

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way
which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which
have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with
bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."

- Psalm xxxii,8,9

Isaiah lviii

Revelation i

Psalm 32

New Book of Worship, Psalm 32, p.52

How different the lot of the righteous and that of the wicked! To the one the Lord says, "I will guide thee with mine eye." The other is likened to non-rational creatures whose harmful mouth must be restrained.

This text teaches of the two methods of the Divine government of men: the Divine rule inwardly through the conscience - the internal method with the spiritual man - or the Divine rule outwardly through fears.

These two methods are described in number 249 of the "Divine Providence" where we read: "All the laws of the Divine providence are necessities; and as they are the causes of the permission of these things it is clear that if man is to live as a man, to be reformed and to be saved, these things can be taken away from him by the Lord only by means, - by the Word, and especially by the commandments of the Decalogue, - with those who acknowledge all kinds of murder, adultery, theft, and false witness as sins; but with those who do not acknowledge such things to be sins, by means of the civil laws and fear of their punishments, also by means of moral laws, and the fear of the loss of reputation, and thereby of honor and wealth. By these means the Lord leads the evil, but only away from doing these things, not from thinking and willing them; while by the former means He leads the good, not only away from doing these things, but also from thinking and willing them." The one case is like the restraint as on the horse and the mule, the other is Divine instruction and teaching in the way to go, the Lord leading them. Such are the external means with the evil and the internal means with the good.

The internal means pertain to the Word, and now in the day of the New Church to the Word opened as to its inner meaning, that its genuine teaching may be known. The Word and the writings which open the Word are the means of Divine guidance for the spiritual. By these the Lord instructs man and teaches him in the way. Instructing signifies the enlightening of the understanding, and teaching the leading of the will.

Ministers and teachers may help in this work, but the actual seeing of what is taught and explained is from the Lord alone. If one understands and loves the truths of the Word, it is because the Lord Himself gives the power to do so. Enlightenment of the understanding is from Him who is the Word. It is the truths of the Word that make us wise, not any natural learning. It is the Lord operating in us through the Word who enables us both to understand and to love. "I will guide

thee with mine eye." His thoughts are watchful over us, every moment directly guiding all those who look to Him and trust Him. Every good that comes to us, every permission of temptation or adversity that may befall us is bent to that one end. The Divine eye regards the eternal life of man in heaven, and his temporary things in this world only so far as they can be made instrumental to that one supreme purpose.

John in vision saw the Lord, and records: "His eyes were as a flame of fire." Here the eyes signify the Lord's Divine wisdom, and the flame His love. By means of the Sacred Scriptures we can become aware of the Lord's Divine wisdom, and of His Divine love toward us.

When we see the reality of heaven, that shunning all evils as sins and love to the Lord and the neighbor for His sake are the laws of the Divine love and wisdom, we then see the Divine eyes as a flame of fire fixed upon the understanding and will of the spiritual man, instructing and teaching him in the way which he should go. Thus he is led interiorly by the Word through his conscience. Every time we act from conscience, refusing to do what we see to be wrong, the scripture "I will guide thee with mine eye" is fulfilled in us. This is the Lord's internal government with the good.

But with those who look to themselves and wish to go their own way, refusing the Divine guidance, the Lord's government has to be of another nature. External restraints are the only kind that they will regard. They do not receive the Word of the Lord, they do not acknowledge that evils are sins against God. Not regarding God at all, whether He exists or not, how can they possibly think of such things as sins against the non-existent? They simply suppose that such things being disadvantageous, society has imposed restraints, like moral sanctions and civil laws, and that is all there is to it. They are irked by such bit and bridle, for they would like to indulge their evils without let or hindrance.

We are warned not to come into this state. "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in by bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." The horse corresponds to and thus signifies the understanding. But in the opposite sense the horse represents self-intelligence, as when it is said that the Lord delights not in the strength of the horse.

The mule, as a beast of burden represents rational truth serving the spiritual, but in the opposite sense he represents man's own foolish reasonings, without any understanding of Divine truths. So in our text the horse and the mule signify the entire absence of true human understanding, wherefore it is said, "which have no understanding."

This is the picture of the merely natural man who looks down upon religion and thinks only of what he wants for himself. In him the loves of self and the world dominate. Those loves, unless restrained, would destroy society. Such a mind, and the self-seeking reasonings from it - such horse and mule - must be held in with

bit and bridle. Sometimes they take the bit in their teeth and rush along. That is the way with lawbreakers. So longer and more severe punishments have to be applied as a stronger bit and bridle. It is all external government, but necessary for the preservation of society.

"Must be held in." It is this horse and mule that make necessary all controls. Even in times of scarcity such controls would be quite unnecessary if individuals and nations were spiritual men, for the love of the Lord and the neighbor would work out an equitable distribution.

"Be ye not like unto them." Whether we are like them or not depends on the reason why we refrain from doing evils. If it is from fear of being caught, or fear of the disapproval of our friends and acquaintances, or if we are continually thinking of some evil that we would love to do if only those fears were removed, then we are like the horse and mule that have to be held in with bit and bridle: we are by the Lord's providence under the external government of the evil, and are not free. By these means the Lord leads the evil, though, we note, only away from doing those things, not from thinking and willing them.

But if our life is from the Word of the Lord, if we abominate all those evils as sins against God, then mediately by the Word the Lord is removing such evils from us, keeping us not only from doing them but also from thinking and willing them.

We are told that it is not hard to live the life that leads to heaven. Is this true? At first everyone has to be held in by bit and bridle. We are not born regenerate, and our natural desires have to be brought under control. This is done gradually, as we keep the commandments. At first we are under Moses: we keep them because we know that we should, though we do not understand why. But then, after we have kept them, they cease to be a restraint upon us and we come to understand that in keeping them is the path to happiness and enjoyment. And finally we enter actively and willingly into a combat against our evils, seeing that only by overcoming them can we come into peace of mind and rest.

Jeremiah writes, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." And the Lord said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." First by the Word the Lord turns us against evil. Then a conscience is formed in us from the Word, and we come under the method of internal government of the good by the Lord's Divine providence. Our understanding is being instructed and our will taught toward the ideal of heavenly life for which the Lord created us, and for the preservation of which He came into the world to redeem and save us. We are not then under restraint but under guidance. We see the Divine wisdom of the Divine love in the Word. We see that the eyes of the Lord are upon us in fulfillment of the promise, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye."