

## Explanation the Concept of the "Son of God" in the Qur'an and the Bible from a Novel Perspective: A Historical-Analytical and Dialogical Approach

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### Abstract:

This study presents a comparative and analytical examination of the concept of the "Son of God" in the theological traditions of Islam and Christianity, with particular emphasis on the Qur'anic and Biblical texts. The primary objective is to elucidate the semantic development and historical-cultural contexts of this term, as well as its role in shaping divergent—and at times conflicting—theological discourses between these two Abrahamic religions. The central issue addressed in this research is the identification of the roots of differing interpretations concerning the status of Jesus (peace be upon him). While orthodox Christian theology understands the "Son of God" as the second person of the Trinity and consubstantial with the Father, the Qur'an categorically rejects any attribution of offspring to God and presents Jesus instead as a chosen prophet of God. Employing a library-based methodology alongside a historical-analytical and dialogical approach, this study demonstrates that the early use of this term in Jewish texts—and even in certain passages of the New Testament, particularly the Synoptic Gospels—functioned primarily as an honorific or metaphorical designation. The transformation of this concept toward the full divinization of Jesus was largely influenced by Pauline interpretations and was later formalized at the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) under the influence of both political and theological factors. In contrast, while the Qur'an affirms the miraculous birth of Jesus, it does not regard it as evidence of divinity. The study concludes that a historical re-examination of this term, along with an understanding of the contexts that shaped contemporary interpretations, can help reduce misunderstandings and provide a basis for constructive and respectful dialogue between Islam and Christianity, without overlooking their fundamental theological differences.

**Keywords:** Son of God, Holy Qur'an, The Bible, Theological History, Interfaith Dialogue.

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## Statement of the Problem

The term "Son of God" in religious texts, particularly in the Bible, encompasses a wide spectrum of meanings, ranging from references to kings and the children of Israel to the specific meaning of the Messiah in the New Testament. The Holy Qur'an also addresses this title, but it negates its divine implication, acknowledging it only in a metaphorical or honorific sense for Jesus (PBUH). These conceptual differences not only provide a foundation for a more accurate understanding of Jesus's status in Abrahamic religions but also serve as a starting point for interfaith dialogue.

The present study, employing a historical-analytical and dialogical approach, examines the semantic and practical evolutions of this term in the Bible and the Qur'an, striving to elucidate its theological and cultural similarities and differences. The main research question is: How is the term "Son of God" utilized in the Biblical and Qur'anic texts, and what are its implications for understanding the theology and the status of Jesus within each religion?

## Literature Review

Studies related to the term "Son of God" have primarily been conducted within the two contexts of the Bible and the Qur'an. In Biblical texts, research has mostly focused on the historical and semantic analysis of the term. For instance, Ehrman (2014) demonstrates how the title "Son of God" in early Christianity evolved from a metaphorical concept or a special status into a denotation of divinity. Interdisciplinary studies, such as *Son of God: Divine Sonship in Jewish and Christian Antiquity*, also indicate that this term has differing applications in Jewish and Christian texts; however, these studies do not encompass its application in the Qur'an and Islamic exegesis (Allen, 2019).

Semantic analysis by Smith (2024) shows that the meaning of the "Son of God" changes depending on the linguistic and cultural context, yet it lacks a comparative investigation between Biblical and Qur'anic texts.

In the field of Islamic studies, classical and contemporary sources have analyzed the meaning of the term in the Qur'an. For example, Tabatabai (2008, Vol. 9, p. 486) interprets the term "Walad Allah" (Child of God) metaphorically, denoting a special human status rather than literal procreation, and Fakhr al-Razi (1993, p. 234) similarly considers it to signify the special status of prophets. These studies demonstrate strength in their exegetical and theological analyses, but they typically do not engage in interdisciplinary comparisons with Biblical texts.

Upon reviewing the existing literature, the major research gaps are as follows:



1. A predominant focus on Christian and Jewish texts, with limited comparative research between the Bible and the Qur'an.

2. The absence of an interdisciplinary analysis encompassing text, history, semantics, and theology.

3. A scarcity of modern research that incorporates an Islamic perspective and comparative analysis alongside Biblical texts.

The present study, utilizing a historical-analytical and dialogical approach, intends to bridge these gaps and comparatively elucidate the meaning of the term "Son of God" in the Qur'an and the Bible.

### 1) The "Son of God" Before the Bible

One of the earliest uses of the term "Son of Man" dates back to antiquity in the Near East. During that era, this term was used to express the nature and diversity of the relationships between humans or the world and God or gods. In this application, one of the most significant referents for the "Son of Man" was one who attained the position of kingship. By attributing the title "Son of Man" to a king, his special relationship with God and his divine persona were understood. The Pharaoh also considered himself the Son of God (New Catholic encyclopedia, 2003, p. 311).

