

Answer to a Christian Challenge: Why Can Mary Have a Son Without a Consort but God Cannot?

By Abdullah bin Hamid Ali

Christian: *“Why can’t God have a son? Muslims believe in the virgin birth. The Qur’an asks how God could have a son when He has no consort but allows for Mary to have a son even though she had no consort. Doesn’t this give a power and privilege to Mary that God is denied?”*

Response: The only way for God to have a son would be to redefine what a son in the same way some today attempt to redefine what a “marriage” and a “woman” are. A son is a male human child, just as a marriage can only happen between a male and a female, and as a woman is an adult female human. If a son is a human child and God is not human, God cannot have a son.

The other alternative would be to redefine God—not in the sense of placing strictures on God since we know more of what God is not than what God is. Among the things we know He is not is: 1) male or female. Calling God “He” doesn’t imply gender. It is merely to employ the pronoun God attached to Himself since Semitic languages assign everything a linguistic gender including things like pens, chairs, and cars. God is really an “It” who chose the male, not female, “it-ness” pronoun (He) to describe “It”/self. So, we say “He.” 2) God is not born. So, cannot be anyone’s child. 3) God does not die. So, God’s existence cannot come to an end. 4) God’s attributes do not grow or expand beyond what they already are since that would undermine His permanence.

A son can only resemble his father or mother. And when we look at Jesus—upon him God’s peace—we notice no true resemblance to God. He was born, he grew, he ate, he slept, he relieved himself, and according to Christians, he died. He was created and had no power to create himself. Nor did he have any power to protect himself from harm.

Sons resemble their parents. And Mary’s—upon her God’s peace—inability to miraculously impregnate herself matched Jesus’ inability to enter her womb or to save himself from persecution and crucifixion. That is, the virgin birth was not due to some miraculous power God gave to Mary. Rather, it was from the sheer will of the creator. So, when one says that Muslims consider it possible for a woman to have a son without a consort but impossible for God to have a son without a consort, this is a flawed analogy since Mary is not equal to God. That logic, as a refutation of the Qur’an, would only be convincing if we equated Mary with God and imputed to her the same power and attributes.

God, on the other hand, has power to do all things within the realm of possibility. And to have a son is not within the realm of possibility: Sons resemble, succeed, and inherit from their fathers and mothers. Jesus cannot succeed or inherit from God because God is the Living, Eternal, and Self-Subsisting. If Jesus is “a” god besides God, then there is not one god, but two: One uncreated that created the second. But God was not and cannot be created. He is the Creator. So, saying Jesus is God’s son is akin to believing in the material existence of a square circle or triangle rectangle which are things which only exist as expressions of language, not reality.

The only other alternative would be to say the word “son” is being employed in a figurative sense as “God’s children.” If so, this would reveal that there’s nothing special about Jesus if all human beings are children of God. We could tolerate the metaphor but not the literal connotations of “son-ness” or “child-ness.”