

Trinity in Christianity

The author : Father Zakaria Boutros
The publisher: www.fatherzakaria.com

+ Announcer : My dear viewers, welcome once again to our program “Questions about Faith.” It’s our pleasure to have Father Zakaria Botros once again to answer your questions. Last time we talked about the doctrine of the trinity and today Father Zakaria will be continuing to answer you questions. The question for today is as follows: Can Christianity get rid of the doctrine of the trinity or is it an essential doctrine? go ahead.

+ Father : As a continuation to our previous discussion, we said last time we need to be looking for a common ground. So our pursuit after common ground can’t we just get rid of this doctrine of the trinity? This question may occur to one’s mind. It’s rather a good question. Let’s talk about it. What is it about the trinity that we are going to give up or get rid of? When talking about the trinity, we mentioned before that it has to do with God’s existence. God has true existence. Can God get rid of it? We also said this existing God is intelligent. Can we get rid of the intellect part can God exist without intellect this is impossible so then God who’s existent and intellectual must necessarily be living. He must have a Spirit he must have life. Therefore he created living beings. So, can he give up the Spirit? Never! Ok then, when we say that God is triune, he is one in three hypostases, how can I get rid of one of them? Can he get rid of the intellect, the existence, the spirit, triune or trinity comes from the same rules as triangle, When we talk about a triangle we mean a geometrical shape that has 3 sides. Inside this triangle we have one area that is surrounded by 3 sides. Can you still have a triangle and yet get rid of one of the sides? It will cease to be a triangle. Supposing this is a piece of land if you get rid of one side then the piece of land will be open. So when we say that a piece of land is triangular, it means you can’t get rid of any of its sides. God is one, living, intelligent, existent. Which part shall I give up so that we should all come closer and stand on common ground? It is simply inconceivable.

+ Announcer : Our beloved Muslim friends say there is only God and no more, God is one, and there is no other God but him. He has no associates. So when we come and say to them God is three in one

+ Father : Let me correct you here, he is triune, it’s a trinity not three in one.

+ Announcer : That’s right. Can we still explain it a bit more?

+ Father : Ok, we can talk from the Quran itself. We proved it from the Bible. When the Bible said, “Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” also, “The witnesses in heaven are three the Father – who is the existence – and the Word – which is the intellect – and the Spirit – which is life. “But if I quote the Bible to a Muslim, he may say don’t quote the Bible; it’s all corrupted. You have fabricated the whole thing. So when I come and talk with my Muslim brother I say to him let’s open the Quran and see if this is in the Quran or not. Because he believes in the Quran so when I talk to him from the Quran, this would be more convincing to him. But sometimes he asks me a question, “Do you believe in the Quran that you might quote the Quran.

+ Announcer : Exactly, Father, I almost asked you the same question.

+ Father : Of course if I believe in the Quran, the situation would have been different instead of my black gown I would be wearing a white one. What I want to say is: it is not necessary to believe something in order to be able to quote it. Suppose I am trying to explain something to a Marxist. If I talk to him out of a capitalistic viewpoint he will say what you are telling me is false. But if I quote Marxist authors, I quote from Karl Marx and say Karl Marx said such and such and this proves my point, then he can’t argue back. What I want to say is that I’m gonna quote Quranic verses simply because my Muslim brother believes in the Quran.

Then he will see for himself that the Quran talks about the trinity exactly the same way we believe it to be. Can you believe that the Quran itself believes in the trinity the same way we do? The Muslim may ask me, “Where is that.” This is nonsense.

+ Announcer : Father, when you talk please mention the whole reference, the sura and the verse number because I would love that my Muslim brothers and sisters would refer to those verses and also refer to the Muslim exegetes and commentators.

+ Father : The most important verse in the Quran that talks about the trinity is sura 4 titled women verse 171, sura 4 verse 171 it says, “Christ Jesus the son of Mary, was merely God’s messenger and his word which he cast into Mary and a spirit proceeding from him”.

Muslims stop at a messenger of God and say yes you see he’s only messenger, I say ok I agree with you, we do believe also that Christ is a messenger of God he have been sent with a message from God and he is a prophet because he also

prophesied about future events. He is also a priest who offered the sacrifice of him self for us.