### 2) The "Son of God" in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, similarly to the New Testament, there is no explicit or implicit mention of a triune God consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, in the Jewish Bible, there are numerous instances of attributing children to God. These passages were written in various historical periods, sometimes centuries apart, and even disregarding the issue of time, these phrases possess various meanings depending on their contextual placement. They sometimes refer to the Messiah, sometimes to the children of God addressing Israel (Exodus 4:22), sometimes to the king of the Davidic dynasty (2 Samuel 7:14), and sometimes to angels (Daniel 3:25).

This meaning was not limited to a specific referent and was used in reference to a number of individuals descended from Adam, the father of mankind, as well as the entire nation of Israel: "...Israel is my son, my firstborn" (Exodus 4:22).

Genesis 6:2 states: "The sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." Job 1:6 also says: "One day the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh..." Additionally, Job 38:7 refers to the sons of God: "...and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

In the Bible, David and his successors are specifically called by the title of the Son of God: "I will be his father, and he will be my son..." (2 Samuel 7:14).



As is clearly evident in the aforementioned verses and other Biblical passages, not only did the Israelites consider themselves sons of God, but it was Yahweh Himself who, in many instances, called the children of Israel His children. This indicates a mutual affection between God and God's people, to the extent that, for example, if Pharaoh does not let God's sons go, God will, in response, take vengeance upon the sons of the Pharaoh's people: "I tell you, let my son go, so that he may worship me; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn" (Exodus 4:22-23).

In explaining the usage of this term in the Old Testament, one can refer to McGrath's interpretation of the term "Son of God," which he defines as "belonging to God," thereby attributing a more general meaning to it (McGrath, 2013, p. 533).

### **3) The "Son of God" in Late Judaism**

In late Judaism, unlike traditional Judaism, the term "Son of God" was more closely associated with apocalyptic and revelatory literature. In this literature, the Jews were constantly awaiting their savior. The Jews, who had become accustomed to God's intervention in their lives following their deliverance from Egypt and similar miracles, were now awaiting the coming of the Messiah King to provide them with a glorious life based on the supremacy of the Jews and the nation of Israel (Weaver, 2002, p. 64). Therefore, naturally in this period, the term "Son of Man" was used more frequently for the Messiah; although even in this period, the Messiah was not the exclusive referent of this term (New Catholic Encyclopaedia, 2003, p. 312).

### **4) The "Son of God" in the New Testament**

In the New Testament, two individuals are specifically called the Son of God: Adam and Jesus Christ (Luke 3:23, John 3:16, John 6:40, John 9:35-38, Mark 14:61, Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, Luke 9:35, Luke 3:22, Luke 1:30-35, and John 1:34).

The New Testament verses that call Jesus the Son of God are expressed in the following forms:

- Verses in which Jesus calls himself the Son of God or refers to God as his Father: Mark 14:61, Mark 13:23, Luke 10:21-23, John 3:16, John 6:40, John 9:35-38, John 10:26-36.

- Verses in which a heavenly voice, angels, or John the Baptist call Christ the Son of God: Matthew 3:17, Matthew 16:5, Luke 9:35, Luke 1:30-35, Luke 3:22, John 1:34.

- Verses in which ordinary people call Jesus the Son of God, and he either confirms it, remains silent, or gives an ambiguous response: Matthew 26:44-63, Luke 22:70, Matthew 14:33.



- Verses in which the authors of the New Testament call Jesus by the title of the Son of God: Galatians 1:9, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 John 2:22–25, 1 John 4:14–15.

- Verses in which others call God the Father of Christ: Romans 11:6, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3.

In the New Testament, God is called Father in numerous instances (Matthew 6:9, Mark 11:25–26, John 20:17).

Furthermore, in some instances in the New Testament, God is considered the Father of Christians (John 1:12, Galatians 3:26, Romans 8:14–17, Matthew 6:14–15, Matthew 6:3–4).

God is also called the Father of all humans (Ephesians 4:6).

God is the Father of the righteous and the upright (Matthew 5:9, Luke 6:35, Matthew 5:44–45).

Soleimani Ardestani considers the application of "Father" for God in the Old Testament to be metaphorical; however, in the New Testament, this concept becomes different. The use of "Father" for God in relation to all people or a specific group of them is metaphorical; sometimes the criterion for being a son is obedience to the Father, sometimes it is creation, and sometimes it is love (Soleimani Ardestani, 1999, pp. 31–34).

