The Person of the Lord Jesus (Isa) in the Gospels, the Quran and the Traditions

Sharing the amazing events of the Christmas Story

The purpose of this article is to help you share the amazing events of the Christmas Story in a meaningful way with friends and neighbours. I have compared the person of the Lord Jesus in the Quran and in commentaries on the Quran with the Biblical record and especially with the Gospel record.

Major issues that arise in discussions

- Many Quranic verses are highly critical of the concept of the Trinity. Muslims accuse us of being polytheists both currently and in origin. They object that the Bible doesn't prophesy the coming of the Prophet Muhammad and so the New Testament has been corrupted. An example: the Quran denies that the Lord Jesus was crucified – another corruption.
- Some distinctive characteristics of the Lord Jesus and some miracles done by Him are recorded in the Quran.
- There are some arguments against the Deity of the Lord Jesus in the Quran.
- Some Biblical statements about the Deity of the Lord Jesus and the person of the Holy Spirit cause problems.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I hope this article will enable you to explain why to us, believers in the Lord Jesus, Christmas is such a time of rejoicing. You need to explain why we are so sad the typical Western Christmas has largely been hijacked from its Biblical roots to boost the commercial profits of many (Santa Claus/Father Christmas/Christmas trees/new clothes/toys etc.). Many Western Christmas traditions come from pagan European customs over 1000 years old.

The Person of the Lord Jesus in the Quran/Islam – the first difficulty

The Lord Jesus is mentioned in 93 verses in the Quran. In addition there is the vast literature of Muslim theologians who have commented on the Quran over the centuries. These are in collections called the Hadith. The best-known is the Sahih Al-Bukari. It is from these verses/comments Muslim thinking finds its source whenever the Lord Jesus comes under discussion. Whenever Muslim theologians and educated Muslims have looked at the Bible and other Christian writings for interpretation and understanding they tend to accept what agrees with Muslim theology, but reject the idea of seeking a way to reconcile the texts of the Gospel and the New Testament as a whole with the Quran due to the differences in total beliefs and traditional stories set out in the Bible and in the Quran/Hadith. To explain the differences they allege the New Testament is corrupted whenever it contradicts the Quran.

I will try and show Quranic thought in its gradual development when it opposes Biblical truth. For example, it is clear there is a distinction of thought in these truths between the early Meccan Suras where often the ayats are more sympathetic to the Biblical record and more favourable to the Lord Jesus and His followers including clergyman and monks. But by the end of Muhammad**'s** life in Medina, the verses had become harsh and hostile to Biblical truth entirely rejecting the Deity of the Lord Jesus.

No doubt part of the reason was purely doctrinal. Muhammad saw in what he understood of the teaching of the Trinity a contradiction to belief in the absolute unity of God that Islam proclaims and on which its message is based. So there are a number of ayats in the Quran severely criticising the Trinity. We Christians are accused of polytheism – associating partners with God and exaggerating false beliefs in our understanding and experience of Biblical truth.

Muhammad was probably disturbed by heretical Christians scattered in the Arabian Peninsula. The Byzantine Empire had adopted Greek Orthodoxy as the official religion of the Empire. In the western part of the former Roman Empire Christians had to become Catholics. The Church of the East in Persian-held areas was tolerated under the Zoroastrian Sassanids, but this church (often called Nestorian) was persecuted in the part of the Near East that was the Byzantine Empire. Uniformity of belief was considered essential for political control.

This led to heretical forms of Christianity that were forced out of the Byzantine Empire moving down to Arabia. Many of these "sects" had strange theologies including that Jesus was a god and Mary a goddess. There were many other distortions. Early Muslims came into contact with these heretical Christians.

Sadly, other than Greek and Latin, there was little Bible translation. So many objections made by Muhammad and early Muslim leaders (Khalifs) were a rejection of what we would also see as non-Biblical theology and tradition. The people of Arabia were mostly isolated from the more advanced cultures of the Mediterranean or Persia and the rest of Asia. Most people were illiterate and depended on aural transmission of knowledge.

So it is possible that there were "Christians" in Arabia who thought God consisted of his partner Mary and her son Isa. But no Biblical Christian has ever stated such an idea and no Christian denomination has ever published such a belief. Yet over centuries Muslims have made this a great issue that has never been abandoned in spite of all the explanations given by Biblical believers over many centuries.

A second difficulty

Another deep-seated problem derives from the Quran, *"And Isa* (Jesus), *son of Mary said, 'O children of Israel, I am the emissary/apostle of Allah to you confirming the truth of the Torah before me and heralding a messenger who will come after me whose name is Ahmed – the most praised one. Yet when he came to them with proofs, they said this is obvious sorcery.' "* (Sura 61:6)

Abu Jarfar al Taberi quoting from Mauwira bin Saleha and Sahli bin Suez and others said, "I heard the emissary of Allah (Muhammad) say, 'With God I am foreordained to be the seal of the prophets. Really Adam is mixed with the earth. I will inform you first that my father Abraham prayed and Isa also proclaimed about me and there was a vision that my mother saw. Likewise the mothers of the prophets saw that my mother bore me, a great light issued from her – enough to light the palaces of Damascus."

Muslims take this statement literally! The Gospels are devoid of any prophecy concerning one like Muhammad or any statement that the Lord Jesus spoke of such person. In talking to Muslims it is clear that when the Lord Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come (Jn. 14:15-16, 26) they think this is a prophecy concerning Muhammad. But reading the actual words of the verses to them convinces them that it cannot be so. Phrases like 'will be in you' make it clear that the Holy Spirit is not a man like Muhammad. As a result they say the Injil is corrupted.

A third difficulty

This is our belief in the Gospel account of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and His Crucifixion as fundamental to Christianity. The Quran is said to deny the Crucifixion. They quote Sura 4:157,
" … and on account of their saying, 'We killed the Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of God'. Whereas they did not kill him, they did not crucify him, although it was made to seem thus to them. As for those who differ on this, they are certainly in doubt about it only following conjecture; but they surely did not kill him; rather God raised him up to the divine presence."

A fourth difficulty

We believers in the Lord Jesus believe that he is the Son of God. The Quran condemns this belief in several places. We will go back to this difficulty later.

