

HOLY MARY IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

*Thesis submitted to the University of Dhaka for the Degree of Masters of
Philosophy (M.Phil.) in Islamic Studies.*

Supervisor

Dr. Muhammad Abdur Rashid
Professor
Department of Islamic Studies
University of Dhaka
Dhaka-1000
Bangladesh

Researcher

Most. Jibon Nesa
Registration No. 105/2008-2009
Joining date: 06-09-2009
Department of Islamic Studies
University of Dhaka
Dhaka – 1000
Bangladesh

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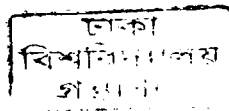


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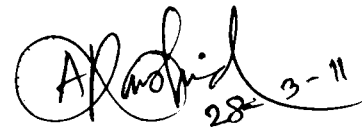
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Approval of the Supervisor

Most. Jibon Nisa has just completed a thesis entitled “**Holy Mary in Christianity and Islam: A Comparative Study**” under my supervision as a partial requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) in Islamic Studies at the University of Dhaka. No part of this thesis has ever been published anywhere. I wish her every success in life.

Dhaka
March, 2011

Handwritten signature of Dr. Muhammad Abdur Rashid in black ink. The signature is cursive and includes the date '28-3-11' written below it.

(Dr. Muhammad Abdur Rashid)
Professor
Department of Islamic Studies
University of Dhaka
Dhaka-1000
Bangladesh

Declaration

Thereby I am declaring that the material embodied in this thesis is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other Diploma or Digree of any university.

Dhaka
March, 2011

Most. Jibon Nesa
28-03-11
(Most. Jibon Nesa)
Registration No. 105/2008-2009
Joining date: 06-09-2009
Department of Islamic Studies
University of Dhaka
Dhaka - 1000
Bangladesh

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Most. Jibon Nisa
Department of Islamic Studies
University of Dhaka
Dhaka – 1000
Bangladesh

Some Abbreviations used in this Work

AD	:	Anno Domini, in the year of the Lord
AH	:	Anno Hegirae, in the year of the Hijrah
B.	:	Born
BCE	:	Before the Common Era
C.	:	Circa, about, approximately
Can.	:	Canaanite
CE	:	Common Era
Cf.	:	Confer, Compare
1 Chr.	:	1 Chronicles
2 Chr.	:	2 Chronicles
1 Cor.	:	1 Corinthians
2 Cor.	:	2 Corinthians
Dt.	:	Deutronomy
D.	:	Died
Dr.	:	Doctor of Philosophy
Eccl.	:	Ecclesiastes
Ed.	:	Edited
Edn.	:	Edition
E.g.	:	Example gratia, for example
Et al.	:	et alii, and others
Etc.	:	et cetera, and so forth
Ex.	:	Exodus
Gn.	:	Genesis
Hos.	:	Hosea
Ibid	:	Ibidem, in the same place
IFD	:	Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka
I.E.	:	Id est, that is,
Is.	:	Isaiah
Jb.	:	Job
Jer.	:	Jeremiah
Jgs.	:	Judges

Jn.	:	John (Gospel of John)
Jon.	:	Jonah
Jos.	:	Joshua
1 kgs	:	1 kings
Lk	:	Luke (Gospel of Luke)
Lv.	:	Leviticus
MABPWH/T	:	May Allah be pleased with him/ them
Mk.	:	Mark (Gospel of saint Mark)
Mt.	:	Matthew (Gospel of Matthew)
N.B.	:	Nta bene, take eardful note.
n.d.	:	No date
Nm.	:	Numbers
No.	:	Number (pl. nos)
N.P.	:	no place
Op. cit.	:	Opere citato, in the work cited
PBUH/T	:	Peace be upon him/them
Pl.	:	Plural
Ps.	:	Psalms
1 Pt.	:	1 Peter
r.	:	Ruled
RSV	:	Revised Standard Version of the Bible
RV.	:	Revelation
Sec	:	Section (pl. secs)
Sg.	:	Singular
Sir	:	Ben Sira
1 Sm.	:	1 Samuel
SWT	:	Subhanuhu Wa Taala
Th.D.	:	Theologicae Doctor, Doctor of Theology
Trans.	:	Translator, translators, translated by, translation
Viz	:	Videlicet namely
Vol.	:	Volume (pl. vols)
Zec.	:	Zakariah

List of transliteration from Arabic to English

أ	=	a
ب	=	b
ت	=	t
ث	=	th
ج	=	j
ح	=	h
خ	=	kh
د	=	d
ذ	=	dh
ر	=	r
ز	=	z
س	=	s
ش	=	sh
ص	=	s
ض	=	dz
ط	=	t
ظ	=	z
ع	=	'
غ	=	gh
ف	=	f
ق	=	q
ك	=	k
ل	=	l

م	=	m
ن	=	n
ه	=	h
و	=	w
ي	=	y
إ	=	'

short vowels:

َ = (fatha) = a

ِ = (kasra) = i

ُ = (damma) = u

long vowels:

آ = a

إي = i

أو = u

diphthongs:

أو = aw

إي = ay

أى = iyy

أو = uww

Introduction

The present study is about '**Mary in Christianity and Islam: A Comparative Study**' relating the very common point of both religions, Christianity and Islam i.e., the place of Holy Mary in Christianity and Islam. Both Christians and Muslims show their deep respect to her as she was specially favored by God's grace. While I studied Christianity in M.A. final year, I found there in Christianity many similarities with Islam. The place of Holy Mary is one of those similarities which always encourage me for further study.