The question that arises here is: why did God send His son to earth in human form?

The New Testament provides two answers to this question:

1. He sent His son to be an atonement for sins (1 John 2:1–2, Romans 5:18, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 1:5, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 John 4:10, Hebrews 9:26, Galatians 1:4).

2. He sent His son to save humanity from the burden of the law (Romans 9:30–32, Romans 7:1–4, Galatians 2:21, Galatians 4:4–5).

To examine the concept of the title "Son of God" in the New Testament more deeply, the premise must be established that the New Testament consists of two parts: the first part includes the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the Book of Acts, the Epistle of James, the two Epistles of Peter, and the Epistle of Jude; in this section, Jesus does not possess a divine aspect. The second part includes the Gospel of John, the three epistles attributed to him, and the thirteen epistles attributed to Paul. The use of the title "Son of God" in the three Synoptic Gospels carries an ordinary meaning, indicating popularity and honour, and this usage was common during their time. Evidence for this can be found in identical events that are repeated across the three Gospels, where the title "Son of God" is omitted or replaced with another phrase (Mark 15:39, Matthew 28:54, Luke 23:47 / Matthew 13:15–17, Mark 8:27–31, Luke 18:9–32 / Mark 26:63–66, Mark 14:61–64, Luke 22:71).



The title "Son of Man" is not used in the epistles of Paul and John, while the title "Son of God" has the highest frequency of use in the epistles of John. Soleimani attributes this to the passage of time and the eventual establishment of the title "Son of God" (Soleimani, 1999, pp. 102–108). Furthermore, in the Gospel of Mark, which is the oldest Gospel, this title is used in very few instances, which are also frequently accompanied by ambiguity or doubt (*ibid.*, pp. 108–114).

In the book *The Son of God in the Qur'an and the Testaments*, Soleimani Ardestani divides the Gospel into two sections—the "Human Jesus" and the "Divine Jesus"—and asserts that the metaphorical use of the title "Son of God" for Jesus Christ is not identical in both parts of the New Testament. In the first part, although his sonship differs from that of the general public, it remains a type of ordinary metaphor in light of his fatherless birth, chosenness, or obedience to God. However, in the second part, with expressions such as the "only begotten son," Jesus's sonship becomes entirely unique (John 1:14 and 18, John 3:16 and 18, John 9:4). Beyond that, in certain instances, Jesus is called God, which outwardly contradicts his status as a son (Philippians 2:5–7). Soleimani notes that Christian scholars' interpretation of the title "Son of God" in the New Testament aligns with the "Divine Jesus" section. Even though various parts of the text refer to Jesus's human attributes, scholars justify these instances by appealing to the union of the two natures—divine and human—within him, viewing them as non-contradictory (Soleimani Ardestani, 1999, pp. 43–54).

Quoting Elliot, Kashani states that when Christians speak of the divine aspect of Jesus Christ, they refer to him as the Son; however, this term implies neither that God has a spouse and Christ was born physically, nor is it a merely honorific title. Furthermore, the term "Son" does not imply that Jesus is a created being or has a temporal beginning; rather, the Son is God in the exact same sense, and the Son, like the Father, has been God from eternity. Nevertheless, without God the Father, the personal existence of the Son within the Godhead would be impossible, as the entirety of the Son's existence derives from the Father. This relationship is eternal and everlasting, and one should not assume that Christians call Jesus the Son simply because he was born into the world as a human. Likewise, being the Son does not equate to occupying a lower rank than the Father (Kashani, 2013, pp. 51–52).

The doctrine of Christology in Christianity has undergone a profound evolutionary process, and examining this trajectory can yield a relative understanding of Jesus Christ's status and the concept of the Son of God within Christian belief.



### 5) The Son of God in Christianity

As previously mentioned, the Gospel consists of two components: the human Jesus and the divine Jesus. The aspects concerning the divine Jesus are predominantly attributed to Paul and John. Biblical accounts regarding Paul indicate that he was a Jew who had not seen Jesus, yet suddenly claimed to have encountered him and converted to Christianity; subsequently, a significant portion of the New Testament epistles was attributed to him. Nevertheless, in his writings, Paul explicitly opposed the apostles and engaged in disputes with them (Galatians 1:11–12; Galatians 2:6–11). He also dismissed the necessity of the religious Law (Torah), considering faith to be sufficient.

Regarding John, given the temporal distance between him and Christ, it cannot be stated with certainty whether he personally witnessed the life of Jesus or merely expanded upon Paul's ideas (Soleimani Ardestani, 1999, pp. 75–83).