Some of the distinctive characteristics of the Lord Jesus (Isa) in the Quran and the Bible

The miraculous conception of the Lord Jesus

Look up Suras 19:20-21; 21:91; 3:47 for the relevant passages. We read in Sura 66:12, *"And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity, and we breathed into* (her body) *of our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of his revelations and was one of the devout servants."*

See also Sura 21:91, *"Then there was the one who kept her virginity and we breathed of our spirit into her and we made her and her son a sign for the peoples."*

Al Razi Fakhr al-Din (died 1209) was a Quranic exegete. His commentary – Mafatih al-ghayb – (the keys of the unseen) is still often cited. Al Razi said, "We breathed therein of our spirit (meaning the Lord Jesus) as he was in Mary's womb." There are disagreements over who breathed, but many experts say it was God as implied in the above quotation. Other Muslim scholars have said it was the angel Gabriel.

There is disagreement by Muslim scholars over the meaning of "breathing". Wahab, the Hanbali scholar, said it was the angel Gabriel who breathed into Mary's breast and it reached her womb. Another version is that Gabriel breathed on the hem of her garment and she conceived.

It was also said in the traditions that Gabriel took hold of Mary's sleeve and breathed into her side and it entered into her breast and she conceived. Then Mary's sister, the wife of Zechariah, came to visit and help Mary and while she was helping her she knew Mary was pregnant and Mary mentioned her state to her. The wife of Zechariah said, "I find a child in my womb who worships that which is in yours" – thus the statement, 'believing in the word of Allah'

Another alternative tradition is that the breathing was in her mouth and reached her womb and immediately she conceived. Ibn Abbas said, "Gabriel opened her (Mary) garments with his fingers and breathed inside. The saying (in the Quran) "whose body was chase" means she kept herself chased and maintained her virtue. "And we breathed therein with our spirit" means that the breathing was into the opening of her garment. It is also said, "We, that is Allah, created whatever appeared in the womb of Mary".

Muqatir explaining the words, "She believed in the words of her Lord" said they mean she believed in Al Isa. Al Hassan while reading the Quran substituted this belief by using the phrase "word of her Lord". This is why Isa is called "the word of Allah" in a number of places in the Quran – i.e. Suras 3:45; 4:171.

The miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus

The Quran mentions a conversation between the Virgin Mary and the angel of the Lord when he came to announce Christ's birth saying, *" 'I am a messenger of your Lord that I may bestow on you a faultless (sinless) boy.' She said, 'How can I have a boy when no mortal has touched me, neither have I been unchaste?' The angel said, 'So it will be, your Lord says it is easy for me and we will make him a revelation to mankind and a mercy from us. It is a thing ordained'."* (Sura 19:19-20. See also 21:91 and 3:47.)

Al-Sayyid Ahmad Badawi (died 1276), a Sufi leader popular in Egypt, commented on the miraculous birth of Jesus saying that, "His birth set him apart from all humans and messengers because he was born without any human embrace or relationships."

Al-Razi comments, "Concerning the words, 'I bestow on thee a faultless boy', 'faultless' could mean: he was without sin; he grew in integrity as it is said that he who has no sin is chase and in the growing plant there is purity; he was above reproach and pure.,"

The words, "We make him a revelation for mankind" mean we make his birth a sign to mankind as he was born without a father and "a mercy from us" means that mankind will be blessed by the

manifestation of these signs. They will be overwhelming indicators of his truthfulness and make the acceptance of his word more likely.

Al Jafer Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (died 923) was an early Muslim historian and a collector of Hadith. He wrote a substantial commentary on the Quran where he explained "a faultless/sinless boy" – Isa was "a youth pure and chaste, outstanding and excellent."

The Lord Jesus (Isa) was blessed by God.

We read in Sura 19:30-31, *"He* (Isa) *said, 'I am indeed the servant of God who has given me Scripture and made me a prophet and made me blessed wherever I am'."*

Al Taberi explained, " 'Made me blessed wherever I am' means he has made me a teacher of good."

Sulyman bin abdul al-Jabber said, "I heard Ibn al-Rait, a follower of the Beni Muksum, say, 'a scholar encountered a scholar more learned than himself and after greeting him said, 'What should be manifested by my knowledge?' And he said, 'The doing of good and refraining from that which is forbidden. This is the religion of Allah which he sent to his prophets to mankind.' Scholars have agreed that the saying, "he has made me" means that Isa (the Lord Jesus) was blessed whereever I be."

The Lord Jesus (Isa) was supported by the Holy Spirit.

Sura 2:253 says, " … and we gave the proofs to Jesus, son of Mary and we fortified him with the Holy Spirit." Ibn Abbas said, "The Holy Spirit is the name by which Isa was raising the dead." Abu Muslim said, "The Holy Spirit by whom he was supported was probably the Pure Spirit which Allah breathed into him (Isa) by which he distinguished him from those he had created in a normal manner from man and woman."

Sura 4:171 says, *"O people of the book, commit no excesses in your religion nor say of Allah nothing but the truth. The Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary, was a messenger of Allah and his word which he bestowed on Mary and a spirit proceeding from him. So believe in Allah and his messengers."*

The substance of these verses is that Allah gave Isa in his person a spirit and this spirit supported him in his personality. But Muslim scholars differ in their explanation of the Holy Spirit by whom the Lord Jesus was supported. Ibn Ons said, "He was the spirit that was breathed into the Messiah. Allah related him to himself, honouring him as Messiah and setting him apart … and the saying, 'We breathed in him (Isa) our spirit is indicative of this'." Al-Sadi Anquad said, "The Holy Spirit is Gabriel and his support of Isa is by being his companion and friend, helping and accompanying him wherever he went until he was taken up into heaven." Ibn Jubail said, "The Spirit of the Holy is the supreme name for Allah and by it Isa was raised from the dead."

Abd al-Rassaq Kashani (died 1329) was a medieval Sufi leader concerned about the necessity of an individual's responsibility. He said, "Allah proposed to cleanse the body of Isa from inherent impurities and he was an incarnate spirit in an ideal and spiritual body. He, Allah, cleansed his spirit and purified him from being influenced by natural instincts and environmental characteristics so he (Isa) could be supported by the Holy Spirit in whose form he was."

Ibn Attar (died 1309) was a Sufi leader. He said, "The most excellent plants are those whose fruits are like Isa – the Spirit of God. Ibn Abbas said, "As it was the Spirit which was breathed into him (Isa) and the Holy One is Allah, so he is the Spirit of Allah."

