

Episode 17

Host: Dear viewers, welcome to you again to a new episode of our program, "Questions About Faith". It is our pleasure to renew our meeting with you, and it is also a pleasure to have with us Reverend Father Zakaria Botros. You're most welcome, Father.

Fr. Zakaria: Thank you.

Host: We have been discussing many topics the previous time, and this time. The subject of our discussion has been the impossibility of the distortion of the Holy Scriptures. I would like you, as usual, to give us a brief summary of what has been covered the previous time, in order to be able to follow with you this time.

Fr. Zakaria: Well, of course, we have been talking about the Holy Scriptures as being revealed by God, by the testimony of the Bible itself and by the testimony of the Quran. Well, the Bible is a message of love from God, to show the way of salvation to all sinners. It shows man how God may accept him, because He loves him, and that Christ died on the cross as redemption and atonement. So here the Bible reveals all these things, the mysteries of the faith, so whoever wants to relate to God and whoever wants to know the way to God must know the Bible, and therefore Satan fights the Bible with all possible infernal power. He neither wants the people to read the Bible nor open the Bible, so he accuses it of anything, he accuses it even of distortion so that nobody would touch it. But we thank God, as we have spoken,

and said before that there are verses in the Quran testifying 'yes' to the authenticity of the Bible and its freedom from alteration. We mentioned Surah 5 verse 47: "We have sent you down the book with the truth to confirm what was already there from the previous Book and to safeguard it." so the Quran at Mohamed's time said that the Bible was authentic "to confirm what was already there from the Book." Had it not been true, the Quran wouldn't have said so. This had been repeated many more times - in about 12 to 13 Surahs, as we know, and moreover there's something else. It shows that God commands the prophet Mohamed and the Muslims to refer to the Bible. Would he then refer them to a distorted book? Impossible. Then it wasn't distorted. In Surah 10 verse 94: "If you are in any doubt concerning what we have sent down to you, then ask those who have read the Book before you". That is, refer to them and they will tell you. Had it been distorted, how would he refer him to them? ***On the contrary there would have been a warning instead.*** Yes, wouldn't there? "Those are the ones to whom we have given the book along with discretion and prophethood. Such are the ones whom God has guided so copy their guidance". That is, walk after them according to their guidance or direction. And in Surah 16 verse 43, he commands them to refer to the people of the reminder "Before you we have only sent men whom we have inspired, so ask the people of the reminder if you don't know."

Nahed: So it has been repeated twice this phrase "ask the people of the reminder"

Fr. Zakaria: Most certainly. And again Mohamed himself testifies in Quranic verses, of the Torah and the Injeel

(Which is the Gospel) which, were in his time and testified that they were sound and useful as evidence. Let's have a look at the following verse: Surah 28:49 "Say bring a book from God's presence, which will be a better guide than either of them, so I may follow it."

Nahed: What does he mean here by "than either of them?"

Fr. Zakaria: The Torah and ***the Injeel***. The Injeel. And in Surah 5 it says: "Say people of the book you will not make any point until you keep up the Torah and the Gospel." Had they been tampered with, ***how would he exhort them to keep them up?*** He is the judge. And in Surah 5 again, it says the following: "How can they choose you as judge when they have the Torah, which contains God's judgment?" ***This means the judgment of the Torah and the Injeel was valid and in effect.*** And that was true at the time of the prophet Mohamed, and as evidence he was wondering why people were choosing him for a judge although they had the judgment of God. So how could they have been tampered with at Mohamed's time? And in Surah 5:47, it says: "Let the people of the Gospel judge" That was the Torah. "How can they choose you as judge when they have the Torah, which contains the judgment of God?" but here it says: "Let the people of the Gospel judge by what God has sent down in it" so then at Mohamed's time the Gospel was in existence, and it contained the judgment of God, and it was revealed by God. Had it been otherwise Mohamed would have said so, that it was tampered with. The Quran even testifies. Yes please, go ahead.

Nahed: It's alright I was just wondering if there are any other verses

Fr. Zakaria: Yes, the Quran testifies that the people of the book preserved it, that is the Bible, and they were witnesses of it till Mohamed's time. This is the Quran's testimony. Surah 5 verse 44. What does it say? "We have sent down the Torah, containing guidance and light. The prophets, who were committed to peace, judged by those who were Jews by means of it, and so do the rabbis and the scholars because of what they sought to observe from God's Book. They have even acted as witnesses for it."

