

IS GOD A CORPOREAL BEING?

Surely our concept of God whom we cannot see must be as close to being right as possible. It is a great pity that it is not more clearly spelt out in Clause 1 of our Statement of Faith, although a careful reading of it implies that Deity is corporeal.

It is very simply put in the Christadelphian Instructor. In questions for children under eight, **Q.6** asks – “What is God Himself” – **Answer** – “He is a being of glorious spirit substance.” In the section for older children questions 17 and 18 address the subject of God’s being and His spirit:

17.—What is the Spirit of God?

ANSWER: It is His invisible power or energy breathed forth from His presence, and of like nature with **His Glorious Person**. By this, heaven and earth have been made and are preserved in being from moment to moment In this we live and move and have our being in Him.

PROOF: "The Spirit of God hath made me" (Job 33:4); "By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens (Job 26:13); "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created" (Ps. 104:30); "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. 33:6); "Thou hast made the heaven and earth by Thy great power" (Jer. 32:17); "In the beginning the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:12); "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28); "If He gather unto Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust" (Job 34:14-15);

18.—Is God separate and different from the Spirit of God?

ANSWER: NO God and His Spirit cannot be separated. They are both one. The sun and the light that comes from the sun are both one so God, and the Spirit that comes from God, are both one, God is the centre and **glorious substantial form** of the Spirit that fills heaven and earth.

PROOF: The passages quoted in answers 14 to 17- also the following "The Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent me" (Isa. 48:16); "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3); "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord" (Jer. 23:24); "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit" (Ps. 139:7); "God is Spirit" (John 4:24).

The following extract from **Phanerosis** (pgs. 18 & 19) was Bro. Thomas's response to the Judaistic teaching of his time which has not changed much. It is illuminating in respect to the subject of the corporeal nature of our God and worthy of careful consideration.

The source or fountain of power in the universe is one. It is a unit. Therefore everything which exists is *ex autou*, out of Him. Hence the Creator did not "make all things out of nothing." This is the teaching of theology, the "orthodox theology" of the Old Man of the Flesh; and which leads many of his children to affirm that "matter is God," understanding by matter that which is cognizable by the five senses. Hence the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all the things they can see, taste, feel, smell, and hear upon earth, are God. They confound that which "is of Him"

with the "Him" out of whom all things proceed. On the other hand, other children of the Old Man affirm that "God is immaterial;" by which they mean that he is not matter, or substance, or body; but an inconceivable something they call "spirit," an incorporeal, unsubstantial, immaterial spirit, which is as near to nothing as words can express. Nothing making all things out of nothing is the Old Man's theology concerning God and the fountain of all things, reduced to its simplest terms. But the Scripture declares that 'Spirit is the Theos'. I say simply theos, because we shall yet have to ascertain the New Testament sense of Theos. SPIRIT, then, is the Theos commonly called God. But more than this, this Spirit is the Father; that is, the One, "out of whom are all things." This appears from what is affirmed of "Spirit" and of "Father." Jesus says in John v. 31, "The Father raises up the dead and quickeneth," or makes the grave-emergent dead incorruptibly living: and in ch. vi. 63, he says "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," or makes alive. The Father and the Spirit are, therefore, the same ; nevertheless, the word "spirit" is often used in other senses. It is the FATHER-SPIRIT that Paul refers to in 1 Tim. vi. 16, whom no man hath seen in His unveiled splendour. Veiled in flesh, "the Vail of the Covering " (Exod. xxxv. 12): he that discerned him who spoke to Philip, "saw the Father"—(John xiv. 9; xii. 45.) But, veiled or unveiled, the Father-spirit is substantial. Speaking of the Unveiled Father-Spirit, Paul says, in Heb. i. 2, 3, that the Son is the Character of his Hypostasis (Bro. Thomas provides the Greek) rendered, in the common version, "express image of his person." The Son is the character or exact representation, and the Father is the hypostasis. In reference to the former, the Father says, in Zech. iii. 9, "Upon One Stone there shall be Seven Eyes ; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof (that is, of the stone), saith He who shall be hosts." The graving engraved on the stone is termed, in Greek, character, an impress wrought into a substance after some archetype or pattern. This archetype is the hypostasis, so that hypostasis is the basis or foundation of character; wherefore the same apostle in Col. i. 15, styles the character engraved the IMAGE of Theos the Invisible. Seth was the image of Adam, and Adam, the image of Elohim (cf. Gen. i. 26 ; v. 3.). Like Seth, Jesus was an image of Adam, but only in relation to flesh. Adam the First was image of Elohim, and this was in relation to bodily form. Body and form were the hypostasis of Adam and Seth; that is, they were the basis or foundation of the images so named. Where body and form do not exist, there can be no image; therefore, where image is predicated of hypostasis, that hypostasis must have both body and form. The Father-Spirit, unveiled, is, then, a bodily form; and as all things are "out of Him," He is the focal centre of the universe, from which irradiates whatever exists.

