

Trinity- Ndola Conference on December 3rd for reaching Muslims

Almost one in five people in the world are Muslim. In the US there are presently more Muslims than Methodist. Because of the massive influx of North African Muslims immigrating into France and due to birth rates alone, projections show that France in not that many generations will be a Muslim Nation. It appears to me that the battlefield for the remaining advancement of the Kingdom of God is primarily centering off between Christianity and Islam.

Introduce myself and my background and family.

Hook: Tomorrow I will be preaching on “When is believing in Jesus just plain foolishness?” The answer is twofold. Believing in Jesus is just plain foolishness when:

1. Jesus is a lie and therefore those that believe in Him are plain foolish
2. When you think Jesus is a lie and don't believe in Him. You think those that believe in Him are plain foolish but you are

So it is with the Trinity. To the Muslim we are the fools for believing in the Trinity when in reality they are the fools. One of the key lessons we all must learn in life is that something can be true whether we believe in it or not. Something can be true whether you understand it or not.

The first hour with Bonnie was taking a clear look the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity.

ANALAGY: Bank Tellers training to recognize counterfeit Kwacha is to know the look, feel, smell ETC of the real Kwacha so then the counterfeit is easy to recognize! That is what Bonnie's talk was.

This second hour with me is designed to be more on the practical side. Our Goal in this hour is to understand how the Muslim views the Doctrine of the Trinity and then how can we best communicate to a Muslim the Doctrine of the Trinity.

With this said we will cover this by looking at three areas.

1. I want to look at the Muslims concept of God and compare it to the Christian Doctrine of God showing the major differences and similarities.
2. I want to look at the Muslims misunderstanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity by examining three of their objections to the Trinity.
3. I want to show you some ways to communicate this great Doctrine with your Muslim friends.

In addition to the ESV Scriptures I want to begin by acknowledging that much of my research and thus information for this hour has come from:

1. The Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin
2. Answering Islam by Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb
3. The Compact Guide to World Religions by Dean C. Halverson

Lets get started.

What is the Muslims concept of God and how does that compare with our Doctrine of God?

As you know for the Muslim, Allah is the only one true God. To the Muslim there is nothing more blasphemous than the Trinity. The Muslim believes that God is neither physical nor spirit. God is a totally unique being in that Allah is not similar in any way to any other being. In fact if the Muslim believed otherwise he would be guilty of the grave sin known as "ishrak" which essentially means assigning partners to Allah. ***This what makes the Doctrine of the Trinity so difficult for a Muslim?***

Allah is unapproachable by sinful man, and the Muslim's deepest desire is to submit with hopes that he can hold back the judging arm of Allah. As you know the word *Islam is a noun which means to submit or surrender one's self*. If a Muslim is successful at this then the Muslim will inherit eternal life in an earthly paradise of gluttony. Muslims have no concept of a God who is loving and compassionate and who is a Father. Paul clearly teaches us Christians in the Book of Romans 8:15 that we can cry out to God even as "Abba Father" one of the most loving, endearing and intimate ways for us to refer to Jehovah.

Although the Muslim sees Allah as harsh and wrathful he also sees him as loving and merciful. However, the Christian Doctrine of God derived from the entire Bible shows throughout all of the OT and NT in verse after verse that Jehovah God is loving and compassionate and then of course this crescendos in the NT revealing the supreme illustration of God's love for the Redeemed in God sending and then crushing His Son in order to redeem His Church. The Muslims view of Allah as loving and merciful is weak in that the entire Koran **only contains two verse** showing Allah as anything other than harsh and wrathful.