+ Announcer : That doesn't negate the fact that he is the son of God and which means that he is God incarnate.

+ Father : The epithet whatever it is doesn't concern me at all. What I believe about Christ is that he is God, who had a natural physical body yet without sin. This body he took from saint Mary. His body was just as much as normal body as what you have or I have, but he did not receive this body through the intervention of a father.

+ Announcer : Muslims also believe the same thing and it occurs in the Quran and there is no dispute about it.

+ Father : The Quran also says, "We sent her our spirit – or blew our spirit on her – who presented himself to her as a full grown human being." So he was a normal man yet sinless and the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him. So Christ had a body yet God dwelled in him and manifested himself through him. This is a big topic and it requires another time, where we can talk about how God manifested himself to Moses on the mountain etc.

But what I want to mention here is this verse from Women 171. I want to finish what I started saying about it? The first part said that Christ son of Mary is the messenger of God. Ok lets put this a side we have no problem with that, let's talk about God this verse doesn't say that Christ is God. What I want to say here is that at this verse proves the existence of God and that Christ is merely his messenger, all right? This God has a word because it says "and his word" or "a word from him", when the Arabic says kalimatuhu, the "hu" at the end means His, what does it refer to? Of course to God; it is the singular pronoun indicating the third person, and in Arabic it has to refer to the closest noun which is God in this case. So he is the messenger of God and the word of God. This is exactly what we say that Christ is the word of God "and a spirit from him" or "preceding from him" the same "h" in minhu which means of him is a third person singular pronoun and it's also masculine, and it must refer to God. So God has both a spirit and a ward, isn't that the same trinity that we believe in?

+ Announcer : But here is a little question, Father. Many of our Muslim brothers say, "All of us have a spirit of God within us, the source of our being, because when God created Adam, God blew his spirit or breathed his spirit into

Adam. Therefore all of us have the spirit of God. We would like to understand the difference.

+ Father : The Bible says that God breathed into Adam a breath of life, that is human spirit. Because when God breathed his Spirit into Adam or a breath of life into Adam, Adam became a living soul, a living being, this is the human being but the divine Spirit is something else; it's the Spirit of God, it's not a breath of life from God.

+ Announcer : This mean that all of us have a breath of life from God, but the spirit of God is something totally different. I wish that everyone understand it & grasp.

+ Father : So in this Quranic verse in women 171 we see the Godhead, we see the word of God, and the Spirit of God. Ok this is what the Muslims say. There are some other beautiful testimonies about the trinity in this sense. Dr Shaqanqeery, his full name is Mohamed al Shaqanqeery is a professor of Islamic law in the University of Paris he was also a professor in the faculty of law in Ain Shams, Cairo. He wrote in El Ahram newspaper on the 26th of May, 1985, he wrote that article originally in Paris and it was translated by another professor, by a prof. Dr. Mohamed Badr, professor of historical Law or the history of law in Ain Shams University. What did he say in his article? We know that the Quran says about Jesus that he is the word of God and his Spirit. Again we know that the Quran said about Jesus that he's the word and the spirit of God. This is the same verse sura 4 verse 171, the translation of this nomenclature is not difficult for a Christian to understand. It's not difficult for the Christian he knows that Christ is the word of God and his spirit, he accept it, Therefore Muslims objected, Muslims how come?

+ Announcer : Isn't that strange!

+ Father : because such a concept would lead them to confess the divinity of Christ. He goes on to explain himself. He poses another question: what is Christ? He answers Muslims answer that he's the word of God and that he's the spirit of God according to the Quran. If you ask a Muslim what is Christ he'll say he is the word of God & the spirit of God, right? But this word and this spirit, are they created or uncreated - such a beautiful question: is the word of God created or not, the spirit of God created or not.

Do you see how intelligent this man is? We want people to think like that in order to reach the truth. Descartes says, "I think, I doubt, I think and therefore I exist." If he doesn't doubt, and if he doesn't think, then he is non-existent, he's as good as not being there at all. Many people don't want to think, they do not

want to question, and they just take it for granted that they are been told the truth.