Paul does not consider Christ to be the product of a supernatural birth; rather, he believes in the presence of a divine and eternal element within Jesus, presenting him as the incarnation of the pre-existent Christ and the Son of God (Wolfson, 2010, p. 189). Similarly, in John's writings, there is no clear evidence supporting a belief in the supernatural birth of Christ, as he primarily focused on elaborating and expanding upon Paul's teachings (Ibid., pp. 203–204).

Soleimani views the ultimate outcome of Paul's activities and teachings as the theological foundation for the "divine Jesus" aspect of the Bible (Ibid., pp. 86–91). The significance of this development in the historical evolution of the Christian religion is so profound that scholars such as John B. Noss and Joan O'Grady consider Paul the second founder of Christianity (Noss, 2003, p. 613; O'Grady, 2005, p. 47).

Paul was a zealous Jew who converted to Christianity following a revelation and dedicated his efforts to its expansion. Crucially, however, Paul was a figure speaking within a Jewish milieu that was gravitating toward Christianity. Therefore, the terminology he employed required a strict alignment with Jewish beliefs. Given that Jews invoked the one God twice daily, it is highly implausible that he could have introduced polytheistic concepts and terminology among newly converted Jews without facing opposition. What is evident in Paul's written literature is the use of the very same prevalent Jewish terminology and discourse. For instance, as previously noted, the term "Son of God" was customary among Jews and had been used repeatedly in the Old Testament. Wolfson argues that Paul, in harmony with the traditional view prevalent at the time—which held that the Messiah is the one whom the God of the Bible refers to



as "my Son"—identifies Christ as the very Son of God (Wolfson, 2010, p. 186).

Indeed, in Pauline literature, Jesus is not the only one called the Son of God; other believers are also referred to as sons of God. According to Christian theologians, the difference between these two usages lies in the fact that the believers' status as sons of God stems from their adoption, whereas Jesus's status as the Son of God is due to the fact that he is God's own Son. However, it is impossible that Paul considered the incarnation as a kind of supernatural birth. In fact, there are expressions in Paul's works regarding the birth of Jesus which, if we knew from external evidence and context that Paul believed in the supernatural birth of Jesus, we could interpret as meaning a supernatural birth. In and of themselves, however, they merely signify that Jesus embodied within himself a divine and eternal element—namely, the pre-existent Christ—who was conventionally considered the Son of God (Ibid., p. 198).

The term is also utilized in the Gospel of John and warrants further examination. For example, in the thirteenth verse of the prologue to the Gospel of John, which describes the supernatural birth of Jesus, it states that he was born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. However, some Christian commentators believe that the correct reading of "born" should refer back to the twelfth verse, which uses the phrase "children of God." In other passages of John, no evidence can be found indicating a supernatural birth linked to his status as the Son of God; rather, it appears he employs the phrase "Son of God" in the same manner as the Hebrew Bible (Ibid., pp. 202–203).

Some proponents of attributing the title "Son of God" to Jesus argue that, apart from Paul's writings, in the Synoptic Gospels, although Jesus did not call himself the Son of God, he did not reject the title either (Matthew 16:13–17). Yet, a closer look at this passage reveals that Jesus referred to himself as the "Son of Man," not the "Son of God"! Nevertheless, they still infer that Jesus was not opposed to being considered the Son of God.

In response, considering the aforementioned evidence, one can argue that Jesus's silence in this context can naturally be attributed to the traditional Jewish understanding of the term, an understanding that would not have been considered unusual by Jesus.

Aslan articulates John Hick's argument by stating that the historical Jesus did not perceive or interpret himself as God or God the Son incarnate. Furthermore, Hick believes that if Jesus had been addressed in this manner during his own time, he would actually have considered such a statement blasphemous. He notes that while nothing can be said with absolute certainty regarding Jesus's own self-understanding, the available evidence



has led historians of that era to conclude with a very high degree of consensus that Jesus did not view himself as God incarnate. Hick argues that from the fifth century to the late nineteenth century, Christians generally believed that Jesus considered himself God the Son, the second person of the divine Trinity.

After examining the impact of cultural conditions on scriptures, Hick posits that divine titles and the term "Son of God" were repeatedly used for heroes, emperors, and kings during the Roman period and the New Testament era. Therefore, it is entirely probable that Jesus was perceived strictly as a figure belonging to that category. Consequently, Jesus's prophetic mission and character might have been instrumental in inspiring such metaphorical language. However, the crucial point for Hick is that both "Son of God" and other titles attributing divine characteristics to an individual were widely used in a metaphorical sense in the society where Jesus lived (Aslan, 2006, pp. 327–330).