Christianity and Islam, belonging to the Semitic origin and Abrahamic tradition, came from the same source. Therefore, both of Christians and Muslims have many things to share to each other. One of those common things is that followers of these two religions vehemently venerate Mary from their religious point of view. Christian's churches teach various doctrines concerning Mary and she is the subject of much veneration. The area of Christian theology concerning her is known as Mariology. Christian people venerate her as the Ever Virgin Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, Godbearer, Queen Mother, New Eve, Mother of God etc. On the other hand, Mary is mentioned more in the Noble Quran than in the entire New Testament. The account of the 19th chapter of the Quran has been named after her and this chapter is nearly identical with that in the Gospel according to Luke. In the Quran, no other women are given more attention than Mary. She enjoys a singularly distinguished honored position amongst women in the Quran. Thus in the Quran she is declared as a sign of God, an obedient one, a chosen one, a purified one, a truthful one, a righteous one, a chaste and virtuous one. Therefore, she is a highly respected woman figure in Islam.

So it will not be exaggerate if we say that between Christianity and Islam there is no difference externally but internally there are some subtle differences i.e., Christianity imposes divinity upon her while according to Islam she was not divine. Again in Christianity Mary is also given the title with mother of God or Godbearer while in Islam such titles of Mary are against the concept of unity of God.

However, in many books and literatures, the same information have already been found but a comparative study on Mary entitled '**Mary in Christianity and Islam: A Comparative Study**' is not yet come to my notice, as far as our

knowledge is concerned. The present study is, therefore, a humble attempt to prove Mary as the best woman of the world in compares to other ideal and holy women in the history of religions specially Judaism, Christianity and Islam. So in consonance with the need of Christio-Islamic traditions this topic entitled '**Mary in Christianity and Islam: A Comparative Study**' has been selected as a subject of thesis paper for the M. Phil. degree in the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Dhaka.

As far as our knowledge goes, the comparative study about the place of Mary in Christianity and Islam has remained an unexplored field. The present study is, therefore, itself a scope to study much more than earlier which also covers the following topics of two religions:

- the blessed virgin woman, Mary, in Semitic religions or Abrahamic Traditions;
- the position of Mary in Christianity;
- the position of Mary in Islam; and
- a comparative study on Mary of Christianity and Maryam of Islam.

The present study is, therefore, an academic study on holy Mary from Christio-Islamic point of view based on sound and reasonable interpretations.

The main objective of the present study is to comparatively study on Mary from Christio-Islamic point of view in highlighting of the clear idea about Mary in order to maximize similarities and to minimize dissimilarities for getting both Christians and Muslims close to each other with a view to stay together in peaceful coexistence and harmony showing their deep respect to one another. The other specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- ❖ to know other holy women of the world;
- ❖ to comparatively discuss on Mary from Christio-Islamic point of view;
- ❖ to find out similarities and dissimilarities of respective religions on Mary;
- ❖ for a greater interest to highlight similarities and not to emphasize dissimilarities;

- ❖ Try to prove that Christians and Muslims are from the same origin as they both keep their belief in the same God as well as they have the same chain of the prophets who were commissioned by God to show the straight path throughout the history.

The study is, however, based on an extensive survey and exclusive study of the existing literatures. The requisite pieces of information have been collected both from original and secondary sources. The main original sources are: the Holy Bible specially the Holy Gospels of the New Testament, the Noble Quran specially its' 19th chapter and other verses related to Mary and the prophetic traditions (Hadithes). The main secondary sources are: Mary, Stephen, *The Life of the Virgin Mary*, Lennard Publishing, 1990; Miravalle, Mark, *Introduction to Mary*, Queenship Publishing, 1990; Pelikan, Jaroslav, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, Yale University Press, 1998; Glavich, Mary Kathleen, *The Catholic Companion to Mary*, ACTA Publications, 2007; Graef, Hilda, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, London, 1985; Brwnson, Orestes, *Saint Worship and the Worship of Mary*, Sophia Institute Press, 2003; Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, New York, 1976; *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and John Reumann, Philadelphia, 1978; *Mary in the Churches*, ed. by Hans Kung and Jurgen Moltmann, New York, 1983; *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, ed. by Alberic Stacpoole, Wilton, Conn., 1982; Geage, Rev. Nilo, *Mary of the Koran: A Meeting Point between Christianity and Islam*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1984; Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Story of Mary and Jesus from the Quran*, Amana Publications, 1989; and besides, many other Tafsir literatures of the Quran and different commentaries of the Prophetic Traditions of Islam.

The hypothesis of this present study has already been taken on the title of '**Mary in Christianity and Islam: A Comparative Study**' because of its importance on the dignity of Mary in Christianity and Islam. The hypothesis will be proved through religious scriptures, literatures, investigation of historical documents, and beliefs and practices of the respective followers.

Every study has some limitations. The limitations of the present study are as follows:

The researcher will not go through each and every line of Christian and Islamic scriptures for the comparative study on Mary, though the present study claims that, but on the basis of main important verses and subsequent information and relevant events author tries best to know for his studying concerned.

The researcher also will not touch all the historical documents related to Christians and Muslims lest it should transcend the fixed topic. Only from the relevant historical events the subsequent information has been collected to clarify the topic concerned.

All the beliefs and practices of Christians and Muslims should be reviewed, but only relevant beliefs and subsequent practices about Mary are collected here to prove their attitude towards Holy Mary.

The present thesis paper is divided into three chapters of which chapter one deals with Holy Mary in Christianity, chapter two with The Blessed Maryam (Mary) in Islam, chapter three with A Comparative Study of Holy Mary (Maryam) between Christianity and Islam.

CHAPTER ONE

HOLY MARY IN CHRISTIANITY

Chapter One

HOLY MARY IN CHRISTIANITY

SECTION ONE : BIOGRAPHY OF MARY

Mary's life at a glance

Generally the theology and history of the Blessed Virgin Mary follow the chronological order of their respective sources, i.e. the Old Testament, the New Testament, the early Christian and Jewish writings. However, the chronology of Mary's life depends completely on the chronology of her Son Jesus' life, which is in itself sparse in the New Testament. Therefore, at best, a chronology of Mary can be only indicative rather than conclusive. Nonetheless a chronology—even a tentative one—is a potent aid in our visual age in bringing a person to life for our better understanding. Hence, according to the *Dictionary of Mary*,¹ the following chronology has been drawn up to provide a more graphic idea of the life of the Blessed Mary.

