

## QUESTIONS ASKED BY GOD

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

God asking questions? We are the ones who do the asking. And so we should, for the Bible tells us to ask, to seek and to knock. From God we seek answers. But does God in truth ask questions? Yes.

Questions asked by God can be so helpful. They can change our perspective and our attitude. At the end of the book of Jonah God asks, "Is it right for you to be angry?" In the story of Cain and Abel questions are especially striking. "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?" Not heeding those questions, Cain killed his brother, and God said, "Where is Abel your brother? . . . What have you done?" (Genesis 4).

"It is a common thing in the Word for God to question someone, and for people to reply, although God knew all beforehand." This is from *Heavenly Secrets (or Arcana Coelestia)* paragraph number 1931. In this book theologian Emanuel Swedenborg invites us to notice the questions asked by God.

Actually the very first saying in the Bible addressed to a person is in the form of a question. When Adam had eaten of the fruit, God called to him saying, "Where are you?" It is at this point that Swedenborg begins to discuss the reasons why God asks questions. To quote from *Arcana*, "It is common in the Word for someone to be first asked where he is and what he is doing, although the Lord previously knew all things; but the reason for asking is that a person may acknowledge and confess" (number 226).

We usually ask questions because we do not know. God asks questions because He does know. In the Sermon on the Mount we read, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye" (Matthew 7). If we pause and are willing to hearken to God's questions we may become aware of motives and causes in human relationships which we did not before see.

God's questions are not only to help us see our own faults. God uses questions to comfort us. Jesus had a way of asking the disciples why they were fearful. "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?" (Luke 24).

The Sermon on the Mount is deeply affecting partly because of its use of questions. "Look at the birds of the air . . . Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing?" (Matthew 6:26-28).

There is a story in Genesis about a woman named Hagar who was in despair in the wilderness. The angel of God said to her "Where have you come from and where are you going?" (Genesis 16). Later God called to her in her distress and asked this question: "What ails you, Hagar?" Swedenborg observes here that God has intimate knowledge of our thoughts and affections. When He asks what is wrong it is so that "people may have

comfort from being able to express their feelings, which often proves a relief” (*Arcana* 2693).

It is from love that God asks questions. He knows where we are and how we are and whither we may go.

*Reprinted with permission from The Intelligencer-Record, Doylestown, PA, USA.*