For Christian thinkers, especially in the pre-modern era, proving the divinity of Jesus has always been a difficult and arduous task. The notion that Christ is the only true Son of God was not accepted by many Christian scholars from the very beginning. If Christ was to be both God and the Son of God, while simultaneously being human, the union between his divinity and humanity presented a profound conceptual difficulty—an issue that provoked sectarian conflicts within Christian churches for many years. Yet, one of the central arguments employed by these thinkers relies precisely on this designation of the "Son of God" (McGrath, 2006, p. 357). This expression only gained widespread prominence through the surviving works and documents of Paul and the terminology utilized in the Gospel of John, which this research will examine in further detail.

### **The Divinity of the Son of God**

Pauline Christology, which is based on Christ being the Son of God, led to the creation of many sects among Christians in the early centuries. In the early centuries of Christianity, Christ was considered merely a human being. Over time, the Church deemed the purely human conception of Christ a heresy and propagated the idea that Christ was only human in appearance and in reality, possessed a divine nature. At the beginning of the fourth century, a major controversy arose in the Christian world between Arius, a Libyan bishop, and Athanasius, a disciple of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria. Ultimately, during a council known as Nicaea, with the direct intervention of Constantine—who had little knowledge of theological debates—Athanasius's view was accepted as the official ruling of the Church. The outcome of this dispute strengthened the foundations of



the Christian Trinity, which continues to surround the Christian world to this day (Kashani, 2013, pp. 54-101).

One of Arius's goals was to prove the oneness and simplicity of God, who, being pure spirit, could not have direct contact with the material world. Therefore, a mediator was necessary; this mediator was the son, who, although brought into existence before the beginning of time, was still a creature. Arius insisted on affirming the oneness and immutability of God, while emphasizing the humanity of Christ and his capacity for change and suffering. In contrast, Athanasius articulated the purpose of the incarnation as the salvation of humanity by someone who shares in the very essence of God. In his view, Christ had to be unique and qualitatively different from a normal human being, even one who had received divine grace. For this reason, the son had to be of the same substance as the father (Grady, 2005, pp. 150-153).

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity did not undergo fundamental changes during the Middle Ages, but as Christian society entered the era of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, this doctrine, like other aspects of human life, became subject to revision, reform, and rationalism. In the contemporary century, among intellectuals and newly emerging Christian sects, the theory of the Trinity has been severely criticized and is sometimes perceived as a manifestation of blasphemy (Kashani, 2013, pp. 101-104).

Conversely, individuals like John Hick, in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, believe that it emphasizes oneness just as much as it emphasizes Threeness. He considers this doctrine to be highly important and fundamental for safeguarding the doctrine of the Incarnation, which affirms the divinity of Christ. Hick, advocating for the views of Baillie, favors aligning the doctrine of the Incarnation with modern life. He sees the result of this effort as compatibility and peaceful communication with other religions (Hick, 2006, pp. 86-90).

Will Durant, regarding the Trinity, states that the Church Fathers failed in their attempt to present the Trinity rationally and ultimately, like Athanasius, conceded that reason must bow before the mystery of the Trinity (Durant, 1999, p. 770).

Kashani, in criticizing the Church Fathers' claim of a shared essence between Christ and God, refers to 1 John 4:15 to argue that the union between God and the Son is metaphorical. Furthermore, to explain Christ's special characteristics, including the resurrection mentioned in John 2:18-22, he cites John 10:18 to describe it as a gift from God, rather than proof of Jesus' divinity (Kashani, 2013, pp. 130-131 and 182-183).

Other miracles of Christ are also used by the Church as evidence for the claim of his divinity, but each of these can be critiqued and refuted through



reflection and cross-referencing with other verses. Many verses can be cited that demonstrate the distinct and separate identities of Christ and God, including John 5:19 [Note: Persian text contains a typo as 91:5], Romans 11:36, John 10:25, Mark 13:32, and John 20:17.

### **Christian Sects Opposing the Divinity of Jesus**

Several groups and sects have existed in the history of Christianity that have denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, recognizing him not as God, but as a prophet, a moral teacher, or a heavenly being (but not of the same essence as God). The most important of these groups are:

#### **Unitarians**

The term Unitarian originally referred to Christians who reject the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Their defining characteristic is a firm belief in the absolute oneness of God and the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity. They consider Jesus to be a chosen human being, the Son of God in a metaphorical sense rather than a divine essence, and a great prophet or an outstanding moral teacher, but they do not recognize him as God incarnate. Unitarians believe in God as the sole creator of the universe, and although there is a wide spectrum of views regarding the full humanity or divinity of Jesus, it is widely accepted that his status is not equal to God. Unitarian churches and some liberal Protestant churches that do not accept the doctrine of the Trinity in its traditional form fall under this category (Gottfried, 2023, p. 6).