Probable years of B.C.E.	Concerning Events
23/20	Birth of Mary to Ann and Joachim
20/17	Presentation of Mary in the Temple
11/8	Betrothal to Joseph
7	Annunciation of Jesus' Birth to Mary Mary's Visitation of Elizabeth Mary found with Child
7/6	Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem Circumcision of Jesus at 8 days of age Purification of Mary after 40 days Prophecy of Simeon concerning Jesus and Mary Prophetess Anna speaks of Jesus Return to Nazareth
6/4	Adoration of the Magi Flight into Egypt to save Jesus from Herod
4-?	Return to Nazareth after Herod's death

1. A. Buono, "Marian Chronology", *Dictionary of Mary*, revised and expanded edition (with complete references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church), Mumbai, 2008, pp.290-91

Probable years of C.E.	Concerning Events
6	Finding of Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem
6-?	Life of Mary and Joseph with Jesus at Nazareth
27/28	-----
30	Mary at the Marriage Feast of Cana Mary with Jesus during His Public Life Jesus' indirect praise of Mary for her faith
30	Mary at the Cross Mary with the Apostles in the Cenacle after Jesus' Ascension Mary is assumed to heaven to rejoin her Son

Mary (prophesied) in the Old Testament

The Old Testament refers to the Blessed Lady in its many prophecies. Among them some best known prophecies are mentioned below, for instance.

Genesis 3:15

The first prophecy referring to Mary is found in the very opening chapters of the Book of Genesis (3:15): "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."

According to Christian scholars, here in the said verse the expression "the woman" in the clause "I will put enmities between thee and the woman" is a literal version of the Hebrew text. Its simple translation is: "I will put enmities between you and a woman". Hence the prophecy promises a woman, Mary, who will be the enemy of the serpent to a marked degree; besides, the same woman will be victorious over the Devil, at least through her offspring, Jesus Christ.

Isaias 7:1-17

The second prophecy referring to Mary is found in Isaias 7:1-17:

"The Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel. He shall eat butter and honey, that he may know to refuse the evil and to choose the good. For before the child know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good, the land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of the face of her two kings."

Without answering a number of questions connected with the explanation of the prophecy, we must confine ourselves here to the bare proof that the virgin mentioned by the prophet is Mary, the Mother of Christ. The argument is based on the premises that the prophet's virgin is the mother of Emmanuel, and that Emmanuel is Christ.

In 8:8, the prophet ascribes to him the ownership of the land of Juda: "the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Emmanuel". In 9:6, the government of the house of David is said to be upon his shoulders, and he is described as being endowed with more than human qualities: "a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, and the Prince of Peace". Thus Christian scholars may infer from all these verses that Mary is mentioned in the prophecy of Isaias as mother of Jesus Christ; in the light of St. Matthew's reference to the prophecy, we may add that the prophecy predicted also Mary's virginity untarnished by the conception of the Emmanuel.²

Micahs 5:2-3

A third prophecy referring to The Blessed Lady is contained in Micah 5:2-3: "And thou, Bethlehem, Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall be come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity. Therefore will he give them up till the time wherein she that travaileth shall bring forth, and the remnant of his brethren shall be converted to the children of Israel."

Here The Blessed Lady is denoted by the phrase, "till the time wherein she that travaileth shall bring forth".

Jeremias 31:22

A fourth prophecy referring to Mary is found in Jeremias 31:22; "The Lord has created a new thing upon the earth: A woman shall compass a man". The text of the prophet Jeremias offers no small difficulties for the clear understanding that

2. cf. Knabenbauer, *Comment. in Isaiam*, Paris, 1887; Schegg, *Der Prophet Isaias*, Munchen, 1850; Rohling, *Der Prophet Isaia*, Munster, 1872; Neteler, *Das Bush Isaias*, Munster, 1876; Condamin, *Le livre d'Isaie*, Paris, 1905; Maas, *Christ in Type and Prophecy*, New York, 1893, I, 333 sqq.; Lagrange, *La Vierge et Emmanuel*, in *Revue biblique*, Paris, 1892, pp. 481-497; Lémann, *La Vierge et l'Emmanuel*, Paris, 1904; St. Ignat., ad Eph., cc. 7, 19, 19; St. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*; St. Iren., adv. haer., IV, xxxiii, 11

Mary was clearly prophesied by Jeremias. Moreover, the prophecy of Jeremias, uttered about 589 B.C. and understood in the sense just explained, agrees with the contemporary Messianic expectations based on Isaias 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:3. According to Jeremias, the mother of Christ is to differ from other mothers in this, that her child, even while within her womb, shall possess all those properties which constitute real manhood.³

Thus the Old Testament refers indirectly to Mary in those prophecies which predict Jesus Christ.

Mary in the (New Testament) Gospels

The reader of the Gospels is at first surprised to find so little about Mary; but this obscurity of Mary in the Gospels has been studied at length by Blessed Peter Canisius,⁴ Auguste Nicolas,⁵ Cardinal Newman,⁶ and Very Rev. J. Spencer Northcote.⁷ In the commentary on the "Magnificat", published 1518, even Luther expresses the belief that the Gospels praise Mary sufficiently by calling her (eight times) the Mother of Jesus. In the following paragraphs we shall briefly group together what we know of The Blessed Lady's life before the birth of her Divine Son, during the hidden life of Jesus Christ, during His public life and after His resurrection.