Nahed: The expression here is "istuhfethu", استُحفظوا which clearly means that they observed it perfectly

Fr. Zakaria: What they sought to observe. Isn't that right? What is *the* meaning of this verse regarding the prophets who were committed to peace? Commentators say that they were the prophets who committed their lives to God's will. Asslamu أسلموا here in Arabic does not mean those who embraced Islam, because Islam had not emerged yet. Allatheena asslamu الذين أسلموا means those who committed their lives to God. That was said by Imam Abdullah Youssef Ali, page 261 in his translation of the meanings of the Quran. After that, in Surah 2 : 146, and Surah 6 verse 20, it says: "Those to whom we have given the book know it just as they know their own sons." By the way, in the previous verse which says: "sought to preserve it", that is explained also by Imam Abdullah Youssef Ali, saying those who have been entrusted with the preservation of the Book of God, and are witnesses to its authenticity. That's in the book of Imam Youssef Ali, page 261 and 262.

Nahed: This way there's no room for doubt that the Holy Bible has not been tampered with before

Mohamed. Fr. Zakaria: No way.

Nahed: And now we have established from the Quran that the Bible has not been distorted before the emergence of Mohamed.

Fr. Zakaria: Most definitely.

Nahed: I would also like you to answer those who claim that the distortion of the Bible occurred after the time of Mohamed.

Fr. Zakaria: Yes, of course, we have given two assumptions, ***either before or after***. So before Mohamed is now ruled out by the evidence of Mohamed's citation with verses, and ***by the testimony of the Quran***. That was simple. So now to the second alternative, that it had been after Mohamed, there's also nothing. The occurrence of distortion after Mohamed. Did it happen or not? To start with, the Quran testifies to the Holy Bible that it is a reminder from God. Zikr ذكر . Does the Quran testify of the Bible that it is a reminder from God? Or does it testify to itself only as being a reminder from God? The Injeel (Gospel) is a reminder from God. The Torah is a reminder from God. (Zikr), ذكر Surah 21 verse 7: "Before you, we have sent only men whom we have inspired, so ask the people of the reminder if you don't know."

Nahed: Well, a short pause here. The word Zikr ذكر here must mean the Holy Bible, the Torah and the Injeel.

Fr. Zakaria: Exactly.

Nahed: Namely the verse coming after that saying: "We have sent down the Zikr ذكر and we are safeguarding it" indicates the Torah and the Injeel?.

Fr. Zakaria: Most certainly so, and that's what we are coming around to in a while. Surah 16 verse 43: "Before you we have only sent down men whom we have

inspired, so ask the people of the reminder if you don't know." It has been repeated in Surah 21 verse 7, and in Surah 16 verse 43. This confirms the meaning, and the Quran testifies that God safeguards the Zikr ذكر from distortion since the Torah, the Injeel and the Bible are Zikr, ذكر not only the Quran. Then Surah 15 verse 9 applies to it. Some people mispronounce it al hajar الحجر but this is wrong. It's called Surah al Hijr because hijr was a mountain so it's Surah al Hijr verse 9. "We ourselves have sent down the reminder, just as we are safeguarding it". Safeguarding it, right? So the reminder here must be the Bible? **Certainly**, alongside with the Quran. As a matter of fact those who challenge the Bible as false, those who call it into question, most unfortunately challenge the Quran also.

Nahed: How's that?

Fr. Zakaria: Oh well, the Quran says, the Holy Scriptures are Zikr ذكر and God preserves the Zikr ذكر so if they claim that the Holy Bible has been distorted, then they also challenge the Quran as false, assuming God did not safeguard the reminder. So they clash with it here, right? So anyone who challenges the Bible should be aware, should know what he's talking about. Otherwise he'd be challenging his own holy scriptures as false. Is that clear? **Yes, clear**. O.K. There are Quranic verses testifying that The Quran itself safeguards the Holy Bible from distortion. The Quran itself safeguards the Holy Bible, namely God safeguards the Bible from distortion. And The Quran safeguards the Bible from distortion. Where is that? Surah 5 verse 48.

