

Nine Questions, Chiefly Relating
to the Lord, the Trinity, and
the Holy Spirit, with Answers

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Translator's Prefatory Note

This little tract, which in accordance with an old and well established custom, and for self-evident reasons, is placed immediately after the *Doctrine of the Lord*, was first printed and published in the original Latin in London in the year 1785 by Robert Hindmarsh from a manuscript copy in the handwriting of Thomas Hartley, and received from him by Hindmarsh in that year.

The date at which the answers to the nine questions were written by Swedenborg is very closely indicated in the replies to Questions 2 and 7, where by referring to the work *True Christian Religion*, Swedenborg shows that his answers were written after the publication of that work [1771]. They therefore contain his latest utterances on the subject of the doctrine of the Lord and the Divine trinity.

The following translation has been made from a copy of the very handsome Latin quarto of Hindmarsh which is preserved in the library of the Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

Nine Questions, Chiefly Relating to the Lord, the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit, with Answers

Question 1

1. In what sense did the Lord call himself the son of man, if he took only flesh from the mother, and not a rational soul? Has the human sonship regard solely to the human flesh?

Answer

The Lord called himself the son of man because he was the Word or Divine truth even as to the human; for in the spiritual sense “son of man” signifies the truth of the church from the Word. The same was signified by “prophet,” because the prophets taught truths from the Word; and therefore the Lord, who was a prophet in a pre-eminent degree, and also the Word, and therefore the Divine truth, called himself, as to the human, the son of man. This is why, in the prophets and psalms *passim* where the vastation of truth in the church is treated of, it is said that the son of man abides not there; and this also is why the prophets themselves were called sons of man, as Ezekiel in Ezek. 2:1, 3, 6, 8; 3:1, 3–4, 10, 17, 25; and very frequently in the succeeding chapters; and also Daniel. That such is the case has been shown from many passages quoted in *Angelic Wisdom concerning the Lord*,¹⁹ which consult if at hand.

19. This is the work published by Swedenborg under the title *Doctrina Novae Hierosolymae de Domino*, translated into English as *Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Lord*. [Translator]

Question 2

2. Had the Lord a rational soul from Jehovah the Father, to which was united the Divine *esse*, whence he became very God and very man?

Answer

The Lord from eternity (that is, Jehovah) was Divine love and Divine wisdom, and he then had a Divine celestial and a Divine spiritual; but not, before he assumed the human, a Divine natural. And as the rational is predicated solely of the celestial and spiritual natural, it follows that by the assumption of the human, Jehovah the Lord did also put on the Divine rational. He had a Divine rational before the assumption of the human, but by means of influx into the angelic heaven; and when he had manifested himself in this world, he did so by means of an angel whom he filled with his divinity. For the purely Divine essence (which as just said was purely Divine celestial and Divine spiritual) transcends both the angelic and the human rational. But that Divine rational existed by means of influx. Its nature may be inferred from what is said below on the sixth point. Luther and Melanchthon teach that in Christ man is God and God is man, which also is according to holy Scripture, as may be seen in *True Christian Religion*, n. 137. But Calvin denied it, and merely affirmed that Christ is God and man.

Question 3

3. Was there not always a trinity in the Divine nature, to be understood in this way: the Divine love, the Divine wisdom, and the quickening spirit, or holy proceeding?

Answer

The Divine trinity in one person is to be understood as soul, body, and proceeding operation, which together constitute one essence, for the one is from the other, and therefore the one belongs to the other. In the same way there is a trinity in each man,

which taken together constitutes one person, to wit, the soul, the body, and the operation that goes forth. But in man this trinity is finite, because man is only an organ of life; whereas in the Lord the trinity is infinite and thus Divine, because the Lord is life itself even in respect to the human, as he himself teaches in John 5:26; 14:6; and also elsewhere.

Question 4

4. Does not the son, by whom Jehovah is said to have created the worlds (Heb. 1:2; 11:3), signify the same as the Divine wisdom in Jer. 10:12; 51:15; so that the essential wisdom or *logos* of God in first principles is now become the truth or *logos* of God in ultimates?

