natural. This world is an arena for man to choose good or evil, and success or the lack

<sup>265</sup> AE 643; emphasis added; see 689:2, 691; described further in AC 8227, 8875, 10187; for more teachings on how the evil deprive themselves of Divine protection, see AC 2379, 3519:4, 5, 4555:2, 5036, 5893:3, 6369,6423, 9049:6, 9141:4, 9936:2, 9962:2; HH 550; AE 472, 556b, 669, 781:12, 999:2, 1121: SD 2688, 2689, 4067.

<sup>266</sup> AC 8227; emphasis added.

<sup>267</sup> See DP 249, 250.

<sup>268</sup> See LJ 73, 74; AC 931; AR 547; AE 732, 764:2; TCR 109, 786-790.

<sup>269</sup> LJ 74

thereof in this life is no criterion of true justice. To trust in Providence we must look to and think about life eternal, where all is just. If we expect too much good in this life, we are asking Providence for the wrong things. Life on earth is not a vale of tears, but neither can it be a bed of roses so long as there is evil in man.

It would be interesting to examine in detail the many ways justice *is* wrought on earth. In this life evil punishes itself often. History is full of examples of so-called poetic justice. Treachery frequently destroys the traitor, dishonesty the liar, power the powerful. Napoleon's lust of power, Charles XII's stubbornness, Hitler's racist fantasies of dominion and glory, Stalin's paranoia, French intolerance of the Huguenots in 1685, Roman Catholic decay before Luther, French hatreds during the Wars of Religion, and many more examples of apparent evil seem to illustrate the principle that evil often punishes itself readily on earth. A true concept of justice, however, must go beyond this. Trust in Providence should turn us somewhat away from the world and towards heaven and Him who is Justice itself. To turn away from the world means not to leave it, as Christian ascetics have believed, but towards spiritual use, the betterment of the spiritual state of mankind.

Genuine trust in Providence, therefore, should beware of too close an association with the idea of progress that is fashionable among many today. The happy ending syndrome of much popular culture urges that in every way things in this world are getting better and better. This is a new notion in the history of human thought. Neither ancient man nor the first Christian Church believed in unending progress in this world. The modern idea of progress emerged in the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, after the spiritual judgment of the first Christian Church. Growing as a result of the rejection of God, it stems from the belief that if man will just take his destiny into his own hands, and ignore God, the supernatural and written revelation, then earthly life, the only life there is, will get better and better. In their writings the greatest proponents of the modern theory of progress have been opponents of a visible God and the supernatural.<sup>270</sup>

Yet the heresy of purely worldly progress easily enters our thinking, influencing us away from God and eternal life. In fact to trust in Divine Providence is to trust in a spiritual justice, in this and

<sup>270</sup> See Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, first published by the University of Chicago, 1949; also in Phoenix Book paperback.

the next life. We should trust that the Lord never ceases to love and never stops working to lead everyone to heaven, yet never destroys our freedom even if we hate Him. Just as one of the Lord's greatest temptations was to compromise man's freedom for his own good, so probably the greatest object of our trust should be that the Lord will always grant us freedom and thus life itself, including the consequences of our choices.<sup>271</sup>

It is concerning the subject rather than the object of trust, however, that Swedenborg's Writings present radically new doctrine. Christians for centuries believed that trust in Divine Providence centered on the actions of God, particularly His visible actions. Much New Church thought has shared this perspective. While the Writings do not neglect this outer plane of Divine operation, the most striking feature of their teaching on Providence, and especially of the work *Divine Providence*, is the emphasis on a new, more interior confidence in God: the trust that all good and all truth are from God and not from man or his own prudence.<sup>272</sup> The fullness of trust in Divine Providence centers less on observing deeds of God than on acknowledging that from himself man has no good or truth, and that all good and truth are from Him who is love and wisdom itself.

This acknowledgment is made formally in prayer and worship, but fundamentally, in its essence, it is made in every area of human life and usefulness, when man pursues what is good and true from God rather than what is from self. When man seeks what is good for self rather than what God reveals is good, or when he believes what his self-intelligence says is true rather than what is genuinely true, then he makes himself the source of good and truth. This principle would seem to apply not only to spiritual good and truth revealed by God, but also to moral, civil, and natural good and truth about which man must make daily decisions: always he has the choice between what he wants to be good, and what is actually good; and between what his conceit says is true, and what is actually true. Man can trust that God is genuinely the source of all good and truth only by trying to follow and live in that good and truth in every area of human endeavor. If he does this, then and only then does he have confidence in Divine Providence rather than in his own prudence,

<sup>271</sup> For an interesting discussion of the temptation to remove man's freedom, see "The Grand Inquisitor" in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book V, Chapter 5.

<sup>272</sup> See, for example, DP 191, 199, 201, 205-213, 310-313, 316, 318:10, 321.

and then does God grant him the trust that various events will all benefit those who are in the stream of Providence.

