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DOES GOD HAVE A FORM AND SHAPE?

In an attempt to change the Church's teaching about the nature of God, it has been claimed that God has no form and shape, because God is a spirit. It has also been claimed that any statements in the Bible that do attribute a human shape to God are nothing more than anthropomorphic language, meaning language which "attributes human form or feelings to a god, animal, or object" (Oxford University Press Dictionary).

So let's examine this question more closely.

For a start let's look at some basic scriptures.

And God said, Let us make man IN OUR IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26)

So God created man IN HIS [OWN] IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:27)

And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

These scriptures are VERY CLEAR in stating that God created man in His own image. The Hebrew word "tselem", here translated as "image", refers to "RESEMBLANCE". It refers to "looking like" God, but composed of a different substance than God. The statement "in the image of God" is very explicit. Genesis chapter 1 gives us basic information that man simply would not figure out on his own! And it is BASIC information that God created us to LOOK LIKE He does in form and shape, with the potential to later be changed into spirit, still in the form and shape of God!

Let's look at some Greek words in the New Testament. There are two words which are in the KJV translated as "image". The word "eikon" means what we in English understand by the word "image". The other Greek word is "charakter". This word is only used once in the New Testament, and it really should not have been translated as "image".

As stated above, the word "eikon" refers to the appearance of an image. It is used for "the image on a coin" in scriptures like:

And he saith unto them, Whose [is] this IMAGE and superscription? (Matthew 22:20)

And they brought [it]. And he saith unto them, Whose [is] this IMAGE and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. (Mark 12:16)

So this word "eikon" refers to looking like something else.

The other word "charakter" refers to what has been stamped on, engraved onto, or etched on something.

That's also what the word "character" refers to in English, the qualities and attributes that have been engraved into our being. This Greek word "charakter" is only used once in the New Testament, to refer to Jesus Christ. Notice:

Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and THE EXPRESS IMAGE (charakter) of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:3 AV)

The translation "the express image of" is actually misleading, since this word does not refer to appearance, but rather to traits and to attributes. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus Christ has the same character as God the Father, rather than telling us something about Christ's appearance.

There are also several different Greek words for "likeness". The main one used is "homoioima".

"Homoioima" refers to that which is made like something; a resemblance. It is used for "likeness" or "similitude" in scriptures like:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the LIKENESS of men: (Philippians 2:7)

For if we have been planted together in the LIKENESS of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection: (Romans 6:5)

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the SIMILITUDE of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (Romans 5:14)

Now let's look at Romans 1:23, which is very revealing. Here is the transliterated Greek text:

"kai ellaxan ten doxan tou aphthartou theou en HOMOIOMATI EIKONOS phthartou anthropou kai peteiron kai tetrapodon kai herpeton."

The KJV reads:

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into AN IMAGE MADE LIKE to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (Romans 1:23)

The English expression "an image made like" is translated from the two Greek NOUNS "homoiomati eikonos". Notice that "homoioima" is used BEFORE "eikon". The English translators first switched these two words around and then translated the Greek noun "homoioima" into the English VERB "made like".

THIS OBSCURES THE MEANING PAUL INTENDED!

A more accurate translation of the Greek text of Romans 1:23 would be:

"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God INTO A LIKENESS ("homoioima") OF AN IMAGE ("eikon") of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping things.

So notice:

1) Paul did NOT say that they changed God's glory "into an image" (Greek "eikon")!

2) What Paul said was that they changed God's glory "INTO A LIKENESS OF" an image. That is an altogether different thing!

There is absolutely NO WAY that we can draw the conclusion from Romans 1:23 that "this verse proves that God does not have a form or shape", as the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God has claimed.

Let's also notice that Paul freely uses the word "eikon" in reference to God.

For a man indeed ought not to cover [his] head, forasmuch as he is THE IMAGE ("eikon") and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. (1 Corinthians 11:7)

"The image and glory of God" ("eikon kai doxa theou") uses the word "eikon" with its normal meaning. The verse tells us that God has a certain appearance and that man was designed and fashioned after that appearance.

Who is the IMAGE ("eikon") of the INVISIBLE God, the firstborn of every creature: (Colossians 1:15)

This verse tells us that Jesus Christ is "the EIKON of the invisible God". This verse says that you CAN have an "eikon" of something that is invisible to human eyes ... and Christ is "it"!

THIS VERSE MEANS THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD THE FATHER NOT TO HAVE A FORM AND SHAPE! THE REASON IS THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE AN "EIKON" OF SOMETHING THAT IS FORMLESS AND SHAPELESS!

Now notice the following verse:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to THE IMAGE ("eikon") OF HIS SON, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

Notice carefully: the word here is "EIKON" and NOT "CHARAKTER". If Paul had intended this to refer to Christ's character- attributes, then he would have used the Greek word "charakter", as he did in Hebrews 1:3, which we have already looked at.

So where Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Christ is "the express 'CHARAKTER' of God the Father", Romans 8:29 tells us that we are to become conformed to the "'EIKON' of Jesus Christ". Clearly these two Greek words have different meanings.

Besides Colossians 1:15, 2 Corinthians 4:4 also shows that Christ is the "eikon" of God the Father.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is THE IMAGE ("eikon") of God, should shine unto them. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

The claim that all of these verses, and many more like them throughout the Bible, are doing nothing more than using "anthropomorphic" language is totally false! It is quite clear that God tells us that we human beings have been created in the form and shape of God.

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