

Third Sermon on the Lord's Prayer, by Rev. Theodore Pitcairn, December 1946.

"Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11.)

Or in the order of the Greek, "Our bread the daily give us this day."

Bread, or loaf, stands for food, and when it stands alone it includes drink as well; thus it represents all the things of love and wisdom, all things of the good and the true, of cognitions and scientifics, by which the spiritual body is fed.

After praying, "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so upon the land," man looks to his cooperation with the Lord as if from himself, and thus towards the coming of the Lord's Kingdom. But in order that man may cooperate as of himself towards this end he must have a spiritual body, which can cooperate. If man regenerates he receives the initiament of such a body, but this body must be fed from day to day with celestial food, in order that it may grow, and become strong, and in order that it may recover when sick.

This bread must be received daily, or day by day. Day by day, or daily, signifies into the eternal, an eternal series of states following each other, according to the Divine order of Providence. No man can foresee, know, or understand this Divine series, and hence cannot provide for it. The Lord alone can foresee and provide, and the Lord in His Divine Providence does so. The daily bread therefore represents the Divine Providence.

Because man does not know the future, and therefore can not provide for the future, the Lord says: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink." (Matt. 6:25.)

The Divine Providence is in the least particular and singular things, as well as in the generals, and in each least thing it provides for the succeeding state, in an eternal series. This is the miracle of miracles. Man's prayer should be that in each day or state he should be kept in the stream of Providence, so that living in the present he may find the spiritual food that is necessary for that state, and be thus kept in the stream which leads from day to day according to the Divine Order into the Lord's eternal life.

Providence is threefold: it operates immediately from the Lord into the soul of man; it operates mediately through the heavens and the spiritual world into the mind; and it operates from without through the natural body which is in the world. The immediate operation into the soul is above the consciousness of men and angels. Man or angel cannot perceive this operation, but he can believe in it. The operation of the spiritual world into the mind most men are totally unaware of, but if one reflects on one's affections and thoughts, which are all from the spiritual world, in the light of Doctrine, one can come to perceive this operation of the Divine Providence. In fact this should become with man a primary thing.

When most people speak of the Divine Providence they think solely of its operation from without, that is, of things which happen to them from without. As long as one views Providence in this way one has only a natural idea of the Divine Providence. There is nothing indeed, not the least thing which happens to man, which is not of the Divine Providence, or of the Divine Permission, which is also of Providence. But this operation of Providence apart from the other two operations could not save a man. The three operations of Providence work together so as to make one operation of the Divine Providence. Without this one operation which is threefold there could be no provision of man's daily bread, and thereby for his spiritual life.

Concerning the first operation of the Divine Providence which is immediately into the soul we can add nothing further, as this operation is beyond the knowledge of man and angel.

As to the second operation, which is mediate through the heavens, and, by permission, through the hells, it is this operation which is the source of all man's loves, affections and thoughts. Without it man could have no thoughts or affections. Man may know about this operation of the Divine Providence from the Word and Doctrine, but he only believes in it when he is in the stream of Providence, when it is the most real thing of his life, and when he looks to it as the source of all internal joy and happiness.

The third or external operation of Providence is again threefold. The primary operation is through the written Word; Providence leads man to read those things of the Word which are useful for his spiritual life, and which in conjunction with the two other operations of Providence give him his daily bread.

The second operation of Providence from without is by means of the written and spoken Doctrine of the Church, by communication with other members of the Church, by which the Holy Spirit is communicated from man to man.

The third operation of Providence from without is by means of all other events, by all things which happen to him, whether they bring happiness or sorrow, by all things which he hears or reads. One who is in the stream of Providence believes that all such things, whether of Providence or of permission, whether they bring joy or sorrow, are of spiritual value to him, and are for his eternal salvation. Such a man is content with his lot, and is thankful to the Lord not only for those things which appear prosperous, but also for those which do not appear prosperous but appear sorrowful; such a man places no trust in human prudence, especially not in his own prudence. Yet he acts prudently as of himself from the Lord, and acknowledges that insofar as he acts prudently from the Lord and not from himself, this also is of the Divine Providence.