Genealogy of Mary: Davidic Ancestry

Genealogy of Mary according to Luke⁸

1. God	2. Adam	3. Seth	4. Enosh	5. Cainain	6. Mahalalel
7. Jared	8. Enoch	9. Methuselah	10. Lamech	11. Noah	12. Shem
13. Arphaxad	14. Cainan	15. Shelah	16. Eber	17. Peleg	18. Reu
19. Serug	20. Nahor	21. Terah	22. Abraham	23. Isaac	24. Jacob
25. Judah	26. Pharez	27. Hezron	28. Ram	29. Amminadab	30. Nahshon
31. Salmon	32. Boaz	33. Obed	34. Jesse	35. David	36. Nathan

3. cf. Scholz, *Kommentar zum Propheten Jeremias*, Würzburg, 1880; Knabenbauer, *Das Buch Jeremias, des Propheten Klagelieder, und das Buch Baruch*, Vienna, 1903; Conamin, *Le texte de Jeremie, xxxi, 22, est-il messianique?* in *Revue biblique*, 1897, 393-404; Maas, *Christ in Type and Prophecy*, New York, 1893, I, 378 sqq.

4. de B. Virg., I. IV, c. 24

5. *La Vierge Marie d'apres l'Evangile et dans l'Eglise*

6. Letter to Dr. Pusey

7. *Mary in the Gospels*, London and New York, 1885, Lecture I

8. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, retrieved 2009-03-25

37. Mattatha	38. Menna	39. Melea	40. Eliakim	41. Jonam	42. Joseph
43. Judah	44. Simeon	45. Levi	46. Matthat	47. Jorim	48. Eliezer
49. Joshua	50. Er	51. Elmadam	52. Cosam	53. Addi	54. Melchi
55. Neri	56. Shealtiel	57. Zerubbabel	58. Rhesa	59. Joanan	60. Joda
61. Josech	62. Semein	63. Mattathias	64. Mahath	65. Naggai	66. Hesli
67. Nahum	68. Amos	69. Mattathias	70. Joseph	71. Jannai	72. Melchi
73. Levi	74. Matthat	75. Eli	76. Mary		

This genealogy descends from the Davidic line through Nathan, who is an otherwise little-known son of King David, mentioned briefly in the Old Testament.⁹ The intervening generations are a series of otherwise unknown names, but the number of generations is chronologically quite plausible.

Her parents

Though few commentators adhere to this view of St. Luke's genealogy, the name of Mary's father, Heli, agrees with the name given to The Virgin Lady's father in a tradition founded upon the report of the Protoevangelium of James, an apocryphal Gospel which dates from the end of the second century. According to this document the parents of Mary are Joachim and Anna. Now, the name *Joachim* is only a variation of *Heli* or *Eliachim*, substituting one Divine name (Yahweh) for the other (Eli, Elohim). The tradition as to the parents of Mary, found in the Gospel of James, is reproduced by St. John Damascene, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Germanus of Constantinople, pseudo-Epiphanius, pseudo-Hilarius, and St. Fulbert of Chartres. Some of these writers add that the birth of Mary was obtained by the fervent prayers of Joachim and Anna in their advanced age. As Joachim belonged to the royal family of David, so Anna is supposed to have been a descendant of the priestly family of Aaron; thus Mary sprang from both a royal and priestly family.

The hometown of Mary's parents

According to Luke 1:26, Mary lived in Nazareth, a city in Galilee, at the time of the Annunciation. A certain tradition maintains that she was conceived and born in the same house in which the Word became flesh.¹⁰ Another tradition based on

9. Wieland Willker (2009), *A Textual Commentary on the Greek Gospels*, vol. 3: Luke (6th ed.), TVU 39, <http://www-user.uni-bremen.de/~wie/TCG/TC-Luke.pdf>, retrieved 2009-03-25. Willker details the textual evidence underlying the NA27 reading.

10. Schuster and Holzammer, *Handbuch zur biblischen Geschichte*, Freiburg, 1910, II, 87, note 6

the Gospel of James regards Sephoris as the earliest home of Joachim and Anna, though they are said to have lived later on in Jerusalem, in a house called by St. Sophronius of Jerusalem *Probatice*

The birthplace of Mary

As to the place of the birth of The Blessed Lady, there are three different traditions to be considered.

First, the event has been placed in Bethlehem. This opinion rests on the authority of the following popes Paul II (1471), Julius II (1507), Leo X (1519), Paul III (1535), Pius IV (1565), Sixtus V (1586), and Innocent XII (1698) in their Bulls concerning the Holy House of Loreto. According to them, the Blessed Virgin was born, educated, and greeted by the angel in the Holy House. But these pontiffs hardly wish to decide an historical question; they merely express the opinion of their respective times.

A second tradition placed the birth of Our Blessed Lady in Sephoris, about three miles north of Bethlehem, the Roman Diocaesarea, and the residence of Herod Antipas till late in the life of Our Lord. The antiquity of this opinion may be inferred from the fact that under Constantine a church was erected in Sephoris to commemorate the residence of Joachim and Anna in that place.¹¹

The third tradition that Mary was born in Jerusalem, is the most probable one. We have seen that it rests upon the testimony of St. Sophronius, St. John Damascene, and upon the evidence of the recent finds in the Probatice.

The Presentation of Mary in the Temple

According to Exodus 13:2 and 13:12, all the Hebrew first-born male children had to be presented in the Temple. Such a law would lead pious Jewish parents to observe the same religious rite with regard to other favourite children. This inclines one to believe that Joachim and Anna presented in the Temple their child, which they had obtained by their long, fervent prayers.

Now, the Protoevangelium of James (7-8), and the writing entitled "De nativitate Mariae" (7-8),¹² state that Joachim and Anna, faithful to a vow they had made, presented the child Mary in the Temple when she was three years old; that the

11. cf. Lievin de Hamme, *Guide de la Terre-Sainte*, Jerusalem, 1887, III, 183

12. Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1876, pp. 14-17, 117-179

As the house of Joachim and Anna was not far distant from the Temple, we may suppose that the holy child Mary was often allowed to visit the sacred buildings in order to satisfy her devotion.