#### **Arians**

Arianism, formed by the followers of Arius, denied the divinity of Christ and believed that only the Father is the eternal and true God, because only He, in the fullest sense of the word, is uncreated. Regarding the Son, the Logos, who became incarnate in Christ, Arius taught that since Christ came into existence through creation, he could not be God. He had to be a being created before all other creatures, but nevertheless, created by the will of God like other creatures. Regarding the Holy Spirit, Arius believed that he was a creature or a characteristic or attribute of God. This doctrine was non-Trinitarian and ultimately destructive to the entire Christian faith (Moga, 2019, pp. 21-23).

Arianism had an enormous impact on the early Church because it forced the Church to define orthodoxy through a set of creeds, although the Church eventually triumphed over Arianism (Shaibu, 2013, p. 52).

#### **Socinians**

By the year 1600 AD, a radical Protestant school called Socinianism was founded by Socinus, which attacked Christian orthodoxy. This movement was the prelude to the emergence of freethinking. Although the followers of Socinus accepted the Bible, they did not consider it flawless



and saw many errors within it. In their view, whatever was contrary to reason or common logic, or was considered morally useless, could not be divine inspiration. Among this group's most important criticisms of the Bible were the denial of the divinity of Jesus and the belief that original sin was contrary to reason. Ultimately, the ideas of the Socinians laid the foundation for modern Unitarian thought (Hordern, 1989, p. 34).

### **Mormons**

The founder of this sect, Joseph Smith, claimed in New York in the 1820s that God had appeared to him and told him that all existing churches had gone astray and that he had a mission to restore the true church. He also published a book containing the history of an ancient people inhabiting the American continent and the appearance of Jesus Christ among them, entitled the Book of Mormon. Mormons reject the Trinity and believe that the three divine figures (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) are separate entities and are united only in purpose. They also believe that God Himself was once a human being who attained divine status. In addition to the Bible, they consider the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price to be sacred scriptures (Johnson, 2022, p. 15).

### **Jehovah's Witnesses**

The Jehovah's Witnesses sect was founded by Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). Through studying and reflecting on the Bible around 1872 AD, he concluded that Christ would return secretly in 1874 to prepare the ground for the establishment of God's kingdom and reign. His followers, initially based in the United States, were at first known by various names, including the Watchmen, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, or Russellites. Later, in 1931 AD, Rutherford named them "Jehovah's Witnesses". Jehovah's Witnesses believe in only one God and, since 1931, have emphasized that God must only be called Jehovah. They deny the doctrine of the Trinity, considering it polytheism. In their view, Trinitarian Christianity distorts biblical verses during translation and alters their meanings to fit its own perspective. Relying on the original texts of the Old Testament and carefully examining the vocabulary of the New Testament through Greek literature, they consistently deny the divinity of Christ and consider him to be a spiritual creature (Tohidi, 2014).

### **The Son of God in the Qur'an and Islamic Exegesis**

Prophet Jesus (Peace Be Upon Him) is a chosen prophet of God, and his religion and its followers are accepted in Islam. His miraculous creation without a father is similar to the creation of Adam, and the Qur'an states this in several verses, including Al Imran 59 and Al-Mu'minun 50. The Qur'an also forbids Christians from considering Jesus as divine, and Jesus



introduces himself as a prophet and servant of God (An-Nisa 171, Al-Ma'idah 116-117, Maryam 36).

However, Jesus speaks of the "Son of Man" as a common phrase. It should be noted that Jesus spoke Aramaic, while the Bible was recorded in Greek. In Aramaic, the word for "Son of Man" is written as Bar Enash, and in Hebrew as Ben Adam, both of which mean "Son of Man," and in Aramaic or Hebrew, they are equivalent to "man" or "human." In support of this, one can refer to Surah At-Tawbah, verse 30, which states that the people of Jesus imitated an ancient belief that called Ezra (Uzair) the son of God (Peerzada and Jamali, 2018, p. 940).

Allamah Tabatabai in Tafsir al-Mizan regarding verse 59 of Al Imran says that the creation of Jesus, like the creation of Adam, is extraordinary, and therefore one should not speak of him beyond what is said about Adam; just as Adam was created without a father and a mother, Jesus was also created without a father (Tabatabai, 2008, Vol. 3, p. 332).

Islamic exegeses such as Al-Mizan and Tabarsi's Al-Ihtijaj emphasize that Jesus is a guided and distinguished human being, but he does not possess divinity, and union with God is impossible. The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) demonstrated that the expression "Son of God" in the Qur'an means honor and respect, not divinity, and this argument prompted Christians to reconsider their belief (Tabatabai, 2008; Tabarsi, 2002).