Concerning the Stream of Providence we read:

"Those who trust in Providence...notwithstanding that they have care for the morrow, still have it not, because they do not think of the morrow with solicitude, still less with anxiety. Unruffled is their spirit whether they obtain the objects of their desire, or not; and they do not grieve over the loss of them, being content with their lot. If they become rich, they do not set their heart on riches; if they are raised to honors, they do not regard themselves as more worthy than others; if they become poor, they are not made sad; if their circumstances are mean, they are not dejected. They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things advance into a happy state into the eternal, and whatever befalls them is still conducive thereto. Be it known that the Divine Providence is universal, that is, in things most minute; and that they who are in the Stream of Providence are all the time carried along towards everything which is happy, whatever may be the appearance of the means; and that those are in the Stream of Providence who put their trust in the Divine, and attribute all things to Him; and those are not in the Stream of Providence who trust in themselves alone and attribute all things to themselves, because they are in the opposite; for they take away Providence from the Divine, and claim it for themselves. Be it known also that insofar as anyone is in the Stream of Providence, so far he is in a state of peace; also that insofar as anyone is in a state of peace from the good of faith, so far he is in the Divine Providence. These alone know and believe that the Divine Providence of the Lord is in everything both in general and in particular, nay in the most minute things of all, and that the Divine Providence regards

what is eternal." (A.C. 8478.)

According to the literal sense of this number it appears to treat of the operation of Providence from without, thus to treat of natural prosperity and lack of prosperity. But in the spiritual sense it treats of the threefold operation of Providence, the immediate operation into the soul, the mediate operation through the heavens into the mind, and the operation from without. From the operation into the mind, as well as from without, one is rich in the cognitions and scientifics of the Church, or one is poor. By the operation through the spiritual world one is in essential happiness or sadness. The great use of the sadness and sorrow which is from the spiritual world is clear from this, that when one comes into the presence of the angels, man's evils and falsities appear, and this, if he is in the Stream of Providence, brings him into a sorrow which is followed by repentance.

From what has been said it can be seen that to pray for our daily bread is to believe in and be in the Stream of Providence.

The Prayer says, "Our daily bread give us this day." As we have said, man cannot know nor provide for the Divine series of states leading into the eternal, for these are known to the Lord alone; all that is asked of man in regard to this is that he believe in this Divine series, and in the Stream of Providence by which the daily bread is provided in every state. Man's cooperation is only asked in regard to the present, to the state in which he is, namely, "Give us bread this day." Man must open himself as if from himself to the good which the Lord gives him now in this state, in this day. If man looks to the Lord and desires to be led by Him in the present state, and in each state as it becomes present, or now, then he can be led in the Stream of Providence, according to order, into the series of days to come, days concerning which he does not know, for he does not know the future. If he opens himself to receive this day or moment, in each state as it becomes present, or now, the good of the Lord's Love, which comes by the threefold operation of Providence, he trusting leaves to the Lord the states which in the Divine Providence are to follow. In acting in each state, he indeed as it were sees something of the future, and provides for it, and yet he does not provide, for he trusts in the Lord and not in himself.

Let us consider further what is meant by spiritual food or bread. We read: "His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples on to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." (John 4: 31-34.)

The Lord's Divine Body grew and was fed by doing the will of the Divine which was in Him, and by finishing His work. His Divine Body was His Divine Proprium, because He acted and worked from Himself. The Lord alone has a Divine Proprium and Body, which He acquired for Himself by doing the will of Him that sent Him, and by finishing His work.

Man also must do the will of the Lord who sends him, and finish His work. And this is his daily bread or meat. But man cannot, like the Lord, do this from himself; wherefore man's angelic proprium or body is not properly his own. Man's angelic proprium is not from himself, but from the Lord's Divine Proprium, that is he must do the Lord's will and finish His work, not from himself but from the Lord. His spiritual body is fed and grows, and is able to work, but it is continually given him by the Lord; if it were not continually given him from the Lord's Divine Body, or Proprium, it could not exist. This is the meaning of the Lord's words:

"Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him

hath God the Father sealed. Then they said unto Him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God. Jesus answered and said, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent....

The bread of God is He who cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord ever more give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.. I am the living Bread which cometh down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread which I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (John 6:27-29,33-35,51.)

To pray this day for our daily bread involves a believing and living in the Divine Providence in its threefold operation, with a perception that such a life is solely of and from the Divine Human of the Lord, who is the only substance, the only food and the only life.

Amen.

Lessons: Exodus 13: 1-16

Mark 14: 12-25.

Arcana Coelestia 8478.