Jewish maidens were considered marriageable at the age of twelve years and six months, though the actual age of the bride varied with circumstances. The marriage was preceded by the betrothal, after which the bride legally belonged to the bridegroom, though she did not live with him till about a year later, when the marriage used to be celebrated. All this agrees well with the language of the Evangelists. St. Luke calls Mary "a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph".¹⁵ St. Matthew says, when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost".¹⁶ As we know of no brother of Mary, we must suppose that she was an heiress, and was obliged by the law of Numbers¹⁷ to marry a member of her tribe. The Law itself prohibited marriage within certain degrees of relationship, so that the marriage of even an heiress was left more or less to choice.

According to Jewish custom, the union between Joseph and Mary had to be arranged by the parents of St. Joseph. One might ask why Mary consented to her betrothal, though she was bound by her vow of virginity. As she had obeyed God's inspiration in making her vow, so she obeyed God's inspiration in becoming the affianced bride of Joseph. Besides, it would have been singular among the Jews to refuse betrothal or marriage; for all the Jewish maidens aspired after marriage as the accomplishment of a natural duty. Mary trusted the Divine guidance implicitly, and thus was certain that her vow would be kept even in her married state.

The Annunciation

Mary was a relative of Elizabeth, wife of the priest Zechariah, who herself was of the lineage of Aaron.¹⁸ Mary resided at Nazareth in Galilee while betrothed to Joseph of the House of David.¹⁹ During their betrothal—the first stage of a Jewish

15. Luke, 1:27

16. Matthew, 1:18

17. Numbers, 36:6

18. Luke, 1:5; 1:36

19. *Ibid.*, 1:26

marriage—the angel Gabriel announced to her that she was to become the mother of the promised Messiah.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.²⁰

Asking how this could be since "I have known no man," Mary was told about Elizabeth's miraculous conception and informed that the "power of the Most High will overshadow you".²¹ Mary immediately left for Zechariah's house, where she was greeted prophetically by Elizabeth and remained for three months. Matthew's gospel tells that Joseph intended to divorce her when he learned of her pregnancy. However, an angel informed him in a dream to be unafraid and take her as his wife, because her unborn child is "from the Holy Spirit".²²

The Visitation

According to Luke, the angel Gabriel told Mary at the time of the annunciation, "behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren".²³ Without doubting the truth of the angel's words, Mary determined at once to add to the pleasure of her pious relative. Hence the Evangelist continues: "And Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth".²⁴ Though Mary must have told Joseph of her intended visit, it is hard to determine whether he accompanied her; if the time of the journey happened to coincide with one of the festal seasons at which the Israelites had to go to the Temple, there would be little difficulty about companionship.

The place of Elizabeth's home has been variously located by different writers: it has been placed in Machaerus, over ten miles east of the Dead Sea, or in Hebron, or again in the ancient sacerdotal city of Jutta, about seven miles south of Hebron, or finally in Ain-Karim, the traditional St. John-in-the Mountain, nearly four miles west of Jerusalem.

20. Ibid., 1:32-33

21. Ibid., 1:35

22. Matthew, 1:18-25

23. Luke, 1:36

24. Evangelist, 1:39

After her journey of about thirty hours, Mary "entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth".²⁵ According to tradition, Elizabeth lived at the time of the visitation not in her city home, but in her village, about ten minutes distant from the city; formerly this place was marked by an upper and lower church.

"And it came to pass that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb." It was at this moment that God fulfilled the promise made by the angel to Zachary, "and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb";²⁶ in other words, the infant in Elizabeth's womb was cleansed from the stain of original sin. The fullness of the Holy Ghost in the infant overflowed, as it were, into the soul of his mother: "and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost".²⁷

Thus both child and mother were sanctified by the presence of Mary; filled as she was with the Holy Ghost, Elizabeth "cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Mary's answer is the canticle of praise commonly called "Magnificat".

The Evangelist closes his account of the Visitation with the words: "And Mary abode with her about three months; and she returned to her own house".²⁸ Many see in this brief statement of the Third Gospel an implied hint that Mary remained in the house of Zachary till the birth of John the Baptist, while others deny such an implication.

As the Feast of the Visitation was placed by the 43rd canon of the Council of Basle (A.D. 1441) on 2 July, the day following the Octave of the Feast of St. John Baptist, it has been inferred that Mary may have remained with Elizabeth until after the child's circumcision; but there is no further proof for this supposition.

25. Luke, 1:40

26. Ibid., 1:15

27. Ibid., 1:41

28. Luke, 1:56

Mary's pregnancy becomes known to Joseph

After her return from Elizabeth, Mary "was found with child, of the Holy Ghost".²⁹ As among the Jews, betrothal was a real marriage, the use of marriage after the time of espousals presented nothing unusual among them. Hence Mary's pregnancy could not astonish anyone except St. Joseph. As he did not know the mystery of the Incarnation, the situation must have been extremely painful both to him and to Mary. The Evangelist says: "Whereupon Joseph her husband being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately".³⁰ Mary left the solution of the difficulty to God, and God informed the perplexed spouse in His own time of the true condition of Mary. While Joseph "thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins".³¹

Not long after this revelation, Joseph concluded the ritual marriage contract with Mary. The Gospel simply says: "Joseph rising up from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife".³² While it is certain that between the betrothal and the marriage at least three months must have elapsed, during which Mary stayed with Elizabeth, it is impossible to determine the exact length of time between the two ceremonies. We do not know how long after the betrothal the angel announced to Mary the mystery of the Incarnation, nor do we know how long the doubt of Joseph lasted, before he was enlightened by the visit of the angel.

