

144. Q. In what sense may we speak of Mary as the mother of Jesus?
145. Q. Is there any Scripture ground for worshipping the Virgin?
146. Q. Did Jesus, then, have a human father?
147. Q. In what special sense then was Jesus the Son of God?
148. Q. What other reasons have we for believing that Jesus was the Only Begotten Son of God and Incarnate Deity?
149. Q. In view of this array of evidence, what should we do?

## Lesson Thirteen

## THE PRIORITY OF SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: John 6:52—65.

Scripture To Memorize: "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John 6:63).

150. Q. What is our first objective in this series of lessons?
- A. It is to help our pupils to know God our Heavenly Father.
151. Q. What is our second objective in this series of thirteen lessons?
- A. It is to reemphasize the spiritual view of the universe and of life; and to implant in the minds of our pupils the right spiritual attitude towards life and its problems.
152. Q. What fundamental knowledge is necessary to the attainment of this right attitude towards life?
- A. The knowledge of the Priority of Spirit.

Heb. 9:14—"the eternal Spirit." Gen. 1:2—"the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." John 6:63—"It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing." Gal. 5:25—"If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk."

153. Q. What does reason teach us with regard to the universe?

A. It teaches us that there must have been a First Cause of all things.

"Something is; and therefore something eternally was." For, as the ancient philosophers taught: "Ex nihilo, nihil fit," i. e., from nothing, nothing comes. The argument from philosophical necessity, that something must have existed from eternity, is sound.

154. Q. What does reason teach us further about the First Cause of all things?

A. It teaches us that the First Cause must be unoriginated and eternal.

That is, the First Cause must be without beginning; and if without beginning, must therefore be without end. It must have the ground of its existence within itself. It must be, because it is its very nature to be. Cf. Rev. 1:18—"I am .. the Living one.

155. Q. What does reason further tell us that this First Cause must be?

A. That it must be either Spirit or Matter.

No other starting point is possible, for the simple reason that there is no other First Cause imaginable. Dualism, i. e., the notion that both Spirit and Matter are eternal, must be ruled out on the ground that it is unphilosophical to assume two coeternal First Causes, when one is sufficient. Again: the Materialist who assumes that Matter has always been, merely begs the question; for in so assuming, he assumes that Matter is the unoriginated First Cause. Philosophically, there is but one choice; and that is the choice between Theism (belief in God, a Spirit) and Materialism (belief in the eternity of Matter).

156. Q. What do we mean by Matter?

A. By Matter we mean substance, combinations of atoms; popularly, anything that occupies space.

157. Q. What do we mean by Spirit?

A. Spirit is a term which the human intellect is incapable of defining. The best we can do is to

suggest the implications of the term.

158. Q. What, then, are the implications of Spirit?

A. It implies four things especially, viz., 1. Personality; 2. Vitality; 3. Sociality; and 4. Transcendence.

(1) Personality includes among other things intellect, feeling, will and conscience. It includes self-consciousness and self-determination. (2) Vitality includes life, energy, influence, etc. Where there is spirit, there is life. Cf. John 6:63—"it is the spirit that giveth life." (3) Sociality is the desire for fellowship with kindred spirits, including such attributes as friendship, love, etc. (4) Transcendence, by which we mean that Spirit is not subject to the limitations of time, space, etc. These are all characteristics of Spirit, whether in God or in man.

159. Q. What primary reason have we for rejecting the notion of the Priority of Matter?

A. The inferiority of Matter is the chief ground on which we reject its priority.

(1) Matter explains nothing, it accounts for nothing. In fact it must be accounted for itself. (2) The attributes of Matter are far inferior to those of Spirit. (3) Atoms are in themselves impotent. "Atoms can do nothing without force, and can be nothing (intelligible) without ideas" (Dr. A. H. Strong). (4) It cannot be demonstrated that matter, atoms, molecules, etc., are realities. These terms are, rather, artifices of thought, conveniences of speech. It is our contention that realities exist only in the realm of Spirit. (5) Materialism is derogatory to human nature. I refuse to believe that I am nothing more than a combination of atoms. I utterly reject the notion that all there is for me in life, is to eat and drink and then lie down to die, like a beast of the field. I know better! I know, from my own experience, that I have been made "but little lower than God" (Psa. 8:5). (6) Materialism breeds vice and iniquity, because it destroys our sense of responsibility. It debases human society. (7) In short, the materialistic theory is contrary to reason, to experience, to intuition, and to common sense.

