



Can a Loving God Allow War?

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 16 | Divine Providence

Lesson Overview

1. Read

Read *Four Kinds of Freedom*, from a talk by Rev. Dan Goodenough, pp.1-2.

2. Discuss

Reflect on an event in history or an event in your own life. How did the Lord bring good things from it? p. 2

3. Of the Lord's Will or Permission?

Look at an array of everyday events. Decide whether events are of the Lord's will or permission or somewhere in between. Discuss, p. 3

New Church Concept Permission

When we say that God permits, we do not mean that He wills, but that for the sake of the goal, which is salvation, He cannot prevent. *Divine Providence* 234

Four Kinds of Freedom*

It is not from the Divine providence that wars occur, because they involve...enormous evils which are opposed to Christian charity. *Divine Providence* 251

Wars often precede changes in national boundaries, governments or religious thought. Although it may not be possible to see the Lord's leading hand when wars are happening, by taking an historical perspective we can imagine how different the world might be today if the outcome of a particular war had been different, for example, if a certain country had won rather than lost a war.

The Lord permits the terrible evils of war for the sake of His end in view, which is that human beings may be saved. Higher issues are at stake than the loss of life and the ugly things that good people suffer in war. In other words, higher goods can sometimes be brought out of His *allowing* evil to occur rather than by His *preventing* it.

The outcome of a war between Spain and England would seem to illustrate this idea. The Spanish Armada, a fleet of 132 Spanish warships, sailed against England in 1588. English ships peppered the warships with cannon fire and sent small fire boats into the port. To avoid the attack, the Spaniards hurried into the English Channel, and after losing several sea battles, were forced to set sail towards the North Sea. There, a terrific storm swept the ships north of Scotland and Ireland, and more than half were destroyed. Consequently the Spanish were prevented from invading England or dominating the seas, leaving the English free to explore the Hudson Bay area and establish colonies in North America.

The weather was a leading factor in the success of the English. The unusual wind that blew with such terrible force has been nicknamed the "Protestant Wind." Clearly, it changed the course of world history. One consequence of this destruction was the preservation of the Protestant church in England, and the opportunity for people to have access to the Word in their own language.

The English Renaissance blossomed after this victory, and during that period England had a greater impact on literature than other European countries. The age of

* Adapted from a talk by Rev. Daniel Goodenough

exploration followed, and with it the Word was spread around the world. The Renaissance period was a time of study of the wisdom of ancient civilizations, and a time of scientific discovery. These paved the way for the “Last Judgment” of 1757, which took place in the spiritual world, restoring spiritual freedom.

Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. Did Divine providence bring about the unusual winds for the sake of religious liberty?
2. Did Divine providence foresee that the wind and storms would be there, and put ideas into the Spanish commanders’ minds about when and where they should sail?
3. If the Lord can foresee evil things, why doesn’t He prevent them?
4. What would happen if the Lord intervened and prevented people from making bad choices? How would this affect their chances of going to heaven?
5. Can you think of other examples of times when the Lord brought something good out of evil?
6. Clearly seeing an evil helps us to recognize evil for what it is. Think about an evil you have seen and how seeing this evil could help you to appreciate its opposite.
7. Think about something terrible that has happened—a natural disaster, major conflict, etc. Reflect on how the Lord may see the same event, trying to bring good from it.
8. Reflect on something difficult that has happened in your life. Can you think of one way in which the Lord brought something good from it? (e.g. people you have met as a result, insights about yourself or others, etc.)

No one can be withdrawn from his hell by the Lord unless the person sees that he is in it and wishes to be led out of it; and this cannot come about without permissions, the reasons for which are found in the laws of Divine providence. That is why wars exist.

As for why wars involving murders, lootings, acts of violence and savagery, are not prevented by the Lord either in the beginning or during their course, but at the end, when the power of one or the other has become so weak that he is faced with the impending peril of being destroyed, there are many reasons laid up in the treasure house of Divine wisdom. Among them is this one, that all wars, though occurring on the civil plane, are representative of states of the church in heaven, and are corresponding parallels. Such were all the wars described in the Word, and such also are all wars at the present day. See *Divine Providence* 251.2,3

New Church Concept Evil Turned to Good

When the Lord is with someone, He leads him and makes provision so that all that happens, whether sad or joyful, may bring him what is good. This is the Divine providence. *Arcana Coelestia* 6303

In every present moment the Lord foresees evil, and provides good. This He does from the first thread of life even to eternity. *Arcana Coelestia* 9296

The evil things that are foreseen are constantly being turned towards what is good by means of the Lord’s provident arrangement, since the Divine end, which has good in view, governs everything. *Arcana Coelestia* 6489

Those who trust in the Lord are constantly receiving good from Him. For whatever happens to them, whether it seems to be advantageous or not advantageous, is nevertheless good, for it serves as a means contributing to their eternal happiness. *Arcana Coelestia* 8480.1,3

Of the Lord’s Will or Permission?

The Lord foresees and sees all things and every individual thing... though some things arise from His permission, some from His concession, some from His consent, some from His good pleasure, and some from His will. *Arcana Coelestia* 1755

The Lord does not *will* everything that takes place to happen, but he permits them to happen for the sake of human freedom. Look at the events listed below.

1. Which of these things seem to be of the Lord’s will?
2. Which seem more likely to be evils that the Lord *permits* (to protect human freedom) but certainly does not *will* to happen?

Put an X on the chart somewhere between the “will” and “permission” sides of the chart, reflecting whether you think the event is of the Lord’s will, good pleasure, consent, concession or permission.

Event	Will or Permission
Murderer gets death sentence	
Person stops smoking	
Teenager dies	
Someone helps, to benefit themselves	
Businessman makes lots of money	
Animals are cloned	
New medicine found to cure illness	
Travel in airplanes	
A baby is born with a disability	
Lies are exposed	
War starts	
Natural disaster	
Life support extends a life	
A baby is aborted	
A person commits suicide	
Crops are genetically engineered	

Why might it be easier to guess at which things arise from the Lord’s will or from His permission rather than somewhere in the middle of the “spectrum”, such as from His concession, His consent, or His good pleasure? Choose one situation to discuss.