50774 - He is Debating with a Christian and is Asking: Does God Have a Spirit?

the question

I am debating with a Christian and he said to me that God has a spirit. My question is: does Allaah have a spirit (a spirit like the spirit of man, angels and all other creatures). Is the spirit something that is created or what?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

No one has the right to describe Allaah except in the way in which He has described Himself or His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has described Him, because no one knows more about Allaah than Allaah, and no created being has more knowledge of his Creator than the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say, Do you know better or does Allaah?”

[al-Baqarah 2:140]

“And follow not (O man, i.e., say not, or do not, or witness not) that of which you have no knowledge. Verily, the hearing, and the sight, and the heart of each of those ones will be questioned (by Allaah)”

[al-Isra’ 17:36]

The spirit or soul is not one of the attributes of Allaah, rather it is one of the things that have been created by Allaah. It is mentioned in conjunction with Allaah in some texts by way of honouring, for Allaah is its Creator and Sovereign, He takes it (in death) whenever He wills and He sends it whenever He wills.

What we say about the spirit is the same as what we say about the “House of Allaah”, the “she-camel of Allaah”, the “slaves of Allaah” and the “Messenger of Allaah”. All of these created things are mentioned in conjunction with Allaah by way of honouring.

Among the texts in which the spirit is mentioned in conjunction with Allaah is the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“Then He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him the soul [lit. “His soul”] (created by Allaah for that person)”

[al-Sajdah 32:9]

This is speaking of Adam (peace be upon him).

Allaah also says concerning Adam (interpretation of the meaning):

“So, when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him (Adam) the soul which I created for him [lit. “My soul”], then fall (you) down prostrating yourselves unto him”

[al-Hijr 15:29]

And Allaah says:

“She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our Ruh [angel Jibreel (Gabriel)], and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects.

18. She said: ‘Verily, I seek refuge with the Most Gracious (Allaah) from you, if you do fear Allaah.’

19. (The angel) said: ‘I am only a messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son.’”

[Maryam 19:17-19]

Here the word “rooh” (spirit) refers to the slave and Messenger of Allaah Jibreel, whom He sent to Maryam. Allaah mentions him here in conjunction with Himself in the phrase roohuna (Our rooh or

spirit) by way of honouring him. Here He is mentioning a created being in conjunction with his Creator.

In the lengthy hadeeth about intercession it says: “Then Moosa will come and will say: ‘I am not able for it; rather go to ‘Eesa for he is the spirit of (i.e., created by) Allaah and a Word from Him.’” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 7510; Muslim, 193.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: Simply mentioning something in conjunction with Allaah does not mean that that thing is a Divine attribute, rather specific created things may be mentioned in conjunction with Allaah and their attributes are not divine attributes, according to scholarly consensus – as in the phrases, “the House of Allaah”, the “she-camel of Allaah”, the “slaves of Allaah”. The same also applies to the phrase “the spirit (rooh) of Allaah” according to the earliest generations of the Muslims and their imams and their common folk. But if something that is one of His attributes and is not an attribute shared by anyone else is mentioned in conjunction with Him, such as the Speech of Allaah, the Knowledge of Allaah, the Hand of Allaah, and so on, then this is one of His attributes.

End quote from al-Jawaab al-Saheeh, 4/414.

This principle was mentioned by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah in several places. The point is that things which are mentioned in conjunction with Allaah are of two types:

1 – Entities which exist separately. These are mentioned in conjunction with Allaah by way of honouring, such as the House of Allaah and the she-camel of Allaah, and also the spirit (rooh) of Allaah, which is not a divine attribute, rather it is something that exists separately. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, according to the lengthy hadeeth of al-Bara’ ibn ‘Aazib which describes how man dies and his soul or spirit (rooh) comes out: “It comes out flowing like a drop of water from the mouth of a vessel… and he (the Angel of Death) takes it, and when he takes it they (the angels) do not leave it in his hand for an instant but they take it and put it in that shroud with that perfume… and there comes out from it a smell like the finest fragrance of musk on the face of the earth, and they ascend with it…”

See the report of this hadeeth in Ahkaam al-Janaa'iz ib by al-Albaani, p. 198

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "When the soul (rooh) is taken, the eyes follow it." Narrated by Muslim, 920. In other words, when the soul is taken the eyes follow it, watching to see where it goes. All of this indicates that the soul is something that exists separately.

2 – Attributes that do not exist separately, rather they need an entity to belong to, such as knowledge, will and power. If it is said, "the Knowledge of Allaah", the "Will of Allaah" and so on, this is mentioning the attribute in conjunction with the One to Whom it belongs.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in his book al-Rooh:

… Does the rooh exist from eternity or is it something that is created?

Then he said: This is an issue which some scholars got wrong and many groups of the sons of Adam went astray concerning it, but Allaah has guided the followers of His Messenger to the clear truth concerning it. The Messengers (blessings and peace be upon them) are unanimously agreed that the soul is created and taught and trained. This is a basic belief in the religion of the Messengers (blessings and peace be upon them), just as it is a basic belief in their religion that the universe is created, and that physical bodies will be resurrected, and that Allaah alone is the Creator and everything besides Him is created.

Then he quoted al-Haafiz Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi as saying: There is no dispute among the Muslims concerning the fact that the souls (arwaah) that are in Adam and his sons and 'Eesa and other sons of Adam are all created by Allaah, who created them and fashioned them and made them, then He mentioned them in conjunction with Himself as He mentioned all His creation in conjunction with Himself, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth"

[al-Jaathiyah 45:13]

End quote from al-Rooh, p. 144

Some people may be confused about what Allaah says about ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) in the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“The Messiah ‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was (no more than) a Messenger of Allaah and His Word, (“Be!” — and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a spirit (Rooh) created by Him [lit. from Him]”

[al-Nisa’ 4:171]

They think, as the Christians do, that the word min (lit. from) implies being part of Him and that the Rooh (spirit) is a part of Allaah. In fact the word min here implies that this Spirit comes from Allaah, its starting point and origin is with Allaah, because He is its Creator and Controller.

Ibn Katheer (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The words in the verse and hadeeth, “a Spirit (Rooh) from Him” are like the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“And has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; it is all as a favour and kindness from Him”

[al-Jaathiyah 45:13]

“From Him” means that it is created by Him and comes from Him, not from Him in the sense of being part of Him, as the Christians say. Rather it is referring to the starting point of that soul, as in the first verse quoted. Mujaahid said that the phrase “And a Spirit from Him” means a Messenger from Him. Others said that it means love from Him, but the former is more correct, which is that he is a created being from a created soul, and the soul is mentioned in conjunction with Allaah by way of honouring, just as the she-camel and the House are mentioned in conjunction with Allaah in other verses (interpretation of the meaning):

“This she-camel of Allaah is a sign unto you”

[al-A’raaf 7:73]

“and sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it”

[al-Hajj 22:26]

And it says in the saheeh hadeeth: “Enter upon my Lord in His House”; it is mentioned in conjunction with Allaah by way of honouring. All of this is of the same type and comes under one heading.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 1/784

Al-Aloosi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: It is narrated that a skilled Christian doctor of al-Rasheed debated with ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Waaqidi al-Marwazi one day and said to him: “In your Book there is something which indicates that ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) is part of Allaah,” and he recited this verse to him (interpretation of the meaning):

“The Messiah ‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was (no more than) a Messenger of Allaah and His Word, (“Be!” — and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a spirit (Rooh) created by Him [lit. from Him]”

[al-Nisa’ 4:171]

Al-Waaqidi recited the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“And has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; it is all as a favour and kindness from Him”

[al-Jaathiyah 45:13]

and said: Then that means that all things must also be a part of Him, exalted and glorified be He. The Christian ceased his arguments and became Muslim, and al-Rasheed rejoiced greatly.

And he said (may Allaah have mercy on him): The Christians have no proof for their claim to be

honouring ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) with regard to the Spirit being mentioned in conjunction with God, because this is also mentioned with regard to things other than him. In the Gospel of Luke it says that Jesus said to his disciples:

“…how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him”

Luke 11:13 (NIV)

In the Gospel of Matthew it says that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit when he was in his mother’s womb.

In the Old Testament it says that God said to Moses:

“Bring me seventy of Israel's elders … I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them.”

Numbers 11:16-17 (NIV)

It also says concerning Joseph:

“So Pharaoh asked them, ‘Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?’”

Genesis 41:38 (NIV)

It also says in the Old Testament that the spirit of God descended upon Daniel… and there are other such verses.

End quote from Rooh al-Ma’aani, 6/25.

It says in the Gospel of Luke:

“and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”

Luke 1:41 (NIV)

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting

for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ [Messiah].

Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts”

Luke 2:25-27 (NIV)

This clearly shows that the Spirit is an angel who brings revelation, and that ‘Eesa (peace be upon him), the “Lord’s Christ (i.e., Messiah)” is a servant of God. God is the One Who anointed him and made him the Christ or Messiah.

And Allaah knows best.