"We have sent you down the book", that is the Quran, "with the truth to confirm what was already there from the previous Book", that is, the Torah and the Injeel "and

to safeguard it.” What does “safeguarding it” mean? Here we come to the commentary, in the book of Imam Abdullah Youssef Ali, page 263. He explains this word “safeguarding it” in the Surah as follows: that is, preserving it from distortion."

Nahed: Please, this one again Father.

Fr. Zakaria: Imam Abdullah Youssef Ali in his book “Interpretation of the meanings of the Quran” in English, page 263. He interprets the verse from Surah 5:48 where “safeguarding it” occurs and says “safeguarding it”, that is preserving it from distortion.

Nahed: because some of our beloved ones interpret “safeguarding it” totally different, and that requires another topic and we will dedicate a whole session for that.

Fr. Zakaria: We fall back on the commentators.

Nahed: This is not our own interpretation. It is the interpretation of their own scholars,

Fr. Zakaria: Their own recognized scholars and jurisprudence, O.K.? The Quran also testifies that the Holy Bible is the Word of God and therefore it cannot be tampered with or altered. Does the Quran testify that the Holy Bible is the Word of God or the word of man? ***The Word of God, of course.*** And how’s that? In Surah 29 : 46 “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” - that’s the Quran - “and what has been sent down to you.” That’s the Torah and the Injeel. “Sent down”, so the Torah and the Injeel are the Word of God inspired to the prophets. Isn’t that right? Inspired. Now, Surah 4 verse 135: “You who believe, believe in God and His messenger and the book which he has sent down to His messenger” – that’s the Quran. So far so good.

Pay attention to the following: “As well as the book which he had sent down previously” and that’s the Torah and the Injeel. “Anyone who disbelieves in God and his angels, his books, and his messengers, and the last day, will stray far afield”

Nahed: That is, all the previous messengers and all the inspired books prior to the Quran.

Fr. Zakaria: It’s a testimony that they are the Word of God. This is very evident. Well, as the book which he had sent down previously, that’s the Torah and the Injeel. Do you know how many times this verse has been repeated in the Quran? I’ll tell you. In Surah 5:68, 46, 47 and 44.

Nahed: Here’s a little bit that I have memorized from a long time ago when I was... and that is the concluding verses of Surah 2. They made us learn it by heart and repeat it so often. “The messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from the Lord and so do believers, everyone believes in God and his angels, his books and his messengers. We do not differentiate between any of his messengers.

Fr. Zakaria: Do you see? There are many things, many such things. In Surah 5 alone, there are 4 verses to that effect. 44 and 46 and 47 and 68. The same thing about the "sending down of the books that have been sent down previously." Surah 2, verse 146 and 87. Surah 17 verse 2 and verse 55. Surah 6 verse 92 and verse 156, Surah 23:49, Surah 4 : 163, Surah 35 : 25, Surah 16 : 43, Surah 21 : 25, Surah 57 : 27 and Surah 29 : 46. ***Where then, have they come up with such accusations?*** And Surah 10 : 94, all testifying that the Holy Scriptures are inspired by God. O.K. And, I want to say something. "Sent down by God" means His own words. Would the Word of God

be changed and altered? Come and see. Surah 10 verse 64 says: "There is no way to alter God's words, that will be the supreme achievement". No alteration. And in Surah 6 verse 34: "Messengers before you have been rejected, yet they held firm on being rejected and abused until our support came to them, there is no way to change God's words." So no alteration, and no change to God's words. The Bible is the Book of God and the Word of God. How then could it be changed and altered? So here now, yes I will give you a chance. So right now, if a Muslim, any Muslim challenges the Bible as being altered and tampered with, then he challenges the Quranic verses as being false.

Nahed: You know, sometimes we tell our brothers and sisters in Islam: "There is no way to change," then they say: it means the Quran.

But the verse that your holiness has just said, I mean the one talking about the previous books, not only the Quran.