The Ascension of Isa at the time of His death

Sura 3:55 says that Allah said, *"O Isa, I will take you to myself and I will elevate you to myself."*
Al Fasi al Razi said, "There are many interpretations of this verse".

- The meaning of "I will cause you to ascend" is that Allah took him from the place of dishonour and the ascension confirmed that Isa would be brought to a place of honour and exultation. Similar to this is the quotation, "I go to my Lord." This is taken from the Injil.

- The interpretation of "causing you to ascend unto me" means that Allah was raising him to a place where no one could judge him. For on the earth men passed various kinds of judgement on one another, but in heaven there is no true or omniscient judge except Allah.

The infallibility of the Lord Jesus in His message and in His way of life

Some people imagine that the infallibility of the message is definitely linked with the infallibility of the conduct of the messenger, but there are verses in the Quran that contradict this idea. We read many verses that the prophets' lives were not without blame either before or after their message. But in the life of the Lord Jesus in the Quran, he was infallible and so was his message. The angel witnesses to this when he says to his mother, *"I am the messenger of your Lord and I bestow on you a faultless child."* (Sura 19:17, 19)

Al-Baidawi said in his comments on the word faultless/sinless that Isa was merely advancing intellectually year by year.

The signs/miracles that the Lord Jesus did proved uniqueness of His message.

The view of Muslim commentators is that His message was made unique because of the support of the Holy Spirit and it was also unique in the multiplicity and character of the signs attending Him which exceeded those given to any other prophet.

The Quran says, *"We gave Isa, the son of Mary, clear proofs."* (Sura 2:253) The proofs were the miracles. Al-Baidawi said, "Allah bestowed on him a special assignment and made his miracles the reason for his preferment above other messengers. There were clear signs and great wonders unequalled by any other." See also Suras 2:87 and 3:49.

The omniscience of the Lord Jesus

The Quran says, *"When the son of Mary was quoted as an example your people alienated themselves from him. Surely he is a sign for the hour – that is the Day of Judgement."* (Sura 43:61) *"But as for him, he is a sign of the end time, so do not doubt it and follow me; this is the straight path."*

"And when the Son of Mary is held up as an example, behold your people oppose …." (Sura 43:57)

Al Jalalan said in his explanation of the phrase "a sign for the hour" He (the Lord Jesus) knew when the Day of Judgement would come. "When we realise that people generally recognise that Allah is separate from his creation in that he <u>alone</u> knows the times, we understand that the Quran assigns a unique place to the Messiah."

Isa is the mediator near to Allah – the intercessor for us.

In the Quran there is an ayat describing one of the privileges of the Lord Jesus*, "The angel said, 'O Mary, God gives you good news of a word from God, named the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, honoured in the world and in the hereafter and one of those brought near unto Allah'."* (Sura 3:45)

Explaining this, Al Jalalan said, "Outstanding in this world either by the ministry of prophecy and in the hereafter by intercession and position and being one of those brought near to Allah."

Al-Tabari quoting Ibn Hameed and Salama and Ibn Isak said, "Outstanding in the world means possessing dignity and living close to Allah in the world. The words 'in the hereafter and among those brought near' means that he (Isa) is one of those Allah brings near to himself on the day of resurrection and who will dwell close to him."

Al-Razi said concerning Isa. "He was outstanding in the world because he obeyed the call of Allah and raised the dead, healed the blind and the lepers and will be outstanding in the hereafter, for Allah will make him an intercessor for his people."

However the saying: "one brought near" has various viewpoints:

- Allah has made the position of being near to him a great privilege for the angels and would admit Isa to their rank and dignity.
- Isa would be associated with the angels.

- Not everyone who has been outstanding in this life will be close to Allah in the hereafter for those in Paradise are a variety of ranks and degrees.

The miracles of the Lord Jesus in the Quran and those quoted by Muslim scholars as fact – 5 of them

1. **His power to create**

   In the Quran there is this statement, *"Allah says, 'O Isa, son of Mary, remember my favour to you and how I taught you with Scripture and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel and how you shaped out of clay the likeness of a bird and did blow into it and it was a bird by my permission'."* (Sura 5:110)

   Ibn Arabi said in his interpretation of this ayat, "Allah bestowed on Isa a spirit and added the power to bring life into what he made of clay. To none other than Isa has Allah given this power to give life."

2. **He spoke at His birth**

   When Mary gave birth to her son, her people blamed her for she had borne her son out of wedlock. Then she pointed to Isa and they said, "How can we talk to him, a baby in a cradle?" He said, *"I am indeed the servant of God who has given me Scriptures and made me a prophet."* (Sura 19:28-29)

   It has been said by trustworthy scholars that when Mary's people went too far in reproaching her, she was silent and pointed to her baby son as if to say to them he will answer you. As Sadi said, "When she pointed to him they were very angry and said, 'Her mockery of us is worse than her adultery'."

   Another story relates that Isa was feeding at his mother's breast and when he heard the complaints against Mary. He stopped feeding, turned his face to the people and resting on his left hand pointed with his finger and spoke to them.

   There is yet another story told by Al Razi saying that Zechariah came to Mary during this debate among the Jews concerning her and said to Isa, "Speak for yourself, if you have been commanded so to do. And Isa said, 'I am the servant of Allah. He has given me wisdom and made me a prophet'."

3. **Isa raised the dead and healed the blind and the lepers**

   The Quran states the words of Isa, *"I heal him who is born blind and heal the leper and raise the dead by permission of Allah."* (Sura 3:49)

   It is known that the word "blind" in this quotation means a person born in that condition. It was also known that leprosy was an incurable disease. Both are beyond the knowledge of man to cure both in those days and even in our day.

   Al Musanna, quoting Ibn Isak and Hafiz Ibn Omar, mentions that the Quran told Isa to repeat this verse to the Jews by way of proving to them that he was a prophet since blindness and leprosy have no cure.

   Concerning the phrase, "I raise the dead", Wahib ibn Menabi related that Isa was playing with some boys and an older boy sprang on one boy striking him with his foot and killing him. He then threw the dead boy into the arms of Isa. People were told of this and accused Isa and seized him and took him to a judge and said, "This boy has killed another boy". The judge questioned Isa and Isa replied, "I do not know the one who killed him, neither am I one of his friends." Then they wanted to strike Isa. So he said to them, "Bring the boy to me". They asked him why. He replied, "I will ask who killed him." They asked, "How can he speak to you when he is dead?" Then they took him to the dead boy and Isa prayed for him and Allah restored him to life.

   From Wahib comes another story. A great number of sick people – possibly ~ 50,000 – once crowded around Isa. Those who were able to do so reached out to him, but for those who could not do so, Jesus walked among them and cured them by prayer.

Another story from Kalabi says that Jesus used to raise the dead by the cry, 'O thou who art alive, O Everlasting One'. He raised Lazarus, his friend, and he called Shem, the son of Noah, from his grave and he came forth alive. Isa passed by the dead son of an old woman and invoked Allah and the dead son descended from the bier and returned to his family and continued his normal life.

4. **Isa had knowledge of things hidden and invisible.**

   The Quran quotes Isa as saying, *"I announce to you what you eat and what you store up in your houses".* (Sura 3:49) Islamic scholars see two factors in this, firstly that from the beginning Isa could discern hidden matters. As-Sadi says, "While he was playing with children, he told them what their mothers and fathers did. He told one boy, 'Your mother has hidden something for you'. So the boy went home and cried until he received it. Then people said to the children, 'Don't play with this magician' and they collected them into a home. Isa came to look for them and the people said to him, 'They are not in the house'. So Isa asked, 'Who is in this house?' They replied, 'Pigs'. Isa said, 'Thus they will be, for they are pigs'."

   There is also the discernment of hidden matters that is miraculous. Astrologers who tell the future and reveal hidden matters can only do this by asking questions of the enquirer. They also confess that they often make mistakes. But accurate knowledge of the unknown without recourse to external aids or previous knowledge can't be without divine inspiration.

5. **Isa brought a table spread with food from heaven.**

   *"The apostle said, 'Isa, son of Mary, can your Lord send us down a feast from heaven?' He said, 'Be wary of God if you are believers.' They said, 'We want to partake thereof so our hearts may be satisfied and we be may know you have told us the truth and we may be witnesses to it.' Isa, son of Mary, said, 'O Allah, our Lord, send **down** a feast from heaven to be a festival for us for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from you and provide for us as you are the best of providers'."* (Sura 5:112-114)

   The Muslim religious leaders, the Imams, have disagreed in describing the descent of the table, how it looked and what was on it. Qatarda quoting from Jabbir, Fawzi ibn Amr and Muhammad says, "The table was sent down spread with bread and meat. The disciples had asked Isa for food they could eat and which would not cease. He said to them, 'I will do this for you and it will remain if you do not hide it or cheat. If you do, you will be punished.' But before the day had passed they cheated and ate the food so the table was taken up and they were transformed into monkeys and pigs."

   Ibn Abbas said, "Isa said to the children of Israel, 'Fast for 30 days and then ask Allah what you will and he will give it.' They fasted 30 days and when they had finished they said. 'O Isa, we have fasted and we are hungry, call upon Allah to send down a table of food from heaven.' Isa put on a coarse woollen garment, covered himself with ashes and called upon Allah. Angels came with a table on which there were seven loaves and seven huge fish. This was placed among them and there was sufficient for all."

In Arabia at this time there were few people who could read and write. The New Testament hadn't yet been translated into Arabic. Also the majority of Christians living in Arabia were heretical Christians who fled persecution from the Orthodox Church of the Roman Empire in the East.

Clearly most of these stories are exaggerations of stories in the Gospel. Distortion and exaggeration are common in a party game in the UK called 'Chinese Whispers' where a large number of people sit in a circle. One starts a short story by whispering it into his neighbour's ear. That neighbour whispers to his/her neighbour until it finally gets back to the original storyteller. He/she then tells the original story followed by the distorted story heard after it had gone round the circle. Something like this clearly happened in these stories! At the root of them you can discern some Biblical origin, but with a great deal of distortion! Try and discern which were the original Gospel stories and read the true version explaining the Biblical principles behind it.

The Sonship of the Lord Jesus in the Quran

Anyone who considers the person of Jesus as revealed in the Quran discovers that the subject of His Sonship raises considerable controversy. Muslims have at least five objections concerning this.

Objection 1: it is blasphemy!

The Quran states that it is not fitting to the majesty of Allah that he should take to himself a son. When he decrees a thing, he only speaks in order for it to be. Sura 19:34-35 says, *"That was Jesus, Son of Mary, a word of truth about which they doubt. Having a son is not attributable to Allah who is beyond that and when having determined something merely says to it. 'Be' and it is."*

There are two concepts of sonship in Arabic – "walad" a son born by natural birth and conceived by a man and a woman. The second word "ibn" implies a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another. For example, bedouin are sometimes called 'sons of the desert'. So it can also imply 'of the spirit', but not physical or material.

Muslims also quote Sura 19:88-94, *"And yet they say, 'The Benevolent One has begotten a son'. You have certainly come up with a terrible thing! The skies are nearly rent asunder from it, the earth nearly splits and the mountains nearly crumble that they should assign a son to the Benevolent One, for it is not appropriate for the Benevolent One to beget a son. It is only as a servant that every being in the heavens and on the earth without exception comes to the Benevolent One.'"*

Al Fahir al Razi says in his commentary, "I know that Allah, when he replied to the idolaters, asserted to those who claim that God had a son, 'the Jews said that our Messiah will be the Son of God and the Christians said that Christ was the Son of God and the (pagan) Arabs said the angels were the daughters of God and all of them are included in the ayat 'they say that the Beneficent has taken and to himself a son'. The words "a terrible thing" mean it was a shocking denial of the truth. Thus the tearing of the heavens and the splitting of the earth and the collapse of the mountains mean that the wrath of Allah is on him who says, 'the Benevolent has taken to himself a son'."

Objection 2: it is uniting part of creation with the Creator

Sura 43:15-17 says, *"Yet they concede to some of God's slaves partnership with God; indeed the human being is an open infidel! Does God take daughters from what God creates and favour you with sons? When one of you is told of the good news of the birth of those you liken to the Benevolent One, his face darkens and he is filled with anger."*

This raises the issue: What is the relationship between the Creator and the created and what part of creation can be joined to the Creator? Both Christians and Muslims believe this is both physically and mentally impossible. (But it was common in Greek mythology.) Also Muslims add a statement that there is none in the heavens and on the earth but comes unto God as a slave and it is not possible for a slave to become a God. So Muslims believe in the impossibility of a created being becoming the creator of heaven and earth.

As Christians, we confirm that it isn't possible to join anything to God from that which He has created. But we believe this can't be applied to the relationship between God the Father and God the Son since the Son is of the same essence with the Father. The Quran itself says the Lord Jesus is the Word of God and the Spirit from Him. So the uniting part of God's creation has nothing to do with the Sonship of the Lord Jesus.

Objection 3: a son can only be born from male and female human beings

Most Muslims have a problem understanding the title 'the Son of God' given to the Lord Jesus, since the Quran states emphatically, *"How can the Creator of the heavens and the earth have a son without having a consort. The Creator produced all things and knows everything. That is God your Lord, there is no other deity but the Creator of all things. So worship God who is in charge of all things."* (Sura 6: 101-102)

Al Baidawi comments on this passage, "It is only rational to say a child is born male or female of the same kind and nature and Allah is far above being homogenous". In Islam it is inconceivable that

God could have a son. He does not have a consort and it is impossible there could be one. This is foundational to their objection to the Lord Jesus being the Son of God, for 'sonship' of a Father God is absolutely impossible in the concept of the Quran. They only think in terms of a physical sexual union.

Many Muslim scholars support this position. One wrote, "A child must be born from male and female and it cannot be that Allah has a consort and a child. It is he who has created all things and there is nothing other than that which Allah created. So how could he have a son?" Some scholars resort to a verse given by heretical Christians who were originally heathen and after joining a church introduced heresy by claiming that the Virgin Mary was a goddess. It is thought that they previously worshipped Venus and now ascribed to Mary all the attributes of Venus. Several Islamic books refer to this. They think Christians believe Allah consorted with 'Venus/Mary' and had a son. This idea is obviously rejected by the Quran and so by all Muslims and all Christian believers. No believer thinks this and the vast majority have never heard of it. It is an insult directed against the holiness of God who is free from all bodily characteristics.

Anyone who considers Christian beliefs concerning the Sonship of the Lord Jesus will see they are based on the text of the four Gospels. They never look on the Lord Jesus as the 'Son' of God in a physical sense. Rather that He is the Son of God coming to this earth from the divine presence as the 'Word' who was from the beginning. ***"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."*** (Jn. 1:1-2)

The Apostle Paul points to this truth, ***"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning His Son, who descended from*** (King) ***David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of Holiness by His Resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord."*** (Rom. 1:1-4)

Objection 4: Isa used to eat food

Sura 7:75 says, *"The Messiah, the son of Mary, was only a messenger. Messengers had already passed before him and his mother was a woman of truth. They both had to eat their (daily) food. See how we make the revelations clear to people and see how they are turned away."* In Islamic thinking it is impossible that there was any divinity in Isa. He was a human being who needed to eat food. Such a person cannot be Allah.

Al Razi comments on this verse, "Everyone who has a mother has come from non-existence into being and all such were created. But this is not true of Allah. They were poor and in desperate need of sustenance, but Allah is in need of nothing so how could Isa be Allah? The saying, 'They both ate food' proves their humanity for everyone who eats food is mortal."

Objection 5: the created are incapable of benefiting or harming others

Sura 5:76 says, *"Say, do you worship what has no power to harm or to help you, rather than Allah? Allah is the one who hears and knows all."*

Commentators say this ayat refers to perverted Christian claims and contains a number of arguments:

The Jews constantly opposed Isa and tried to harm him. They couldn't hurt him because his friends and followers loved him, but he wasn't able to bring them any good or worldly gain. If one is unable to harm his enemies or bring worldly benefits, how can the mind accept that he is Allah?

Adding to this, al Fiadawi said, "Isa, even if he possessed special privileges, did so because Allah took 'possession' of him. He did not possess them himself. But we (i.e. Muslims) say that if the Lord Jesus was merely the Isa of the Quran, he couldn't have possessed these powers to benefit his followers or even to harm his enemies."

But for us, as Christians, the Lord Jesus is the Mighty God. ***"For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given and the government shall be*** (or is) ***on His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."***

As believers in the Lord Jesus we thank Him that His message was not to harm people or merely to give people material benefits but rather for salvation. The Quran itself says, *"He came as a mercy to the world".*

Al Fiadawi went on to say, "There is a sect of Christians who say the Jews crucified Him and wounded His side and when He was thirsty and asked for water they poured vinegar into His nostrils. So how could anyone as weak as this be considered Allah? The God of the universe cannot be in need. All others are in need of Him. If Isa had been Allah he wouldn't have been occupied in worship (and prayer) for Allah does not worship anything. It is man who worships Allah. It was generally acknowledged that he, Isa, continued in obedience to Allah and worshipped him and it was understood that he did so because he was in need of obtaining benefits himself and the ability to do harm to others and he who is thus, how can he convey benefits to others and defend them from evil. If then he was like this, he was a man like other men."

The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ in Islam

Some points of objection

Objection 1: The greatest controversy in discussions with Muslim friends probably concerns this topic – our differences and the small amount of common ground we share on this subject. Any belief in the divinity of the Lord Jesus the Messiah is absolutely contradicted by Muslims because of many ayats in the Quran. We have already looked at Suras 5:73 and 4:17. In 4:17 we read*, "Those who say, 'God is the Messiah son of Mary' have blasphemed. Say, 'Then who can keep anything from God if God wants to annihilate the Messiah son of Mary, his mother and everyone on earth?' "*

Al Razi comments that it contains a question: "If none of the Christians say Allah is the Christ, the son of Mary, why did Allah speak like that about them saying it if they do not say it?" His answer was that many who believe in the incarnation say Allah did become incarnate in the body of a designated person or his spirit and if that is so, it isn't improbable that some Christians hold this doctrine. Yet this is very close to what Christians <u>do</u> maintain, because they say that the person of "the Word" had united with the person of Isa. The element of "the Word" is either a being or an attribute. If a being, then the personality of Allah has become incarnate in Isa and is one with him and this is what they say, 'Isa is Allah'. If we say, the element is an expression of an attribute, then it is illogical to believe that a attribute can be transferred from one person to another. Why? According to the Christians, Isa is Allah and it is certain that even if the Christians do not clearly state this doctrine, the result of their ideology is nothing less than that. Allah (his name be praised) remonstrated against the corruption of this belief when he said, 'Who can do anything against Allah if he has willed to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother?'"

In the opinions of commentators these words mean that Isa was the same as everyone else on earth in physical appearance, in nature, physique, character and conditions.

Objection 2: The Quran states, *"Those who say, 'God is the Messiah, son of Mary', have certainly blasphemed for the Messiah said, 'Children of Israel worship God, my Lord and your Lord'. For to whoever associates anyone with God, God has forbidden Paradise. His place is the fire* (hell)*. And there is no saviour for those who do wrong."* (Sura 5:72)

Al Razi comments on this verse, "Allah, when he enquired about some sayings of the Jews, began a statement to the Christians and spoke of a sect that said, 'God became incarnate in Isa and was united in his person'."

Objection 3: Sura 5:73 states, *"Those who say God is one third of the Trinity have certainly blasphemed, for there is no deity but one God. So if they do not stop what they are saying, a painful penalty will strike those of them that blaspheme."*

So often Muslim friends start with this Sura and accuse us of worshipping three gods – Allah, Mary and Isa. Al Razi looks at the beliefs of Christians in the following way, "It is said about the Christians that they claim one essence in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – that these three together are one God even as the sun contains a disc, rays of light and heat. They mean by the

Father the personality, by the Son the Word and by the Spirit the life. They assert the Word, the personality and the life saying, 'The Word is the words of God merged with the body of Isa as water mixes with wine and water with milk. They allege the Father as God and the Son as God and the Holy Spirit as God."

Al Razi concludes his explanation with this addition, "Know that's this is known to be false, just by the instinct of the mind; for three cannot be one and one cannot be three.

Objection 4: Sura 5:116 says, *"And God will say, 'Jesus, son of Mary, did you tell the people 'take to me and my mother as deities rather than God?' He will say, 'Glory to you! It is not for me to say what I have no right to. If I used to say that, you would have known it. You know what is in my essence, while I do not know what is in your essence. For you are the one who knows all hidden secrets'."*

Al Razi finds problems in this saying. The first is linked with the meaning of the statement of Allah, "O Isa, son of Mary, remember my grace upon you." He relates this to the distinction that Isa will have on the day of resurrection – i.e. the future.

The second problem he sees is if Allah, being omniscient, knew that Isa didn't say, 'Take me and my mother for two gods', then it isn't fitting for an omniscient God to ask the question! Why did he address him? If the purpose was to reprimand and rebuke Christians, we would say that no Christian has ever believed the statement that Isa and Mary were two gods besides Allah. So how is it possible to let this statement be made by them since none has ever made it?

The answer Al Razi gives to the first point, "Why did God speak to Isa?" Is that it was stated as a question, in the form of a denial. The answer to the second is that Allah is the creator, however Christians believe the creator of these miracles performed by Isa and Mary was Isa himself and Allah did not create them at all. If this is so, then the Christians have said that the creator of these miracles is Isa and Mary and not Allah. So truly they have asserted that Isa and Mary are two gods beside Allah. Thus Allah is no longer the unique God.

Al Razi agrees that the various stories and statements agree with this interpretation. However commentators on the Quran disagree on the exact time when God asked Isa this question. Al Saida said, "God, when he raised Isa, son of Mary, to himself, asked him, 'did you say to mankind – take me and my mother for two gods?" But another commentator – Qatari – said, "This question has not yet been asked, it will be asked at the resurrection."

Objection 5: Sura 4:171 says, *"O people of the Scriptures do not exaggerate in your religion nor say anything about Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Isa, son of Mary is a messenger of Allah and his word which he conveyed unto Mary and the spirit from him so believe in Allah and his messenger and say not three. Cease, it is better for you. Allah is the only one God."*

Abu Jaffar al Tabari commenting on this verse said, "O people of the gospel, you Christians, do not go beyond the truth in your religion or exaggerate and do not say about Isa what is not true. All you speakers, stop saying that Allah is a third of three. You are speaking lies and upholding polytheism. To decease from stating this would be better for you for there will be sudden punishment for you from Allah for this saying if you continue and do not return to the truth which you have been authorised to defend."

The problem in Islam is that Muslims understand Trinity to mean three gods – Allah, Isa and Mary. But throughout the centuries Christians have proclaimed that before Islam and often after the life of Muhammad the word 'Trinity' has never meant three gods. This is a delusion – a heresy that the Christian church in all forms completely disowns and has continued to condemn for nearly 2000 years. The belief was absorbed by the Arabs in "the days of ignorance" in pre-Islamic Arabia when many strange heretical sects left the Eastern Roman Empire to go into Arabia. Islam has taken this distorted and false view from these heretical sects.

The humanity of Isa in Islam

According to the Quran, Isa is a servant and not a Lord. Isa is quoted in Sura 19:30-34, *"I am indeed the servant of Allah who has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet and blessed me*

wherever I am and has prescribed prayer and charity for me as long as I live and kindness to mother as well and did not make me an arrogant malcontent".

Al Razi's commentary on this ayat says, "In this phrase 'slave of Allah' there are four points to note:

- It does away with the erroneous beliefs of Christians that Isa is a God.
- If Isa was being truthful when he confessed his role as a slave of Allah, then truly he was Allah's slave. If he was lying, then the power he used would not have been divine, but satanic. Both these suppositions would render him not good.
- The pressing need for Isa at that time was to remove the accusation of adultery from his mother Mary. But Isa didn't clearly deny it, but laid emphasis on his status as a slave of Allah so that this would remove any suggestion that he was equal with Allah and that this was more important to him than removing the accusation from his mother.
- The removal of this accusation that he was Allah assists in the removal of the accusation of his mother, because Allah would not choose an adulteress to bear a child for this great and high position.

The commentary continues, "The belief of Christians in the divine nature of Isa is very confusing. They have agreed that God is not in a body nor confined in any way, yet we see an argument that makes this belief void from every direction. If they believe Isa is confined in a body, then we reply that all bodies are created. If they believe Isa is not confined, then the statement that the word merged with humanity as water mixes with wine and fire blends with coal is made empty because this is reasonable except there be a physical element."

The Quranic concept of the person of Isa is based on two truths that natural man can't understand.

The first truth is that Isa, being the son of Mary, was the servant/slave of Allah. We see this in the prophets. We read in Isaiah 52:13, ***"Behold My servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted."*** Again in Isaiah 53:11 we read, ***"Out of the anguish of His soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, My Servant, make many to be righteous …."***

The second truth is that the attribute of a servant is completely compatible with the Quranic statement that Isa is, *'a word bestowed upon Mary and the spirit from him* (Allah)'.

In Islam Isa is second in the likeness of Adam. We read in Sura 3:59, *"Isa was to Allah like Adam was. Allah created him from dust then said, 'be' and he was."*

Ali-Jafar al-Tabriz's book **Jamal-al-byan** reports that Allah said, "O Muhammad tell the Christians at Najran that my creation of Isa without a male progenitor was similar to that of Adam, to whom I said, 'be' and he was – without a progenitor male or female. My creation of Isa from his mother without a male is no greater a miracle than the creation of Adam."

Ibn Abbas said something similar, "A group of people came from Najran to Muhammad among them were As-Sayeed and Al Aquab. They said to Muhammad, 'Why do you speak about our friend?' He said to them, 'Who is he?' They said, 'Isa, you allege he is the servant of Allah.' Muhammad replied, 'Surely he is the servant of Allah!' Then they said, 'Have you ever seen or been informed about Isa?' Immediately they left him. Then came Gabriel, sent by our Lord, the Hearer and the Omniscient, and said to Muhammad, 'Tell them if they come to you that the likeness of Isa in creation with Allah is like that of Adam'."

A very similar story was told by Muhammad ibn Hussain and Ahmed ibn Mufadal, "When Muhammad was sent to the people of Najran they asked him what he thought of Isa. They said, 'He is Allah. He descended from his dominion (heaven) and entered into Mary, was born and manifested himself. Have you ever seen a man who was born without a father?' It was then that Allah sent to Muhammad the ayat, "Isa is in the sight of Allah, the same as Adam".

Finally another similar story

This comes from Al Khasan and Ibn Jurash Aklamal. They said, "We have heard that the Christians in Najran sent a deputation to Muhammad saying, 'O Muhammad, Why do you revile our friend?' He replied, 'Who is your friend?' They said, 'Isa, son of Mary, who you allege is a servant.' To which Muhammad replied, 'Truly he is a servant of Allah and his word bestowed on Mary and the spirit from him (Allah).' Then they were angry with him and said, 'If you were truthful, show us a servant who can raise the dead and heal the blind and the leper and who created from clay the form of a bird and would breathe into it so that it became a bird. Isn't he Allah?' " [This is a non-Biblical myth that was common in the 4-6th century Near East among Christians.]

Muhammad said nothing until Gabriel came to him and said, "O Muhammad, they who said, 'Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary, have blasphemed'." Muhammad replied, "O Gabriel, they asked me to tell them to whom he is similar." Gabriel said, "Isa is just as Adam."

I hope this information will give you an idea of how most Muslims think about the Lord Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God who, with the Holy Spirit, forms the Trinity. Not all Muslims will know all their arguments, but most will be familiar with the Quranic verses. This is especially true if they have been educated in Quranic schools run by various mosques in the Muslim World and now in the Muslim diaspora.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed! The rest of this article develops a reply to some of these objections to the Deity of the Lord Jesus for if He is not God, we are still in our sins and we, like the Jews, still wait for Him to come.

Sadly, our Western Christmas has been exported, making things very confusing for Muslims and hindering their understanding.

- The Lord Jesus was probably not born on 25 December. This date was borrowed from pagan Romans who had a major feast from December 17-25. This is the period in the northern hemisphere of the shortest days. They celebrated the sun being unconquered and daylight beginning to lengthen again. Many have calculated that the birth of the Lord Jesus was probably in October.

- Christmas trees are pagan! The idea is borrowed from an 8th century story told in Germany of a child being rescued from under a tree.

- The wise men came at Christmas (not necessarily just three). It is improbable that they came to Bethlehem soon after the birth of Jesus. When Herod decided to destroy the baby boys, he chose those under two. If Jesus had just been born, then Herod would have killed one and two-year-old babies unnecessarily. Herod and his advisers calculated that Jesus was probably still under two years old.

Three fundamental arguments for the Deity of the Lord Jesus

1. The Deity of the Lord Jesus in the Bible

The Muslim enquirer into the birth of Christianity faces many serious questions. The most difficult concerns the Deity of the Lord Jesus – that He who was born of the virgin Mary in Palestine and lived on our earth for some 30 years is in fact the Son of God and God the Son.

This belief is very difficult for seekers from a Muslim background. The difficulty doesn't alter the fact that the Christian faith believes in a unique God. This belief in the existence of three persons in the essence of one God doesn't mean that one takes precedence over the others in time or is greater than the others in any sense at all. God is One and He has revealed Himself in three "names" to show us His plan for our redemption.

We first need to see what the Bible says about the Fatherhood of God in relationship to the Lord Jesus.

Luke 1:32-33: ***"The angel Gabriel said to Mary. 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of His Kingdom there will be no end'."***

When Jesus was born, the prophecy of Isaiah given several hundred years earlier was fulfilled. ***"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign, behold a young virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel which means 'God with us'."*** (Is. 7:14 and Mt. 1:22-23)

At the time of Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan we read, ***"He went up from the water and behold the heavens opened and He saw the Spirit of God, like a dove, alighting on Him and a voice from heaven saying, 'This is My Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased'."*** (Mt. 3:16-17)

Later when Jesus was with His disciples on Mount Hermon He spoke with Moses and Elijah. He was still speaking when a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice from the cloud said, ***"This is My Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him"***. (Mt. 17:5)

2. Some of the declarations of the Lord Jesus concerning His own Deity.

In one of His parables Jesus said, ***"I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser."*** (Jn. 15:1) Again He said***, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's right hand. I and the Father are one."*** (Jn. 10:27-30)

The Lord Jesus said, ***"Truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name this will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*** (Jn. 14:12-13).

When the Jews boasted to Jesus that Moses had given them manna in the wilderness, He said to them, ***"Truly, I say to you it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven."*** (Jn. 6:32)

When the Jews were trying to kill Him because He called God His Father making Himself equal with God, the Lord Jesus said to them, ***"Truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, that the Son does also. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing. Greater works than these will He show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him …. Truly I say to you, an hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."*** (Jn. 5:19-23, 25)

Later when Jesus was teaching the people, He said, ***"Truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin; the slave does not remain in the house for ever. The son remains for ever so if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*** (Jn. 8:34-36)

See also Jesus dialogue with others in Jn. 5: 17-18, ***"Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now and I am working.' This is why the Jews sought all the more to kill Him because not only was He breaking the Sabbath but was even calling God His Father, making Himself equal with God."***

One day He said to His listeners, ***"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. Come to Me, all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. "*** (Mt. 11:27-28)

As we consider this declaration, it is clear that no ordinary man whether a prophet, an apostle or even an angel from heaven can understand the secret of the wonderful person of the Lord Jesus the

Messiah. The true nature of the Lord Jesus is unlimited. No one can understand Him fully except the Father. If He were an ordinary man, this statement couldn't be made. Without any doubt this eternal oneness with the Father was to reveal to us who and what the Father is like as He is described as the "Invisible".

This revelation declared by the Lord Jesus may seem a mystery and difficult to understand. But the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of John's Gospel to clarify it for us in a series of verses. The clearest of these is Jn. 1:18, ***"No one has ever seen God, the Only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known".*** This assures us that no human or angel has ever seen God or known Him with the knowledge that could make Him fully acquainted with all His divine attributes. What was revealed to them came by instruction or by vision. Moses and others of the Old Testament prophets never saw God. They received their revelation by inspiration and the source of these inspirations was the Lord Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, the Son of God, for He alone of His own accord knows the thoughts of our Father God and His purposes. He is God manifested in the flesh. ***"He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the*** (Holy) ***Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world and taken up into glory."*** (1 Tim. 3:16)

Jesus said to His disciples, ***"I and the Father are one. He who has seen Me has seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in Me."*** (Jn. 10:30) He was assuring His disciples of His unity with the Father – that He and His Father are of one essence and glory, rank, ability, will and purpose.

3. The Testimony of the Apostles to the Deity of the Lord Jesus

- The Testimony of Peter

  When Jesus asked His disciples***, "And who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God'."*** (Mt. 16:15)

- The Testimony of John

  "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given understanding so that we may know Him who is true and we are in Him who is true and in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." (1 Jn. 5:20)

- The Testimony of Paul

  "When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman and under the law, to redeem those who are under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Gal. 4:4-5)

4. The Testimony of the Old Testament prophets

- King Solomon the Wise

  "Who has wrapped up the waters as a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name and what is His Son's name? Surely you know! Every work of God proves true. He is a shield to those take refuge in Him." (Prov. 30:4-5)

- Daniel

  "I saw visions in the night and behold with the clouds of heaven there came One like the Son of Man and He came unto the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion and glory and a Kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages would serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and His Kingdom will not be destroyed." (Dan. 7:13-14)

- John the Baptist

  "You yourselves bear me witness that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent before Him'." (Jn. 3:28) ***"He who comes from above is above all."*** (Jn. 3:31) ***"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."*** (Jn. 3:35)

After the witness of these verses we must remember that the Lord Jesus is called 'the Son of God' because He is the second person of the Godhead. The words 'Son' and 'Father' according to the Bible have no connection to the human idea of fatherhood and sonship.

The 'Son' in the Bible is called the 'Word' and 'the likeness of the invisible God'. (Col. 1:15) ***"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature and He upholds the universe by the words of His power."*** (Heb. 1:3) He is Immanuel (God with us). His birth is prophesied in Is. 7:13 and fulfilled in Mt. 1:23.

All these titles explain the words 'the Son of God'. Just as our words reveal what is in our minds and just as a photograph portrays a likeness of a person or view, so the Incarnate Word reveals the Father God and accurately expresses His thoughts to humanity. As the light from the sun reveals its glory and is an essential part of what the sun is in essence, so the Lord Jesus is the brightness of God's glory reflecting the glories of the spiritual nature of our God.

In the greatness of His love, He veiled this behind 'the garment' of His flesh during His existence in our world that we might see God and hear Him. From what has been said we know that the Son was the way God revealed Himself to mankind and the Lord Jesus revealed God's feelings to mankind in a very sensitive way. So also the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, is the mediator of God to the conscience of man. We can't fully understand the true revelation of God to us apart from the work of the Holy Spirit who guides us to a true understanding of divine revelations. Inspired by this truth, the apostle Paul said, ***"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit".*** (1 Cor. 12:3)

Perhaps the word 'son' disturbs Muslims because they imagine that the father precedes the son in time and so there must be a difference in status between them. We need the assurance that the word 'son' doesn't in any way convey inequality or precedence between them because the word 'father' used of God can't be used unless there is a son. The title 'son' requires the word 'father'.

We can conclude from the Bible that from eternity God has had the title 'Father'. So this necessitates the existence of a son from eternity. Perhaps this is the origin of the confusion and disagreements many have experienced in talking about equality between the members of the Godhead. It comes from the idea that the father must precede the son and the thought that there must have been a difference of time between the two.

Perhaps a more correct way to express it is that no one becomes a father until the moment a son comes into being. The time difference is imaginary and a delusion in regard to God and His Son the Lord Jesus. If we add to this that God never begets nor is begotten as human beings (and animals) understand it, we must completely dissociate this idea from God and think very differently and more rationally.

We use the terms "son of truth" or "son of light" indicating the resemblance of them to the truth or the light and in this way the Lord Jesus is called the Son of God because of the resemblance between the Father and the Son in the person of the One God. The Lord Jesus has been called the Son because He is the only complete revelation of God to mankind. We read in Hebrews 1:1-2, ***"Long ago, many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom He created the world."***

Again we read, ***"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen His glory, glory as the Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (Jn. 1:14)

I have found this the most difficult area of discussion with Muslim friends. But we have a major advantage in that the Holy Spirit brings clarity through His word.

It is good to have a substantial book on systematic theology. An excellent first choice in English is by Wayne Grudem: **Systematic Theology – an Introduction to Biblical Doctrine**."