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It is as though, as soon as we go off the original route, God provides the directions we need to get back on our route. It doesn't matter how many errors we make, or how far off track we go, God's Providence will always show us ways to get back on track for the unique spiritual destination he desires for us. All we have to do is to respond affirmatively when these opportunities arise!

*Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*

**Gospel of John 14:5-6**

*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 Divine Providence.*

**Emanuel Swedenborg in Heavenly Secrets 6303**

# Satellite Navigation and God's Providence



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## Satellite Navigation and God's Providence

Satellite navigation systems, once the sole domain of the military, are now becoming increasingly popular for use in cars or even by walkers. They work by combining the two technologies of global positioning and digital mapping. A set of global positioning satellites orbiting the earth enables a small radio receiver to be able to locate its position very accurately, anywhere on earth. Digital mapping enables computer like devices to store countrywide maps that have detail down to individual streets with their names. Put these two technologies together and you have satellite navigation ('Sat Nav' for short).

Place one of these systems in your car and you simply select the destination you want to reach. The device then computes a route to that destination and displays the map on its screen. As you start to drive a voice describes what action you need to take, for example, turn left at the next junction or take the second right at the roundabout and the screen shows your progress in great detail. One of the wonders of this system is what happens if you make a wrong turn either in error or deliberately. As soon as you go off the original route the device calculates what directions you have to take to get back on your route. It doesn't matter how many errors you make, or how far off track you go, the Sat Nav system will always show you how to get back to your required destination.

It struck me recently that the way these systems work provides a good illustration of how God's Providence works in relationship to our spiritual journeys.

God intends that everyone of us should make the spiritual journey from a life that is centred on ourselves to a heavenly inner life that is focussed on others and God. It is this journey that is symbolised by the progress of the Children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land in Canaan as described in the book of Exodus in the Bible.

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Because we are all unique individuals all our spiritual journeys will be different but God knows the best way for each one of us to make the right progress. In a sense our route is laid out before us but our problem is that we often want to go off in our own direction, making small changes here or larger changes there, or completely ignoring the path set out in front of us. But this is where God's Providence comes into action. Every time we move away from the best route to our spiritual home God provides an alternative way to get us back on track. We may get off track just a little, in which case the way back is simple. Or we may make so many errors or misjudgements in how we should live that we seem to have left our true spiritual path completely. Yet even then God can provide a way back for us however unlikely it may seem.

Let us try an example. Suppose we have made some good progress in our spiritual journey. We recognise the place of God in our lives and we find happiness in meeting the needs of others rather than ourselves. And then a crisis occurs – a close friend is struck down by a terminal illness. Questions arise in our mind of why this has happened and where God is in such tragedy and our faith crumbles. Suddenly our spiritual journey changes direction as we focus on ourselves and away from God. We lose sight of where we were originally trying to get to and we begin to see no purpose in life. We have lost our spiritual way!

And yet as we wander about unsure of our spiritual direction God provides all sorts of opportunities for us to re-discover the true meaning of life. We may find that we are able to care for our friend in a way we had not expected or we may simply marvel at the care others provide for our friend. Or we may be challenged by our friend's courage in facing their difficult future. Any of these situations may offer us a way to re-connect with God and a love centred way of living – we just have to take the opportunity presented.

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