Answer

That the Lord (that is, the Word or Divine truth through which all things were made that were made, and through which the world was created, John 1:3, 10) was the Divine wisdom which together with the Divine love constitutes one Divine essence, and thus one and the same God, follows of course; for the Divine wisdom is also the Divine truth, because all things of wisdom are truths, and wisdom produces nothing but truths, for it is their container, exactly in accordance with Jer. 10:12; 51:15. The same is understood also by the statement that is made in Ps. 33:6. The “spirit [or breath] of Jehovah’s mouth” also is wisdom; and the “Word” there mentioned is the Divine love and the Divine wisdom together, for it is said, “And God was the Word” (John 1:1).

Question 5

5. Is not the “Holy Spirit” in the New Testament the same as the “spirit of God” in the Old Testament, with the sole difference that before the Lord’s incarnation it proceeded either immediately from the Divine *esse* or Jehovah, or mediately through angels, and after the incarnation through the son or Divine human?

Is not the Holy Spirit the same as the sphere of God?

Answer

The spirit of God and the Holy Spirit are two distinct things. The spirit of God neither did nor could operate on man except imperceptibly; whereas the Holy Spirit, which proceeds solely from the Lord, operates on man perceptibly, and enables him to comprehend spiritual truths in a natural way; for the Lord has united the Divine natural to the Divine celestial and the Divine spiritual, and he operates from these two through that. Besides, “holy” in the Word is predicated solely of Divine truth, thus of the Lord, who is Divine truth not only in the celestial and spiritual but also in the natural sense; and therefore it is said in Revelation that the Lord alone is holy (15:3–4). (See also *Apocalypse Revealed*, n. 173.) It is also said in John: “The Holy Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (7:39).

The Holy Spirit is the same as the Divine sphere if by this is meant the Divine love and Divine wisdom, which two proceed from Jehovah the Lord from the sun of the angelic heaven, as do heat and light from the sun of the natural world and constitute its sphere. For in its essence the heat of the sun of the angelic heaven is love, and the light wisdom. And to these two the heat and light of the sun of this world correspond.

Question 6

6. Was the Divine human of Jehovah, before the incarnation, a person subsisting per se, as the manifestation [*existere*], form, or body of God? Or was it an angelic form assumed on occasion for the sake of manifestation?

Does it not follow that the Divine human before the incarnation was different from the Divine human which now is since the incarnation, seeing that the Divine trinity is in the Lord’s person?

Answer

Before the incarnation there was not any Divine human except a representative one by means of some angel whom Jehovah the Lord

filled with his spirit, as has been said above. And as that was representative, all things of the church at that time were representative, and like shadows; but after the incarnation the representatives ceased, like the shades of evening or night at the rising of the sun. That representative human in which Jehovah then presented himself in this world before his actual advent was not of such efficacy as to be able spiritually to enlighten men, and therefore enlightenment was then effected solely by means of types and figures.

Question 7

7. May not the most holy trinity be properly said to be one and the same Lord in three characters, distinctions of offices, or relations toward men, as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Divine *esse*, Divine human, and holy proceeding; not as three persons, out of which there would necessarily be made three gods?

Answer

The most holy trinity in one person is to be apprehended as the Divine *esse*, the Divine human, and the Divine proceeding; thus as soul, body, and derivative power [*virtus*] and operation, precisely as given in the memorable relation inserted in *True Christian Religion*, n. 188. As productions from these there follow in order creation, redemption, and regeneration; for creation is an attribute of the Divine *esse*, redemption of the Divine human from the Divine *esse*, and regeneration of the Holy Spirit, which is the primary power [*virtus*], or operation, by the Divine human from the Divine *esse*, according to what has been advanced in *True Christian Religion*, n. 153–155.

Question 8

8. It is said in 1 Cor. 15:45, “The first man Adam was made a living soul”; and in the genealogy in Luke 3, he is placed as the first

after God, and it is said, “who was the son of God.” Does not the regarding of Adam as a church contradict this?

Answer

In the genealogy in Luke it is said that Adam was “of God,” that is, created by God, and not the son of God.

Question 9

9. If there was no individual called Noah, how comes it to be said in Ezek. 14:14: “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job,” etc.?

I lay no great stress on these matters [says Mr. Hartley], but I had a mind to propose them.

Answer

The reason Noah is mentioned in Ezek. 14:14 is that he had been mentioned in Genesis, and consequently the same is signified in the Prophet as in Moses, namely, that the man with his three sons was significative of a subsequent church, on which subject see what has been delivered in *Arcana Coelestia*.