

The Concept of God in Islam and Christianity

Transcribed from Program One of the "Islam vs. Christianity" debate
conducted by The John Ankerberg Show

(...)

Dr. Gleason Archer: In the first place, we should observe that Islam and Christianity are closer to each other than to any other religions. And they share so much in the way of conviction concerning the sacredness of life and the ideals of marriage and family. We do rejoice that so many who are of that background have come at last to a country like America where they have an opportunity to make a choice in regard to their understanding of God and their purpose in life, a choice which perhaps is far more open than would be in a Muslim country where it is a matter of death penalty if anyone ever leaves the Muslim faith. Now, the God who is presented in the Holy Scripture is not simply a sterile monad. He is a Trinitarian God who is observable immediately in Genesis, the first book, the first chapter and the first three verses. Because in the first verse we are told that God, Elohim, created the heavens and the earth and then in the second verse, we are told that the Ruach Elohim, the Spirit of God, brooded over the waters in the initial stage of the earth's development. And then in the third verse we are told that God said, "Let there be light." And this, of course, evokes the creative word of God which is explained in the gospel of John, the first chapter in the first three verses: "In the beginning was the Word, the logos, and the logos was with God and the logos was God. All things came into being through the logos." Now, it is true that in Deuteronomy, Chapter 6, verse 4, we have that fine statement which is basic to the faith of Israel, and I think basic also to Islam and Christianity. "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One." The term used for one, by the way, is echad which is like the Arabic Ahab, meaning one. But it is very interestingly used in Genesis 2:24 of what happens with man and wife become married. They, too, shall become one flesh. Well, of course, this does not mean that there is just a husband or just a wife, but the two of them are one. In verse 26 of Genesis 1, we read in connection with God's creation of man, "Let us make man in our image." Now, this could not possibly refer to angels joining with God in the matter of furnishing a model for man. It does seem to imply a plurality on the part of the one God. Now, of course, it is true that in later times, certainly in Koranic times, the first person plural pronoun "we" was frequently used in a majestic way. Allah is quoted very often in this fashion. But the thing that is important to observe is that in no ancient language of the B.C. period do you find such usage. If a person means

I, he says I, he does not say we. Therefore, on historic linguistic grounds we are forced to say that there is an implication of plurality in the Godhead in this account of man's creation.

(...)

I think it should be pointed out that we, today, still have manuscripts of the New Testament and the Old Testament that go back four, five or even eight centuries before the Koran was revealed to Muhammad. And, they are identical, or virtually identical in wording, to what we have in our scholarly editions of the Old and New Testaments today. Therefore, it is contrary to reason to suppose that there was some other form of gospel or of Old Testament or Torah which is different, for which there is not one line, one word of manuscript evidence.