- a. Sura 11:90 says: " Ask forgiveness of your Lord, then repent to him; surely my lord is all compassionate, all loving."
- b. Sura 85:14 says: " He is the all forgiving, the all loving"

Other than these two passages there is not one other single passage that indicates that Allah loves any part of mankind. The Koran says in Surah 3:14 that "Allah loves not those who do wrong and neither does he love him who is treacherous and sinful." ***Contrast this with the fact that in the entire Bible we are told over 300 times of God's love for us.***

Additionally, there is not one verse in the Koran that shows that a Muslim can have a personal relationship with God. NOT ONE! Contrast that with our Doctrine of God, which could not be any more opposite on this point. The entire unfolding message of the Holy Scriptures is God's redeeming love and desire to have an intimate and personal love relationship with His creation. For those who are born again we have been adopted as sons. (Romans 8:14-15 & Galatians 3:26). We are heirs of God. (Galatians 4:7) The Father God also deals with us as His children and His friends. (Mathew 12:47 and Hebrews 12: 5&7 and John 15: 13 -15 and James 2:23)

A significant part of the Christian Doctrine of God in the book of Romans is that it was God's kindness that led us to repentance and our God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still sinners, haters of and at war with Him, He died for us! *The Bible tells us that our nearness to God is our good. The Lord is near to the broken hearted. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him.*

To the Muslim God has no likeness (Sura 42:11), is unknowable (apart from revelation) and is wholly and totally different. Allah is neither physical nor a spirit. Contrast that with the Christian Doctrine of God. God has a likeness and it is us. The Bible teaches that we have been created in God's image and likeness. (Genesis 1: 26& 27). It also teaches that that we have the knowledge of God in our hearts. (Roman's 1:19 & 20) The Bible also teaches us that God is spirit. (John 4:24)

Another critical difference in the Muslims view of their God is that Allah can change His mind. ***This is massively different than our Doctrine of God which the Bible teaches God is unchangeable in His character and essence. The Bible teaches us that God is the same yesterday, today and forever!*** It is due to the principle of "abrogation" laid down in the Koran that the Muslim believes Allah can change his mind. The Koran teaches that in three separate places that verses in the Koran can be changed. Sura 2:100/106 says: "And for whatever verse we abrogate or cast into oblivion, we bring one better or like it." If Allah can abrogate his eternal speech, how can a Muslim trust him with his eternal soul? ***Can you imagine trying to obey and honor or have confidence in this God?***

The last two significant differences are:

1. Standard for judgment for Allah is that a Muslims good deeds must outweigh his bad deeds but the standard for Jehovah God is nothing less than complete perfection as measured by the Holy character of God. (Mathew 5:48 and Romans 3:23)
2. Allah provided a messenger, Muhammad, who warned of Allah's pending judgment and the Koran says that "No bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another" but the Christian Doctrine of God says God provided a sinless savior, Jesus, who took our sins upon himself and bore God's wrath for our sins instead of us. The justice and righteousness of Jehovah were satisfied in the wrath of God on Jesus and we now are imputed the very righteousness from Christ required by God for salvation.

Tell the story of when ... Imams at our CCM Seminary forum and the lack of Joy. They are like their God. No God to cling to.

Joshua 22: 1-4 (Read it) Why Cling to God? Because you can. The Muslim has not God at all.

The Similarities between the God of the Koran and the God of the Bible are:

- Both are one.
- Both are transcendent Creators of the universe.
- Both are sovereign.
- Both are omnipotent.
- Both have spoken to humanity through messengers or prophets, through angels, and through the written word.
- Both know in intimate detail the thoughts and deeds of men.
- Both will judge the wicked.

Let's look now at the Muslim's misunderstanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity by examining three of their objections to the Doctrine and how we can overcome them.

As Christians the Doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ are inseparable. If you accept the Trinity then you have already accepted the deity of Christ. If you accept the deity of Christ you are well on your way to understanding the Trinity. This is exactly why the Muslim rejects both. If a Muslim were to accept them would be to completely deny the unity of Allah.