The following citation from **Eureka** Vol. 1 pg. 95-96 further elucidates the subject as it was in the mind of Bro. Thomas in 1860:

Having thus shown the meaning of these several terms applied in the scriptures to Deity, I proceed to offer a few ideas upon the Divine Nature as suggested in the revelation of the mystery.

We learn from the Bible that the Deity it reveals has both body and parts. Paul teaches us this in declaring that the resurrected and anointed Jesus is "the apaugasma, or reflexion of the glory, and charakter or peculiar nature of the hypostasis or substance of the THEOS —Heb. 1:3. In other words, he partakes of the Divine Nature; so that what he now is, is what the Deity hath always been. The substance of the Theos is essentially living substance. It could not exist and yet be dead substance, for "the Father hath life in himself," and that life is his inherent peculiarity. It is underived from any antecedent existence; nor can it forsake the Divine Substance, for in that event the Deity would be mortal. But Paul styles him "the Incorruptible Theos," and says that "He is the only one having athanasia or deathlessness." Hence, the

essential qualities of the substance, which underlies all that is predicable of him, are incorruptibility and life.

Incorruptible and living substance, then, is the Body of the Deity; and, as the glorified Jesus is "the IMAGE of the Invisible Theos," he must have "parts." It is not, therefore, a mere figure of speech to speak, as the scriptures do, of the hand, ear, eye, and so forth, of the Invisible Eternal Power. He has form and parts, as well as body, and is the Great Archetype, or divine original, after which all the Elohim, or immortal intelligences, of his universe are modelled and made. He dwells in unapproachable light, and is "a consuming fire." Light and heat, then, in their essentiality, with incorruptibility and life, are concentrated in his substance; for He is the great focal centre of these in all the universe of power. If I might venture a conjecture upon so profound a subject, I would suggest, that the Divine Nature is that wonderful and extraordinary essence observed in that terrible and destructive agent the scriptures term "spirit," and philosophy, electricity, consolidated and corporealized from the necessity of the thing. This glowing substance is too intensely bright for human vision, therefore Paul not only says, "whom no man hath seen," but adds, "nor can see."

The above is supported all over Scripture:

- John 5:37 - "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape."
- James 3:9 - "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude (Bullinger comments - similitude. Greek. *homoiosis*. Only here. In the Septuagint in Gen. 1:26; Ezek. 1:10; Dan. 10:16; &c.) of God."
- Gen. 1:26 - "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:" which is explained by:
- 1 Cor. 11:7 - "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image (*eikon* = physical shape) and glory (sig. mental and moral capacity to develop God's character) of God: but the woman is the glory of the man." Note that Paul does not say that the woman is in the "image" of the man, for she is not (general human form of course, but notably different).
- Ps. 94:9 - "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?"
- Ex. 33:20 - "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." This would make no sense if God was non-corporeal. We know of course that this was His angel (Acts 7:38 - unquestionably Michael), but it was Yahweh's personal glory that Moses sought to see. Michael was there to personally represent Yahweh, as Christ now does (Dan. 12:1).
- Ex. 33:23 - "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." Note "my hand" and "my back parts" - impossible if Yahweh was a 'spirit' in the orthodox sense (i.e. non-corporeal). Michael was the physical embodiment of Yahweh at that time, now replaced by Christ.

On the matter of the actual size of Yahweh visa-vis man, this is a matter of logic and common sense. Christ was the only begotten Son of God born by the power of the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary and producing from her a unique member of Adam's race.

He was doubtless of ordinary stature (somewhere in the vicinity of the average of all men between 5' 10" and 6'). Was this only from his mother's side or was there an input from his Father as there is for you and me? To ask the question is to answer it. Clearly we cannot have the situation where our Lord Jesus Christ who is of a similar size as us now sitting beside some huge giant bearing no resemblance to his son in terms of size. We are truly in every sense of the word made in the "likeness" of our God as were the angels who, on His behalf, created us. They made us the same general size as themselves.

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)