Tafsir Nemooneh states that the Qur'an's strictness towards the People of the Book, including Christians, is due to their deviation from monotheism and their inclination towards a kind of polytheism in belief and worship. Christians consider Jesus as the literal son of God, and this title is not merely out of respect, and the Qur'an compares this to the deviations of earlier idolaters. The roots of such beliefs can be seen in the beliefs of ancient India, China, and Egypt, and many of the teachings of the Torah and the Gospel share similarities with the superstitions of Buddhists and Brahmins. The Qur'an revealed this truth 14 centuries ago (Makarem Shirazi, 2001, Vol. 7, pp. 361-363).

Similarly, in Al-Tafsir Al-Muyassar, it is stated: Certainly, the Jews became polytheists when they assumed Ezra was the son of God, just as the Christians became polytheists when they claimed the Messiah was the son of God. And they had fabricated these sayings themselves (Group of Scholars, 2009, p. 191).

Rashid Rida explains in Tafsir al-Manar that those who consider Jesus the "Son of God" base their argument on his miraculous creation without a father. However, this argument is contradicted by the creation of Adam without a father, demonstrating that Jesus is also a guided and extraordinary human being, but not the son of God (Rashid Rida, 1990, Vol. 10, p. 322).



Ibn Atiyyah and Ibn Abbas have explained that only a limited group of Jews, including four religious' leaders, made the claim that Ezra was the "Son of God." According to Al-Naqqash, none of these individuals remain, and their lineage has become extinct (Al-Andalusi, 2001, Vol. 6, p. 461).

### **Misconceptions Regarding the Denial of the Son of God**

The Qur'an's narrative of the birth of Jesus, despite similarities with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, possesses its own independent and non-historical structure. Instead of reconstructing a biography, the Qur'an presents Jesus within a theological and ethical framework, portraying him like other great prophets. The most complete account is found in Surah Maryam, which details the birth and Jesus speaking in the cradle; other verses merely refer back to this narrative (Waqas, 2021).

According to the research of Abdul Ghafur and colleagues, the Qur'an, which refers to Jesus 24 times as the son of Mary, considers him an ordinary human being but a divine prophet, not the son of God. In the surahs Al Imran and Maryam, the Qur'an emphasizes the chosen status of Mary and the humanity of Jesus, addressing him as Ibn Maryam (Son of Mary). Consequently, although the Qur'an accepts the virgin birth, it rejects the divinity of Jesus and considers his creation easier than the creation of Adam without a father and mother (Abdul Ghafur, 2019).

Unlike certain Christian narratives, the Qur'an provides little information about the childhood and youth of Jesus apart from his miraculous birth, remaining silent about his "unknown years," much like the Gospels. Most of the statements regarding Jesus are expressed in the form of divine monologues, and Jesus himself engages in dialogue only in rare instances, usually with the presence and supervision of God. A portion of these dialogues takes place in the post-resurrection context, where Jesus is introduced as a witness against those who fell into polytheism (shirk) in his name. A significant example is in Surah Al-Ma'idah (116–118), wherein Jesus emphasizes that he never called people to the divinity of himself or his mother, and was solely a caller to the worship of the One God (Waqas, 2021).

Based on historical evidence, Jesus was born among the Jewish people and the "People of the Book," and a divine book named the "Injil" (Gospel) was revealed to him. The Qur'an, which uses the word Injil 12 times, introduces it as a sacred and guiding book, similar to the Torah. According to multiple verses in Al Imran, Al-Ma'idah, and other surahs, Jews and Christians are respectively referred to as the "People of the Torah" and the "People of the Injil." The Qur'an emphasizes that these two books still contain a portion of divine revelation, even though they have undergone alterations over time (Abdul Ghafur, 2019).



One of the most significant factors of disagreement between Islam and Christianity is their different perspectives on Jesus Christ. Western Christianity considers him the Son of God, whereas Islam emphasizes that Jesus is a chosen human, a servant, and a prophet of God. This theological difference has been a point of contention for centuries. Seyyed Hossein Nasr also identifies the issue of Jesus as one of the seven main topics that have consistently caused tension between the two religions; these topics include: the nature of God, the finality of religion, the status of scripture, sacred language, sacred conditions, the interpretation of the life of Jesus, and the perspectives of Christians and Muslims on modernity and postmodernity (Nasr, 1995).