160. Q. What fundamental reason have we for accepting the Priority of Spirit as a first truth?

A. The superiority of Spirit is the chief ground on which we accept the Priority of Spirit.

(1) The attributes of Spirit are so far superior to those of Matter that no other position is tenable. (2) For instance, Spirit implies continuous personal identity. When matter is acted upon by the application of external forces, it changes form. Not so of Spirit. It is always the same. You will still be you, always. Even in this life, despite the numerous complete changes which your body will undergo in a lifetime, you continue to be you. Physical change has no effect on personal identity. (3) Spirit implies memory. According to the latest science, the human body changes completely every four years or so. This being true, the body undergoes some twenty complete transformations in a lifetime. But memory persists. Our memory is frequently as clear when we are eighty years old, as it was when we were thirty. (4) Spirit implies self-activity. Matter has the property of inertia, i. e., it does not move until acted upon. But Spirit acts of its own volition. It controls Matter and is therefore superior to Matter. (5) Spirit implies unrelativeness to time or space. The highest activities of mind are independent of physical conditions. Mind is always in a process of development, long after physical development has ceased. The subconsciousness, in fact, never ceases to develop. You can take a trip around the world, in a dream, and do it "in the twinkling of an eye." You can live anew the experiences of a lifetime, in a dream, in just a few seconds of what we call "time." The subconsciousness is unlimited by our feeble conceptions of time, space, distance, etc. (6) Finally, the only medium through which we can even know about Matter, or formulate theories of Matter, is Mind: and Mind is a function, or phase, of Spirit. Therefore, in knowing Matter, Spirit proves itself superior to that which it knows: and if superior to Matter, it must have antedated Matter. Until it can be scientifically demonstrated that both Consciousness and the Subconsciousness in us are themselves material (combinations of atoms)—which will never be done—we shall

continue to give priority and superiority to Spirit.

**161. Q. Are our conclusions substantiated by the teaching of the Bible?**

**A. They are substantiated in every particular by the teaching of the Bible.**

According to the Bible, the unoriginated and eternal First Cause is God. Gen. 1:1—"In the beginning God." According to the teaching of Jesus Himself, God is a Spirit (John 4:24). No other conception is quite so pure, so satisfactory, so helpful, or so rational, as this.

**162. Q. What, then, is the only true Rationalism?**

**A. The only true Rationalism is Christian Theism; that is, belief in the living and true God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.**

It is our conviction that mankind cannot maintain its conscience or preserve its morale, on a philosophy that robs human existence of its ultimate meaning. This is what the materialistic philosophy does. It is refreshing to turn from this sordid view to the Christian philosophy, that "over and in the universe, as its Creator and Controller, is a Christ-like Father" (Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin). God is; God loves us; God is longsuffering towards us; God cares for us; God yearns for our fellowship. God wants our hearts, that He may save us with an everlasting salvation. God is saying to us: "My son, give me thy heart; and let thine eyes delight in my ways." Our Redeemer is saying: "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest." Why not accept these precious invitations now? Why not turn—now—from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Why not come back now, to the Father's house?

### REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON THIRTEEN

**150. Q. What is our first objective in this series of lessons?**

**151. Q. What is our second objective in this series of thirteen lessons?**

**152. Q. What fundamental knowledge is necessary to the attainment of this right attitude towards life?**

153. Q. What does reason teach us with regard to the universe?
154. Q. What does reason teach us further about the First Cause of all things?
155. Q. What does reason further tell us that this First Cause must be?
156. Q. What do we mean by Matter?
157. Q. What do we mean by Spirit?
158. Q. What, then, are the implications of Spirit?
159. Q. What primary reason have we for rejecting the notion of the Priority of Matter?
160. Q. What fundamental reason have we for accepting the Priority of Spirit as a first truth?
161. Q. Are our conclusions substantiated by the teaching of the Bible?
162. Q. What, then, is the only true Rationalism?

#### SPECIAL STUDY ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

In the last two or three decades proofs of the priority and sovereignty of Spirit (Universal Mind, Intelligence, Logos, Reason, etc.) have been multiplied by discoveries in the fields of both the physical and the psychical sciences. Among the more significant of these are the following:

##### 1. The basically mathematical structure of the cosmic processes.

Examples: (1) The mathematical precision of celestial movements, not only of the bodies which comprise our own solar system, but of the galaxies as well which go to make up the cosmos as a whole: this preciseness is such that for purposes of dating, any one of these heavenly bodies may be taken as the mathematical center (frame of reference); such that the movements of all of them (as, e. g., eclipses, comets, etc.) can be accurately dated as far back into the past or as far forward into the future as the human mind may care to reach in its calculations. When a celestial event fails to take place as "predicted" by an astronomer, what is the astronomer's reaction? He does not for one moment question the objective precision of the celestial motions; on the contrary, he begins looking for the error subjectively. that is, in his own calculations. (2) The differentiation