Fr. Zakaria: Not only one verse, that's around 20 verses, all testifying that it has been sent down by God. So how can God's words be altered? The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God. So how can God's Word be altered? This is a big question mark, and if any Muslim tells me that the Holy Bible has been altered, tampered with and distorted, I tell him, you're challenging your Quran as false. Because then your Quran says that God's words can be changed because it testifies that it's right. I'm going to quote someone who told me something really nice. He said, I'll go along with you for three minutes, and believe that the Holy Bible has been altered. ***I think I know this person.*** I mean God revealed the Torah and had it altered, He let it be altered, then God revealed the

Zabur and let it be altered, and He sent down His Books to Abraham, and God knows what, and He let them be altered and He revealed the book to Jesus and He let it be altered, and then He revealed the Quran and you claim that it has not been altered? How can I trust God after all that? After having altered 4 or 5 Books.

Nahed: After 4 or 5 He has learned the lesson when it came to the last one. You're now making me wonder if God's power can preserve His books, right? You know these things, they're not logical. Nonsense.

Nahed: O.K. Father, apart from the testimony of the Holy Bible and apart from the Quran's testimony of the veracity of the Injeel, logically speaking, is there any logical evidence confirming the impossibility of the distortion of the Bible?

Fr. Zakaria: Yes, of course. The first logical evidence is the story I've just told you, that God altered and altered and again altered and then it came only to the Quran. What assurance then do I have that the Quran has not been altered, assuming God is unable to preserve? That's logic. The second logic is a question I'd like to ask of those who claim such a thing. Where do you think the Bible has been altered? Where exactly? Since before Mohamed it hasn't been altered, it has not been altered, and the Quran and Mohamed testify to that effect. After Mohamed, I mean after the 7th Century A.D., when Christianity had been all over the world. So, where has it been altered? In Egypt, or in Iraq, or in Syria, or in England, or in France? Where has it been altered? Where? What place? The other logical question is : Who, I wonder, committed the distortion. Have the Jews distorted their own Book? ***No way***. Have the Christians distorted their own Book? Or have the two agreed

together and distorted both? Well, we need to see that, we need to look and try to reply to that. O.K. then. In which language has it been altered? Has it been altered in Arabic, or has it been altered in Greek, or has it been altered in French, or has it been altered in English? Or has it been altered in Syrian? In which language has it been altered? And has it remained unaltered in the other languages? Or have all of them been altered? This is an issue, so right now the question that arises is...

Nahed: O.K., we will reply. Apart from the Biblical testimony – we're done with that. Is there a proven scientific fact that testifies to the veracity of the Bible?

Fr. Zakaria: Yes, that's correct, but before I deal with this scientific fact I want to say... I want to reply to those questions. Would you like me to address the viewers about them? ***Yes, please do.*** The first assumption is: Where has the Bible been altered? Where has that happened? We ask, in which country has the alteration taken place? And it's a well known fact that the Holy Bible had already been spread to all countries of the world. In the 7th Century itself it had reached everywhere: Asia – in the continent of Asia, in Africa, and in Europe, it had been everywhere, the Holy Bible. So in which country had it been altered? O.K., and when it had been altered in a country, how would it have been altered in the other countries? ***So the one who did the alteration must have gone all around the world in order to complete his job.*** Would he have gathered the entire world in the organization of the United Nations and commanded them all to agree on the alteration of the Bible? Has the entire world ever agreed on one thing? The other bit, who committed the alteration? When you say the Torah and the Injeel, and they are Books that we

possess. They are with us here, and we carry them. Here they are. Here is the Torah and here is the Injeel. This here is the Torah and this here is the Injeel. Are you following? And we have kept them since the time Christ came, and the Jews had only the Torah. Today, when we review what we've got and what the Jews have got, we find them exactly the same. ***Exactly the same. And will they ever be quiet?*** They will never keep silent if we alter it. ***Neither shall we hold our peace if they alter it.*** So who's going to carry out the alteration and who will keep silent to the alteration? This is the other point that I'd like to mention. The third point which concerns ***the scientific fact***. No, first. In which language? In which language has the alteration taken place? The Holy Bible had been written and translated into all the languages of the world by the 7th Century A.D. It had been written and translated into all the languages of the world and there were 3 major denominations, Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism. And it's well known that they all split apart from one another. ***From the mother church***. When they split apart, which of them made the changes to the Bible? Had the Catholics changed it? Have the Orthodox changed it? Have the protestants changed it? But we all carry the same Bible. ***And would they keep silent about it?*** Would they have let it pass? And the important thing today, go ahead and buy a Catholic copy, or an Orthodox copy, or a Protestant copy, and you'll find all of them the same.