From the age at which Hebrew maidens became marriageable, it is possible that Mary gave birth to her Son when she was about thirteen or fourteen years of age. No historical document tells us how old she actually was at the time of the Nativity.

29. Matthew, 1:18

30. Ibid., 1:19

31. Ibid., 1:20-21

32. Ibid., 1:24

The journey to Bethlehem

St. Luke³³ explains how Joseph and Mary journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem in obedience to a decree of Caesar Augustus which prescribed a general enrolment. There are various reasons why Mary should have accompanied Joseph on this journey; she may not wished to lose Joseph's protection during the critical time of her pregnancy, or she may have followed a special Divine inspiration impelling her to go in order to fulfil the prophecies concerning her Divine Son, or again she may have been compelled to go by the civil law either as an heiress or to settle the personal tax payable by women over twelve years of age.

As the enrolment had brought a multitude of strangers to Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph found no room in the caravansary and had to take lodging in a grotto which served as a shelter for animals.

Mary gives birth to Jesus Christ

"And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered";³⁴ this language leaves it uncertain whether the birth of Jesus Christ took place immediately after Joseph and Mary had taken lodging in the grotto, or several days later. What is said about the shepherds "keeping the night watches over their flock"³⁵ shows that Christ was born in the night time.

After bringing forth her Son, Mary "wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger",³⁶ a sign that she did not suffer from the pain and weakness of childbirth. This inference agrees with the teaching of some of the principal Fathers and theologians: St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Damascene, the author of *Christus patiens*, St. Thomas, etc.

Shortly after the birth of the child, the shepherds, obedient to the angelic invitation, arrived in the grotto, "and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger".³⁷ We may suppose that the shepherds spread the glad tidings they had received during the night among their friends in Bethlehem, and that the

33. Luke, 2:1-5

34. Ibid., 2:6

35. Ibid., 2:8

36. Ibid., 2:7

37. Luke, 2:16

Holy Family was received by one of its pious inhabitants into more suitable lodgings.

Mary at the time of Circumcision of Jesus Christ

"And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus".³⁸ The rite of circumcision was performed either in the synagogue or in the home of the Child; it is impossible to determine where Jesus Christ's Circumcision took place. At any rate, His Blessed Mother must have been present at the ceremony.

The Presentation of Jesus Christ in the Temple

According to the Jewish custom,³⁹ the Jewish mother of a male child had to present herself forty days after his birth for legal purification; according to Exodus⁴⁰ and Numbers⁴¹ the first-born son had to be presented on the same occasion. Whatever reasons Mary and the Infant might have for claiming an exemption, they complied with the law. But, instead of offering a lamb, they presented the sacrifice of the poor, consisting of a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons. In 2 Corinthians,⁴² St. Paul informs the Corinthians that Jesus Christ "being rich. . .became poor, for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich". Even more acceptable to God than Mary's poverty was the readiness with which she surrendered her Divine Son to the good pleasure of His Heavenly Father.

After the ceremonial rites had been complied with, holy Simeon took the Child in his arms, and thanked God for the fulfilment of his promises; he drew attention to the universality of the salvation that was to come through Messianic redemption "prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel".⁴³ Mary and Joseph now began to know their Divine Child more fully; they "were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him".⁴⁴ As if to prepare The Blessed Mother for the mystery of the

38. Ibid., 2:21

39. Leviticus, 12:2-8

40. Exodus, 13:2

41. Numbers, 18:15

42. 2 Corinthians, 8:9

43. Luke, 2:31 sq.

44. Ibid., 2:33

cross, holy Simeon said to her: "Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed."⁴⁵ Mary had suffered her first great sorrow at the time when Joseph was hesitating about taking her for his wife; she experienced her second great sorrow when she heard the words of holy Simeon.

Though the incident of the prophetess Anna had a more general bearing, for she "spoke of him (the Child) to all that looked for the redemption of Israel",⁴⁶ it must have added greatly to the wonder of Joseph and Mary. The Evangelist's concluding remark, "after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city Nazareth".⁴⁷

The Visit of the Magi

After the Presentation, the Holy Family either returned to Bethlehem directly, or went first to Nazareth, and then moved into the city of David. At any rate, after the "wise men from the east" had followed the Divine guidance to Bethlehem, "entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh".⁴⁸ The Evangelist does not mention Joseph; not that he was not present, but because Mary occupies the principal place near the Child.

The flight to Egypt and return there from

Soon after the departure of the wise men Joseph received the message from the angel of the Lord to fly into Egypt with the Child and His mother on account of the evil designs of Herod; the holy man's ready obedience is briefly described by the Evangelist in the words: "who arose, and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt".⁴⁹ Persecuted Jews had ever sought a refuge in Egypt;⁵⁰ about the time of Christ Jewish colonists were especially numerous in the land of the Nile; according to Philo they numbered at least a million. In Leontopolis, in the district of Heliopolis, the Jews had a temple (160 B.C.-A.D.

45. Ibid., 2:34-35

46. Ibid., 2:38

47. Ibid., 2:39

48. Matthew, 2:11

49. Ibid., 2:14

50. cf. 1 Kings, 11:40; 2 Kings, 25:26

73) which rivalled in splendour the temple in Jerusalem. The Holy Family might therefore expect to find in Egypt a certain amount of help and protection.

On the other hand, it required a journey of at least ten days from Bethlehem to reach the nearest habitable districts of Egypt. We do not know by what road the Holy Family effected its flight; they may have followed the ordinary road through Hebron; or they may have gone by way of Eleutheropolis and Gaza, or again they may have passed west of Jerusalem towards the great military road of Joppe.

There is hardly any historical document which will assist in determining where the Holy Family lived in Egypt, nor do we know how long the enforced exile lasted.