+ Announcer : This is how all the people receive their tradition,

+ Father : This is not the way people in the 20th century should think. Let's go back to El Shaqanqeery. Is this word and is this spirit created or uncreated. If the spirit of God is uncreated, then there is no problem. no problem.

+ Announcer : How come?

+ Father : Well we say that God has existence, that he has spirit. Has God created this spirit or had it always been there with him?

+ Announcer : For sure it had always been there with him.

+ Father : If we say that the spirit of God is not created then there is no problem, then the spirit of God is not created it's eternal like God El Shaqanqeery is right in this truth that's So far so good. Very simple logic. This is the bomb then: Christ is therefore – God – because he is the spirit of God by the testimony of the Quran.

+ Announcer : truly this milk, but all nutrition.

+ Father : the spirit of God is it created or not, if we say he's not created then there is no problem, and then Christ is God. We are not talking here about the physical body; we are talking about the Holy Spirit who dwells in Christ and who has manifested in him. Because we say, "Great is the mystery of righteousness; God was incarnated in the flesh." God was manifested in the flesh. So Al Shaqanqeery says that Christ is the spirit of God according to this verse in the Quran sura 4 verse 171 this spirit is either created or it's not created. If not created, then the spirit must be God and Christ therefor must be God, but if the spirit of God is created, but the spirit of God recreated it's easier to say it is created. If the Spirit of God is created, then the Spirit of God and the word of God are created or have been created. Then before creating his word and before creating his spirit, God had neither intellect nor Spirit, which is inconceivable.

+ Announcer : Certainly.

+ Father : Impossible. Shall I summarize this again.

+ Announcer : Yes.

+ Father : Sura Women, which is sura no. 4 says that Christ is the word of God and the spirit of God, Sura 4 verse 171. The spirit and the word which are epithets of Christ, have they been created or not. If we say they have not been created then Christ must be God; God was incarnated in flesh and became man. Someone may object and say no no no; they have been created. They have been created? Then before that point of time God had no mind, God had no spirit

+ Announcer : Of course not.

+ Father : and this is inconceivable. This is simple logic. This article has been published in the Egyptian news paper Al Ahraam on 26th of May 1985.

I would like to give another testimony may I?

+ Announcer : Go ahead.

+ Father : Do we have time?

+ Announcer : Yes, sure.

+ Father : Professor Ahmed Abd El Mo`ty Hegazy, a famous author in Egypt, wrote in El Ahram news paper on the 19th of June 2002 that Christianity is a monotheistic religion and that trinity of Christianity does not mean multiplicity or plurality; it doesn't mean multiple gods or several gods; rather it points to different pictures or images of the same one truth.

+ Announcer : Another time and tell us where was it published.

+ Father : In El Ahram news paper on the 19th of June 2002. The article is quiet recent, written by Ahmed Abd El Mo`ty Hegazy the famous author. Again it says that Christianity is a monotheistic religion and trinity in it does not mean multiplicity or plurality of Gods; but rather points to the different aspects of the same one truth, he will still continue and in that sense it's close to the Muslim conception of the oneness of the Godhead الذات الإلهية and the multiplicity of its personal attributes, because the attributes are essential to the Godhead as the Mutazalites المعتزلة claim.

+ Announcer : This needs a lot of clarification.

+ Father : Such people as this professor do think, and they reach conclusions.

+ Announcer : Let's simplify.

+ Father : Christianity is a monotheistic religion, which means that Christians believe in one God, what about the trinity then he said that trinity does not mean multiplicity of God, there aren't several gods. What does it mean then?!, He said it points to different aspects of the same one truth. One truth may be viewed from different aspects or view points and in that sense Christianity is very similar to the Muslim belief about the oneness of Godhead with several personal attributes. What are those personal attributes according to Monotheology, which is called in Arabic Kalaam علم الكلام. Which called response to theology in Christianity Muslims believe that God is one, but he has personal attributes. There are other attributes that are more like actions such as being powerful, able to do things. All these things that he does, not attributes. And there are other general attributes.

+ Announcer : But these here are personal, he is talking about personal attributes that have to do with the Godhead.

