

THE TRINITY IN LIGHT OF LOGIC

Do Christians really believe in three gods? This is the general view that is in vogue among non-Christians in regard to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. We intend, however, in this tract to discuss this theme objectively, to emphasize **first**, that Christians believe in one God and are not polytheists or infidels as some uninformed accusers who have failed to grasp the essence and content of this doctrine have claimed. **Second**, since its birth the Christian church with all its denominations, has fought vehemently the belief in polytheism up to the present day. Any denomination that believes in polytheism is regarded as a heretical sect. When a Jew asked Jesus Christ about the greatest commandment, Jesus answered, “*The first of all the commandments is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one...’*” Jesus was echoing what is recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Researchers of the scriptures have never been able to trace any call to polytheism since it is against the laws of the holy God. Moreover, the disciples of Christ strongly asserted the oneness of God. Then the church, in order to avoid any misunderstanding of this creed, soon formulated this doctrine in the canonical Christian faith. How, then, can we explain this creed when we say we believe in one God in three hypostases (persons)? What is a hypostasis? How can we say that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is one God?

Any examination of the mystery of the Trinity must first allude to some of its expressions as they are revealed, at least, in the New Testament. Before Christ’s ascension into heaven, He addressed His disciples and urged them to go and preach the gospel to all nations and baptize the believers “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”. What really draws our attention in this commandment is the use of the word *name* instead of *names*, though Jesus was talking about the three hypostases. This verse that says, “and baptize them in the name...” uses an awkward grammatical phrase aimed at emphasizing the oneness of God rather than the multiplicity because God is one.

The second expression is found in the Gospel of John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God”. In this verse the divine inspiration attempted through limited human terminology to reveal the intimate spiritual relationship between the Word (Christ) and the Father. Though the term “word” in the original language does not have a gender and in Arabic grammar the gender of the term “word” is feminine, in both the Arabic Bible and the Qur’an “the Word”, as one of Jesus’ titles, came within a masculine context. Thus, the masculine verb *Kana* (was) is used instead of the feminine *Kanat* as it should be in order to conform to the Arabic language.

The inspiration gradually proceeds to revealing that the eternally being Word was with God and He was God because, as an eternal Word, He was in the very being of God. Or as one theologian explained it: The God who is one, as self-existent, declared Himself as the Father; and as the one Who uttered His Word, He called Himself the Son who is the Word; and as eternally alive in His Spirit, He called Himself the Holy Spirit. God, therefore, without His Word and His Spirit is a mute and dead God; however, if God is mute or dead He ceases to be God. The revealed scriptures in the Old and the New Testament have denoted that God spoke to His prophets and messengers and also sent His

Spirit to inspire, convict, rebuke, and guide. Thus, as the Father is eternal, so are His Word and Spirit.

The third expression is related to the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son. This relation is not physical but spiritual because the Word is the emanation of the very being of the Father. For example, in Arabic, we refer to a composed poem as saying, "This poem is one of the daughters of so and so poet's thought". That is, an expression of his being, thoughts, emotions, dreams, and visions. So Jesus, being The Word emanated or became the manifestation of God's thought and His deep intentions. Christ emphasized this truth when He said, "No one has known the Son but the Father; and no one has known the Father but the Son" (Mathew 11:27). This knowledge is not superficial, but an intimate knowledge free from obscurities. Only Jesus who has seen the Father can make this claim. Christ pointed out this fact when He said, in the context of His relationship with the Father, "No one has ever seen God. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has told" (John 1:18). The term 'bosom' is a figurative speech expressing the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son.

Thus, when we talk about one God in three hypostases we allude to an indivisible unity. Perhaps what the archpriest Abraham Luke indicated in his book *Christianity in Islam* presents a lucid logical explanation for this unity or oneness. He says, "*The miraculous birth of the Son from the Father and the emanation of the Holy Spirit are like the emanation of the 'heat' and the 'light' from the flame of the fire. Wherever there is flame, there is heat and light. Maybe some people conjecture that the flame is the cause for the light and the heat. Their conjecture could have become true if each of the flame, the heat and the light, individually, was fire. However, if the flame, the heat, and the light are one fire, the conjecture would not be true and the statement would not be right because it is a fire with one essence and three properties (they lack the same essence). It is impossible to call any of these properties alone a 'fire' unless the other two are present. So if we say that one of the divine hypostases is God we mean that each of the other hypostases is abiding with Him and is co-equal in His essence, possessing what He possesses with the exception of the property with which each is distinguished. Therefore, the Father is a Father forever, and the Son is a Son from eternity, and the Holy Spirit has eternally emanated. So, the doctrine of three hypostases does not mean the belief in three gods, because the multiplicity of properties and characteristics does not necessitate the multiplicity of being, otherwise, based on the previous example, we end up recognizing (the three hypostases) as three fires, and this is impossible.*

On the other hand, someone may wonder: How can three be in one since $1+1+1$ cannot equal 1? This is true. However, what we really say in this respect, for the sake of illustration, is that $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. The outcome of the process of this multiplication is that One enfolds in its being three equal entities, each distinct in His particular characteristics, but united in Their essence formulating a Oneness, without any of these entities losing any of His characteristics which identifies His personality, role and function.

Lastly, it is inevitable to underscore the Qur'anic verse recorded in Sura 29:46, *And you do not argue with the people of the book except with the way that is best...and say: we believed in that which has been revealed to us, and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one...*

One may wonder how does the Qur'an say, or even urge the Muslims to reiterate in front of the Christians, "Our God and your God is One" when the Christians believe in

the blasphemous doctrine of Trinity? How does the Qur'an acknowledge the God of the Christians while the Christians embrace the concept of the Trinity that is at the core of Christian ideology? If the God of Islam is the same God of Christianity, then Islam, in the final analysis, believes in the true Trinity as it is recorded in the Bible, and not the heretical Trinity that was in vogue during the time of Muhammad as it was taught by the heretical sect of the *Maryamites* who claimed that the virgin Mary was the third hypostasis of the Trinity, beside the Father and the Son; or the *Ebionite* doctrine which called the Holy Spirit 'our mother the Holy Spirit'. These heresies incited the Qur'an to vehemently attack these unbiblical doctrines and renounced that the Merciful has a child as it remarks, '*Did you tell the people take me and my mother as two gods without Me?*' Or as it states, '*Oh, Jesus, did you tell the people to take me and my mother as two gods without God?*' It is well known that the *Maryamite* sect has perished over one thousand year ago. Yet the true Christian doctrine of the Trinity that believes in One God in three hypostases and equal in essence, has survived and will continue to prevail as long as the church of Christ is still established on earth. It is the church that the gates of hell cannot overcome.