When Joseph received from the angel the news of Herod's death and the command to return into the land of Israel, he "arose, and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel".⁵¹ The news that Archelaus ruled in Judea prevented Joseph from settling in Bethlehem, as had been his intention; "warned in sleep [by the angel, he] retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth".⁵² In all these details Mary simply followed the guidance of Joseph, who in his turn received the Divine manifestations as head of the Holy Family.

Prophecy of Hosea

St. Matthew⁵³ cites Hosea 11:1 as prophetically fulfilled in the return of Joseph, Mary and Jesus from Egypt: "... and out of Egypt I called My son".

Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 has been explained in several ways. A *sensus plenior* approach states that the text in Hosea contains a meaning intended by God and acknowledged by Matthew, but unknown to Hosea. A typological reading interprets the fulfillment as found in the national history of Israel and the antitypical fulfillment as found an event in the personal history of Jesus. Matthew's use of typological interpretation may also be seen in his use of Isaiah 7:14 and 9:1, and Jeremiah 31:15.

51. Matthew, 2:21

52. *Ibid.*, 2:22-23

53. *Ibid.*, 2:15

The Holy Family in Nazareth

The life of the Holy Family in Nazareth was that of the ordinary poor tradesman. According to Matthew the townsfolk asked "Is not this the carpenter's son?";⁵⁴ the question, as expressed in the second Gospel,⁵⁵ shows a slight variation, "Is not this the carpenter?" While Joseph gained the livelihood for the Holy Family by his daily work, Mary attended to the various duties of housekeeper. St. Luke briefly says of Jesus: "And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in him".⁵⁶ The weekly Sabbath and the annual great feasts interrupted the daily routine of life in Nazareth.

The finding of Jesus Christ in the Temple

According to the law of Exodus,⁵⁷ only the men were obliged to visit the Temple on the three solemn feasts of the year; but the women often joined the men to satisfy their devotion. St. Luke informs that "his (the child's) parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the pasch".⁵⁸ Probably the Child Jesus was left in the home of friends or relatives during the days of Mary's absence. According to the opinion of some writers, the Child did not give any sign of His Divinity during the years of His infancy, so as to increase the merits of Joseph's and Mary's faith based on what they had seen and heard at the time of the Incarnation and the birth of Jesus. Jewish Doctors of the Law maintained that a boy became a son of the law at the age of twelve years and one day; after that he was bound by the legal precepts.

The evangelist supplies us here with the information that, "when he was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents knew it not".⁵⁹ Probably it was after the second festal day that Joseph and Mary returned with the other Galilean pilgrims; the law did not require a longer sojourn in the Holy City. On the first day the caravan usually

54. Ibid., 13:55

55. Mark, 6:3

56. Luke, 2:40

57. Exodus, 23:17

58. Luke, 2:41

59. Ibid., 2:42-43

made a four hours' journey, and rested for the night in Beroth on the northern boundary of the former Kingdom of Juda.

The crusaders built in this place a beautiful Gothic church to commemorate The Blessed Lady's sorrow when she "sought him (her child) among their kinsfolks and acquaintance, and not finding him, . . . returned into Jerusalem, seeking him".⁶⁰ The Child was not found among the pilgrims who had come to Beroth on their first day's journey; nor was He found on the second day, when Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem; it was only on the third day that they "found him [Jesus] in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. . . And seeing him, they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing".⁶¹ Mary's faith did not allow her to fear a mere accident for her Divine Son; but she felt that His behaviour had changed entirely from His customary exhibition of docility and subjection. The feeling caused the question, why Jesus had treated His parents in such a way. Jesus simply answered: "How is it that you sought me? did you not know, that I must be about my father's business?".⁶² Neither Joseph nor Mary understood these words as a rebuke; "they understood not the word that he spoke to them".⁶³ It has been suggested by a recent writer that the last clause may be understood as meaning, "they (i.e., the bystanders) understood not the word he spoke unto them (i.e., to Mary and Joseph)".

The remainder of Jesus Christ's youth

After this, Jesus "went down with them, and came to Nazareth" where He began a life of work and poverty, eighteen years of which are summed up by the Evangelist in the few words, and he "was subject to them, and. . . advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men".⁶⁴ The interior life of Mary is briefly indicated by the inspired writer in the expression, "and his mother kept all these words in her heart".⁶⁵ A similar expression had been used in Luke, "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart".⁶⁶ Thus Mary observed the

60. Ibid., 2:44-45

61. Ibid., 2:40-48

62. Ibid., 2:49

63. Ibid., 2:50

64. Luke, 2:51-52

65. Luke, 2:51

66. Luke, 2:19

daily life of her Son, and grew in His knowledge and love by meditating on what she saw and heard.

The miracle in Cana

The evangelists connect Mary's name with three different events in Our Lord's public life: with the miracle in Cana, with His preaching, and with His passion. The first of these incidents is related in.⁶⁷

There was a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. . .and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is that to me and to thee? my hour is not yet come.

One naturally supposes that one of the contracting parties was related to Mary, and that Jesus had been invited on account of his mother's relationship. The couple must have been rather poor, since the wine was actually failing. Mary wishes to save her friends from the shame of not being able to provide properly for the guests, and has recourse to her Divine Son. She merely states their need, without adding any further petition. In addressing women, Jesus uniformly employs the word "woman",⁶⁸ an expression used by classical writers as a respectful and honourable address. The above cited passages show that in the language of Jesus the address "woman" has a most respectful meaning. The clause "what is that to me and to thee" renders the Greek *ti emoi kai soi*, which in its turn corresponds to the Hebrew phrase *mah li walakh*. This latter occurs in Judges 11:12; 2 Samuel 16:10; 19:23; 1 Kings 17:18; 2 Kings 3:13; 9:18; 2 Chronicles 35:21. The New Testament shows equivalent expressions in Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; 8:28; Matthew 27:19. The meaning of the phrase varies according to the character of the speakers, ranging from a most pronounced opposition to a courteous compliance.