+ Father : personal attributes that have to do with the Godhead. Without which the Godhead does not exist. What are they? What are those attributes? The first one is existence. If one claims that God doesn't exist then we are not talking about God, then we are totally out of line. So existence has to do with God as an intrinsic attribute of his Godhead, and it does not involve someone

else. He does not need someone else outside him to exist. The second attribute is omniscience or knowledge. God is omniscience; he knows everything he knows himself; he knows the world that he had created; he knows what is going to happen in the future. So God knows himself. It's a personal attributes and doesn't involve the impartation of this knowledge to someone else. The 3rd attribute is that he is living; he is the living and the self existent; he can't be dead. So according to the science of Tawheed التوحيد or kalaam, which means theology, God is one but he has 3 personal attributes: existence, knowledge, and life. Who said so! Ahmed Abd El Mo'ty Hegazy. In El Ahram news paper on the 19th of June 2002.

+ Announcer : It's very recent then.

+ Father : Very recent. So then, we believe in one God. We are not infidels; this has to do with the Godhead and the different attributes or the several attributes of that Godhead.

+ Announcer : Now we come to the last question in this episode. Don't you see that what you say is blasphemous and leads to association of others with God? And then you still claim that you are monotheists?

+ Father : We are not associators (moshriks) because Islam testifies that we are not. How is that? In sura 29 verse 46, it says, "Do not argue with the people of the book unless it is in the politest manner. Say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us and what has been sent down to you. Our God and your God is the same one.'" It says, "The same one."

+ Announcer : But, Father, our beloved Muslims take other verses from the Quran and say they disbelieve who say

+ Father : That God is a third of three.

+ Announcer : No those who say that Christ is God

+ Father : Christ is God

+ Announcer : third of three is settled, it's something else

+ Father : This is another thing

+ Announcer : This in sura alma'eda repeated twice

+ Father : Right, I'll tell you

+ Announcer : Go ahead

+ Father : This statement requires a little understanding. We do not say that the body of Christ is God. We maintain that God manifested himself in the body of Christ. In our Church, we state that his deity was never separated from his humanity- even for a twinkling of an eye. Christ had both divine and human nature in such a way that they were not mixed; they did not merge neither were they altered. Let me give you this final example. If I take a piece of metal and

put it in a fire. And we heat it up really well. What will happen to the piece of metal? Its color will turn red. It was black then it turns red. What is the nature of this piece of metal now? Or we should rather that it has two united natures. The nature of metal is still there; I can hammer it I can bend it, I can form it but it still has nature of fire, because it is red hot still, and I can use to burn something or someone with it. But neither the metal turned into fire nor the fire into metal; they were neither merged nor mixed up or changed. I can bend it yet I can use it to burn something.

Christ in the same way is the unison between the divinity (the fire) and the humanity (the metal). So Christ still performed divine acts and performed human acts through his humanity; he ate and drank through his body. Is it clear now?

+ Announcer : It is much clear now, but there still a bit of difficulty. Muslims protest to this claim and say how come that God would eat and drink and feel hungry?

+ Father : This is exactly what I meant when I said that through his human nature he performed human acts, but through the divine nature he raised the dead, healed the sick, and did all those miraculous deeds. In the same way that fire can burn, can iron, and the metal be bent and hammered, yet the fire is not affected at all by the hammering and bending.

So Christ has two natures: two united natures in one nature; through his human nature he performed all human acts and through the divine nature he performed all divine acts. The body was not turned into God, and God was not turned into body; it was unison of divinity & humanity

“Great is the mystery of justification: God appeared in the flesh.”

Just as he appeared to Moses in the burning bush, just as he appeared to Moses on the mountain, and we can continue talking about this issue in other episodes.

+ Announcer : We thank you, Father, for the explanations and I hope and pray that the truth was communicated to our beloved Muslims. And we are expecting many more interviews with you. My dear viewers, we welcome your questions. Any question that you address to us will be well attended to, and we will respond to it. We will keep responding until we communicate the truth to you. In a while you'll see an address. If you need a Bible or any other literature, we will send it free to your address. Thank you, and until another episode.