Citing Qur'anic verses, Tony Costa argues that the title "servant of God" for Jesus signifies Islam's distancing from the Christian belief in the "Son of God." He believes the Qur'an critiques the Christian understanding of Jesus being the Son in a literal sense—meaning God having a wife and child. He states that based on this understanding, the Qur'an accuses Christians of believing in three gods (Father, Mother, and Son) and forbids them from saying "three." Costa concludes that this specific interpretation is why the Qur'an rejects the concept of the Son of God (Costa, 2015).

A crucial point that this researcher overlooks is that the reference to "three" in Qur'anic exegesis points to the Christian Trinity itself: God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ. A belief that is met with ambiguity even among its own adherents is naturally controversial to non-believers. However, in this case, the Qur'an directly references this specific Christian doctrine and rejects the concept of the Son within the context of the Trinity. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, it accepts the concept when viewed from a position of special respect and servitude.

Despite using terms such as the "Word" and "Spirit" for Jesus, the Qur'an forbids Christians from considering him divine and emphasizes that Jesus is only a prophet of God. It commands that one should not say "three," because God is One (Nisa: 171). The Qur'an then considers Jesus's miracles as confirmation of his prophethood. Harmakaputra notes that this perspective differs from Christianity, because in the Christian tradition, the miracles, life events, and resurrection of Jesus are perceived as signs of him being the Son of God (Harmakaputra, 2013).

Despite some misunderstandings regarding the Son of God, the Qur'an maintains its clear perspective. Osama Qatrani proposed the hypothesis of a dual Messiah (Messiah son of Joseph and Messiah son of Mary), but Islam rejects this idea theologically, considering it a misinterpretation of the divine promise. In Islam, there is only one Messiah: Jesus, son of Mary, is



a guided human being, miraculously born, not crucified, and will have a justice-oriented and monotheistic return (Qatrani, 2025).

### Conclusion

The present historical-analytical study, by examining the concept of the "Son of God" in the Holy Qur'an and the Bible, has demonstrated how the transition of this concept from its original linguistic and cultural context into complex theological frameworks over the centuries has led to fundamental misunderstandings and a deadlock in interfaith dialogue.

The findings of this research regarding the Old Testament and Jewish traditions indicate that within the context of Semitic culture and languages, the use of the word "son" (as the son of God) lacked any biological or ontological implications. This title was entirely metaphorical, honorary, and relational, utilized to denote ultimate proximity, chosenness, and obedience. As seen in the Old Testament texts, this term was applied to angels, Israelite kings (such as King David), and even the entire chosen nation.

However, an examination of the concept's evolution in the New Testament reveals that as early Christianity emerged from its Semitic roots and entered the Hellenistic (Greco-Roman) world, the meaning of the word underwent a profound transformation. Under the influence of Pauline theology and the need to explain the status of Jesus to non-Jewish audiences, the concept of the "Son of God" gradually escalated from a metaphorical position to an ontological and divine reality. This trajectory of theological evolution ultimately reached its zenith at the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), where the divinity of Christ as the "consubstantial Son with the Father" was established as an official canon and inviolable doctrine; an event that became the definitive and fundamental point of divergence between Christian theology and Islamic monotheism.

In contrast, an analysis of the verses of the Holy Qur'an shows that Islam, with a reformist approach aimed at safeguarding transcendent monotheism (*Tawhīd*), strictly negates any attribution of the term "son" to God, whether in a physical sense or within a polytheistic framework. By unequivocally rejecting the concept of divine procreation, the Qur'an presents the miraculous birth of Jesus (pbuh) from the Virgin Mary not as proof of his divinity, but as a sign (*Āyah*) of the boundless power of the Creator and a confirmation of his exalted prophetic status. In fact, while rejecting the title of "son," the Qur'an establishes the unparalleled position of Jesus within the revelatory system by granting him supreme titles such as the "Word of God" (*Kalimatullāh*) and the "Spirit of God" (*Rūḥullāh*).

The key achievement of the present study is demonstrating that the way out of these theological tensions lies in returning to the historical and



semantic roots of these terms within the sacred texts. If Christian and Muslim thinkers recognize that the root of the divergence lies not in the nature of Jesus's (pbuh) mission, but in linguistic shifts and the translation of Semitic concepts into Greek philosophy, the ground will be laid for a constructive and empathetic dialogue.

Ultimately, understanding the truth that the original use of "Son of God" was merely a metaphor expressing "the utmost proximity and servitude" provides a golden opportunity to reduce historical sensitivities and enhance mutual understanding between the followers of Islam and Christianity. This historical insight not only helps to resolve the misunderstandings of past centuries but also paves the way for future research in comparative linguistics, the study of early Judeo-Christian sects, and theological dialogues based on mutual respect and shared understanding.

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