One of the greatest obstacles in the mind of a Muslim, one that causes the most angst and anger is that Jesus is the "only begotten Son of God" (John 1:18 and 3:16) To the Muslim again this is committing the sin of "ishrak". The Islamic mind hates this because they interpret this completely wrong. They understand this in a gross kind of anthropomorphic way meaning that to them the "only begotten Son of God" would mean that God has complete human characteristics. To the Muslim to beget implies a physical act. This is absurd to them. A very known Muslim apologist named Deedat said: "Allah does not beget because begetting is an animal act. It belongs to the lower animal life of sex. We do not attribute such an act to God." We agree with the Muslim on this. The Koran affirms the virgin birth of Jesus, as do we. The Christian Doctrine of God teaches us that the triune God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have eternally existed. There was never a time when God the Son was created. (Mathew 28:19; Luke 3:21-22; John 5:18)

In the Koran Allah broke into history through a word that was written; but through Jesus Christ (who has always existed) God broke into the world through the Word, who is a person. (John 1: 1; Colossians 1: 15 -20; Hebrews 1:2-3; I John 1: 1-3 & 4:9-10)

Objection: “God has no sons.” When a Muslim hears the phrase “Son of God”, they understand it to mean that God had physical relations with a woman in order to have a son. Surah 19:34-35 says: “Such Jesus the Son of Mary: It is not befitting to Allah that He should beget a son.” You can address this objection by showing them in Arabic there are two words for expressing phrase “son of” they are “**walad**” and “**ibn**”:

1. Walad: definitely means becoming a son through the union of a man and a woman. We as Christians would definitely agree that Jesus was not “Waladdullah”
2. Ibn: this is often used in a metaphorical sense. Arabs themselves often talk about a traveler as being an “ibnu’ssabil” – son of the road. They obviously do not mean that someone had sexual union with the road to create the son of the road. It is in this wider metaphorical sense that Jesus is understood as being the Son of God.

According to one Iranian Christian, the best way he said to deal with Jesus, as being God’s son is to refer to Him as a Spiritual Son of God. He said, “this is to not deny Jesus humanity, but such a phrase will be less offensive to the Muslim.” When Jesus referred to God as His Father and Himself as the Son He was not talking about His physical birth but His unique relationship with God. The Jews of Jesus day clearly understood this. In John 5:18 the Pharisees said: “He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” In another instance in John 10:30 Jesus said: “I and the Father are one” and for this statement they picked up stones to stone Him to death.

Objection: Muslims are convinced that Christians worship 3 Gods and not one.

- a. Affirm with them that you too worship only one true God. Show them Deuteronomy 6:4 or Mark 12:29-32 or I Corinthians 8:4)
- b. Point out that the Bible speaks at times of a compound or complex unity rather than a simple, undivided unity. The Bible teaches that the word “one” often means there is a plurality in the oneness. Show them Genesis 2:24 or Exodus 24:3 or Judges 20:1,8,11 or Romans 12:5.
- c. Explain to them the difficulty of understanding and explaining the concept of the Trinity is, in fact, evidence for its divine origin. It should not surprise us that we as God’s created ones, would not be able to fully understand the nature of our creator. C.S. Lewis said: “If Christianity was something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. We cannot compete in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about.”

- d. Don't assume when we say Trinity that know we mean Father, Son and Spirit. Because of a verse in the Koran sometimes Muslims think the Trinity is God, Son and Mary. Surah 5:116, Ali says: "And when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to man, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?"
- e. Show the Muslim the Biblical evidence for the Trinity or tri-unity of God. In the Bible the:
 1. Father is referred to as God. (Mathew 11:25, John 6:27 and 8:54, Ephesians 4:6)
 2. Jesus is recognized as God. (Luke 5:17-26; John 1:1; 20:28)
 3. The Holy Spirit is defined as God. (Acts 5: 3-4)

Even though the Bible refers to each of these persons as God, the same Bible does not speak of three Gods but of three being one. In Mathew 28:19 Jesus said "baptizing them in the name (singular IE not 'names') of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

- f. The Father and the Son and the Spirit are all identified as having attributes that only God has. Like each Person of the Trinity existed before anything was created AND each Person of the Trinity was active in the Creation of all things.
 1. God: Psalm 146:5; Mark 13:19; Acts 4:24
 2. Jesus: John 1:1-3 and 14; I Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16-17
 3. Holy Spirit: Genesis 1: 1-3
 AND each Person of the Trinity possesses the attribute of Omnipresence.
 1. God: Jeremiah 23:24; Acts 17:24-25
 2. Jesus: Mathew 18: 20; 28:20; Ephesians 1:23
 3. Holy Spirit: Psalm 139: 7-8

Objection: The doctrine of the Trinity contradicts itself. Muslims (for that matter many other religions too) often claim that the Trinity contradicts itself because after all, how can something be both three and one?