Nahed: You know, Father? Sometimes they say there are changes and we want to clarify to them that the changes have to do with the translations, but the meaning is the same.

Fr. Zakaria: Exactly, as we have said before, the 7 letters of the Quran. ***You mean so they better keep quiet.*** Well, otherwise I will repeat it again. I'm willing. Well, what about the burning of the 6 copies? O.K., ***that's enough now.*** Don't let me stir up the viewers. O.K. they're nice people, and they're watching now and I should also be considerate to them. Shouldn't I? And regarding that, Mr. Ali Amin, I mean Ahmad Amin said in his book 'Duha al Islam', volume 1 page 358. He said: "A group of the leading men of the prophetic tradition and jurisprudence and theology claimed that alteration took place in the interpretation, not in the inspired text, and the argument of these people is that the Torah had been well known all over the world before the emergence of Mohamed. And only God knows the number of its copies. And it is impossible to alter and change by the collection of those copies, namely to bring all the copies together and conspire, so that all the copies of the earth would have been altered and changed, and the alteration would have to be consistent, which the mind finds preposterous and this testifies to its validity". Whose words are these? ***I was about to ask. Who is this, Father? Again, in order to confirm.*** Mr. Ahmad Amin, who wrote 'Duha al Islam' volume 1 page 358. ***Namely, a thinking scholastic man...*** Islamic, ***Yes, Islamic,*** and a historian, and he says it's impossible, because he says: how could they gather all those books and alter them, being so many? Isn't that right? So, it's impossible in any world language, neither is it possible anywhere in the world, nor can anyone in the entire world make this change, because it had already spread into all the countries of the world. How could they gather them and change them?

Nahed: And now we come to the scientific confirmation. There is an established scientific fact testifying to the veracity of the Holy Bible, which is the testimony of archeology. Could you please clarify that to the honorable viewers? The scientific and archeological testimony.

Fr. Zakaria: Of course, certainly. Archeology is a science that cannot lie. Can it? We have in archeology, manuscripts of the Holy Bible, ancient ones. Well kept to this day. And whoever wants to make sure they exist, they can go to the places I will speak about, and have a look at the original manuscript. **Whoever wants.** Yes, whoever wants. The Vatican codices, which is now in the Vatican, dates back to 250 years before Islam. It's a well kept manuscript, 250 years before Islam. If you compare it today you find it exactly the same as the one we have, and it's in the Vatican, in Rome. Another codex called the Sinaiticus, attributed to Sinai, was discovered in St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai. It dates back also, to 200 years before Islam and it is now in the British Museum, in London. The codex Alexandrinus, the Alexandrian one, dates back to 200 years before Islam also. And it is also in the British Museum. I have seen all these manuscripts with my own eyes. More recent than that, and more powerful too, are the Dead Sea scrolls, the Dead Sea scrolls. I will not talk about them, but I will cite an Islamic author, who talked about it. His name is Mr. Abbass Mahmoud El Akkad. I don't think he needs any introduction. He wrote in the 'Hilal' book, in the December issue in 1959, the following: The treasures of the Qumran valley under the title "The Treasure of the Qumran Valley": "These archeological scrolls have been discovered in a cave in Qumran valley, in the East of

Jordan, scrolls dating back to 2000 years ago.” 2000 years, dating from 1959, alright? Namely, more than six centuries prior to Islam, and it appeared after the preparation of the discovered scrolls that the most important thing they contain, was a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah, and several of the other Holy Books. And that, now pay attention to the report of ... what's his name? Abbass Mahmoud El Akkad. There exists no difference or alteration between them, and the books existing in our hands now.” That's Abbass Mahmoud El Akkad, who also wrote the “Genius of Mohamed”, and “The Genius of Christ”. He testified. So here is the testimony of what? Of Archeology.

Nahed: Excuse me, because our time has run out. We thank you Reverend Father, for these clarifications, and for providing us with the evidence not only from our side, but evidence that leaves no room for doubt concerning the veracity of the Bible. We thank you and look forward to many more interviews. My dear viewers, we thank you for being good listeners. I repeat once again, if you want a Bible or any religious books, please mail us and we will send them to your address. We thank you, till we meet again.