Thus a full trust in Divine Providence is not something man can reason himself into. Rather it is a gift God grants if man acknowledges, by the manner of his living, that good and truth are not man's own or from self, but from God. While trust in Divine Providence should not ignore outward works wrought by God, the distinctively New Church emphasis centers on the individual looking to God for all good and truth in his life. Trust in Providence depends less on whether he accepts this or that deed as a Providential work, than on whether in his daily decisions he acts from genuine good and truth, or from his own corruptions thereof. The essential focus of trust in Providence is not external, but internal: learning to live in such a manner that one's whole life expresses the belief that good and truth are God's, not one's own. In fact the purpose of human existence is precisely this—to develop a way of life that daily trusts in Divine Providence, less by imagining how God operates in the world, than by accepting His love and wisdom as the core of our lives, as the inspiration of our every action.

These two faces of trust cannot be separated, but the internal face is primary and must precede. We cannot have confidence or light about various actions we think may be from or against Providence unless in our daily choices we accept God as the Author of good and truth. When observed events threaten confidence in Providence, the most fitting response is not to argue that evil is good, but to reaffirm the leading of God in one's own daily life. In that reaffirmation God will provide confidence and, in time, understanding.

### **God's Will and Man's Will in Life and History**

If we could trust that Providence will make all things happen for the best, we would be deprived of much of the meaning of our lives. If every free decision we make is eternally for the best in others, then those decisions matter only for ourselves, and the life of religion becomes altogether self-centered. If Providence is the only factor in making history happen, then what is the meaning of human events?

If Providence determines all human actions, then the explanation of every event is the same: it was caused by Providence. Any

apparent external cause, any apparent free will, any apparent relation of an event to other events, is irrelevant and untrue. There is relation only to Providence, and about everything that happens, we can say, that is an act of Providence. And there is nothing more of importance that need or can be said about it. (A student at Oxford once tried to answer a history examination in this way.)

If Providence is the only factor in causing human events, indeed we cannot even learn anything about Providence in human life or history. To see the operations of Providence, even tentatively, we must also be able to see the operation of man. To see how Providence operates, we must see Providence in relation to man, and so we must be able to see man. This means we must see Providence in relation to free will, since free will is what makes man to be man. To see Providence without relation to man is to see nothing. We may *know*, in that case, that Providence does all things, but we can know nothing more.

He who wishes to understand and see Providence must also understand and be able to see man, and so learn their relationship. For example, in the Seventeenth Century the dominion of the papacy threatened large parts of Germany.<sup>273</sup> That is man. That is free will. Providence, however, raised up King Gustavus Adolphus and others to battle the forces of the pope.<sup>274</sup> That is Providence, and so we can see a relation between the two. The passage cited is very instructive about how Providence operates in the affairs of religion, politics and war. It was important for the sake of the Word to check the power of the papacy, and various nations were used to this end. We see nationalism used in the service of Providence, and the use of violent means and worldly and selfish loves for the sake of eternal good. But if Providence determined everything, then the power of the papacy in Germany would also be Providence, not man's doing. And we could learn nothing about Providence except that it does everything. We would not know why Providence had to raise up Gustavus Adolphus to fight a force that was also from Providence. To learn about something, we must see it in relation to other things, not just in relation to itself. This is why if we could not see Providence in relation to man, we could learn nothing about it; we would just know that whatever happened was of Providence. Every event in life and history would have an indisputable and total explanation.

<sup>273</sup> Inv. 24

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

History and life would be equally meaningless to a religious person if all he saw was man and free will, and not Providence as well. This is a serious problem in today's value-free intellectual world. The only thing seen by many in life and history is man and/or society, and both life and history thus lose all transcendent meaning. What but a relation between Providence and man can make life and history mean anything of importance?

Dr. William Whitehead has called history the meeting point of the Divine will and the human will. All genuine good in human events and history is the work of the Divine will, and at the same time man's free will is granted some measure of responsibility in determining what happens in the world. The value of the study of man is in understanding these two wills—God's and man's—and their relation in human events. To understand either one we must understand the other also. The more we understand about man, the more we can learn about how Providence leads him, foresees his evils and provides his goods. Conversely, the more we know about Providence, the more we can understand man.

History should be a source of knowledge about the Divine and the human will<sup>275</sup> but only if man is something that can be seen. And man can only be seen if he has free will. Where he does not have free will, we do not see man, but rather we see whatever it is that makes him do what he does. If we would know Providence, we must learn about man and about his free will.

The essential teachings for directing the study of history and society are the doctrines of the neighbor, of Providence, and of free will. Probably the easiest of these to neglect is the doctrine of free will. Truly to understand man and his past or present these doctrines must be understood together. ■

<sup>275</sup> See DP 187, 189.