Be careful here because even if we are not careful we subtly can fall into this same line of thinking. If you examine this objection closely it is very faulty and actual reflects a weakness in one's own logic. For a statement to contradict itself it must both affirm and deny the same thing in the same respect. Does the doctrine of the Trinity do that? NO! We at times think that it does because we have no way of understanding how something can be both three and one. The doctrine states that God is one in essence (being or substance) and three in persons. Essence and personhood are different. God is three in person in that each person of the Trinity is distinct within the God head; God is one in that each Person of the Godhead shares the same self-existing essence and other qualities unique to God. This is a simultaneous distinction and sameness. This is perhaps best seen in John 1:1 "In the

beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” The word “with” in this case represents a distinction and relationship with between the Persons of the Son (the Word) and the Father (God). Yet, at the same time the phrase “the Word was God” is a verb of being indicating the sameness of essence between the two Persons.

Along the same lines of the Trinity not contradicting itself the law of noncontradiction informs us that something cannot be true and false at the same time in the same sense. The Trinity in no way violates this. The Trinity is not the belief that God is three Persons and only one person at a time. That would be a contradiction. It is the belief that there are three persons in one nature. This is for sure a mystery but not a contradiction.

Further, the Trinity is not the belief that there are three natures in one nature or three essences in one essence. That would be a contradiction. We affirm that there are three persons in one essence. This is not a contradiction because it makes a distinction between person and essence. In other words while God is one and many at the same time He is not one and many in the same sense. This is in no way contradictory. A model of the trinity helps to grasp this difference between one essence and three persons. What we mean is He has one What and three Whos.

God is one in His substance but three in his relationships. The unity is in His essence (what God is) and the plurality is in God’s persons (how He relates).

Let’s look at ways to communicate this great Christian Doctrine of the Trinity to your Muslim friends.

The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be proven by human reason; it is only known because it is revealed by special revelation. (In the Bible) However, just because it is beyond reason does not mean it goes against reason. It is not irrational or contradictory as many Muslims think it is.

Muslim Scholars can at times make a big point of computing and showing the mathematical impossibility of the Trinity. After all they say $1+1+1=3$ every time. Yes, it does and it always will when you add them. You have three separate numbers (in this case one’s) and when you have three and add them you will always get 3. However, a proper way to illustrate the Trinity Mathematically is more like $1(3)=1$. In other words we multiply and not add them. God in three persons but one God. His one essence has multiple personalities. Therefore there is not a more accurate mathematical problem to illustrate the Trinity than 1 to the third power. $1(3)$ because whenever you take three ones times each other you still only have one, one. Three ones multiplied equal one, one. Three ones but they equal one, one.

No analogy of the Trinity is perfect, but some are better than others. Here are the inaccurate analogies:

1. Chain with three links. Why is this inaccurate? These are three separate and separable parts and God is neither separated nor separable.
2. God is like the same actor playing three separate parts on a play. Why is this inaccurate? The actor cannot play all three roles at the same time. God is simultaneously three persons not one person playing three successive roles.
3. God is like three states of water. A solid (ice) liquid and gas (steam). Why is this inaccurate? Water is not normally in all three states at the same time, but God is always three persons at the same time.

Here is a fairly accurate analogy.

1. I am one essence (one person or human) with three different roles all at the same time. I am a father, I am a son and I am a husband. I am one person the same person in three roles or distinctly separate relationships.

Conclusion:

Philippians 2: 5-11

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