Such a variable meaning makes it hard for the translator to find an equally variable equivalent. "What have I to do with thee", "this is neither your nor my business", "why art thou troublesome to me", "allow me to attend to this", are some of the renderings suggested. In general, the words seem to refer to well or ill-meant importunity which they endeavour to remove. The last part of Our

67. John, 2:1-10

68. Matthew, 15:28; Luke, 13:12; John, 4:21; 8:10; 19:26; 20:15

Lord's answer presents less difficulty to the interpreter: "my hour is not yet come", cannot refer to the precise moment at which the need of wine will require the miraculous intervention of Jesus; for in the language of St. John "my hour" or "the hour" denotes the time preordained for some important event.⁶⁹ Hence the meaning of Our Lord's answer is: "Why are you troubling me by asking me for such an intervention? The divinely appointed time for such a manifestation has not yet come"; or, "why are you worrying? has not the time of manifesting my power come?" The former of these meanings implies that on account of the intercession of Mary Jesus anticipated the time set for the manifestation of His miraculous power; the second meaning is obtained by understanding the last part of Our Lord's words as a question, as was done by St. Gregory of Nyssa, and by the Arabic version of Tatian's "Diatessaron" (Rome, 1888). Mary understood her Son's words in their proper sense; she merely warned the waiters, "Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye".⁷⁰ There can be no question of explaining Jesus' answer in the sense of a refusal.

Mary during the apostolic life of Jesus Christ

During the apostolic life of Jesus, Mary effaced herself almost completely. Not being called to aid her Son directly in His ministry, she did not wish to interfere with His work by her untimely presence. In Nazareth she was regarded as a common Jewish mother; St. Matthew introduces the people of the town as saying: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude: and his sisters, are they not all with us?"⁷¹ Since the people wish to lower Jesus Christ's esteem by their language, we must infer that Mary belonged to the lower social order of townspeople. The parallel passage of St. Mark reads, "Is not this the carpenter?" instead of, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Since both evangelists omit the name of St. Joseph, we may infer that he had died before this episode took place.

At first sight, it seems that Jesus Himself depreciated the dignity of His Blessed Mother. When He was told: "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee", He answered: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my

69. John, 4:21-23; 5:25-28; 7:30; 8:29; 12:23; 13:1; 16:21; 17:1

70. Ibid., 2:5

71. Matthew, 3:55-56; cf. Mark, 6:3

brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and my sister, and my mother".⁷²

On another occasion, "a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck. But he said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it".⁷³

In reality, Jesus in both these passages places the bond that unites the soul with God above the natural bond of parentage which unites the Mother of God with her Divine Son. The latter dignity is not belittled; as men naturally appreciate it more easily, it is employed by Our Lord as a means to make known the real value of holiness. Jesus, therefore, really, praises His mother in a most emphatic way; for she excelled the rest of men in holiness not less than in dignity. Most probably, Mary was found also among the holy women who ministered to Jesus and His apostles during their ministry in Galilee;⁷⁴ the Evangelists do not mention any other public appearance of Mary during the time of Jesus's journeys through Galilee or Judea. But we must remember that when the sun appears, even the brightest stars become invisible.

Mary during the Passion of Jesus Christ

Since the Passion of Jesus Christ occurred during the paschal week, we naturally expect to find Mary at Jerusalem. Simeon's prophecy found its fulfilment principally during the time of Jesus Christ's suffering. According to a tradition, His Blessed Mother met Jesus as He was carrying His cross to Golgotha.

Mary and Jesus Christ's Resurrection

The inspired record of the incidents connected with Christ's Resurrection do not mention Mary; but neither do they pretend to give a complete account of all that Jesus did or said. The Fathers too are silent as to Mary's share in the joys of her Son's triumph over death. Still, St. Ambrose states expressly: "Mary therefore saw the Resurrection of the Lord; she was the first who saw it and believed. Mary Magdalen too saw it, though she still wavered".⁷⁵ George of Nicomedia infers from Mary's share in Our Lord's sufferings that before all others and more than all

72. Luke, 11:27-28, Matthew, 12:47-50; cf. Mark, 3:31-35; Luke, 8:19-21

73. Matthew, 12:47-50; cf. Mark, 3:31-35; Luke, 8:19-21

74. cf. Luke, 8:2-3

75. *De Virginit*, vol.111, p.14

she must have shared in the triumph of her Son. In the twelfth century, an apparition of the risen Saviour to His Blessed Mother is admitted by Rupert of Deutz , and also by Eadmer St. Bernardin of Siena , St. Ignatius of Loyola , Suarez , Maldonado , etc. That the risen Christ should have appeared first to His Blessed Mother, agrees at least with our pious expectations.

Though the Gospels do not expressly tell us so, we may suppose that Mary was present when Jesus showed himself to a number of disciples in Galilee and at the time of His Ascension.⁷⁶ Moreover, it is not improbable that Jesus visited His Blessed Mother repeatedly during the forty days after His Resurrection.

Post-Pentecostal life of Mary

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost had descended on Mary as He came on the Apostles and Disciples gathered together in the upper room at Jerusalem. No doubt, the words of St. John,⁷⁷ "and from that hour the disciple took her to his own", refer not merely to the time between Easter and Pentecost, but they extend to the whole of Mary's later life. Still, the care of Mary did not interfere with John's Apostolic ministry. Even the inspired records⁷⁸ show that the apostle was absent from Jerusalem on several occasions, though he must have taken part in the Council of Jerusalem, A.D. 51 or 52. We may also suppose that in Mary especially were verified the words of: "And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers".⁷⁹ Thus Mary was an example and a source of encouragement to the early Christian community. At the same time, it must be confessed that we do not possess any authentic documents bearing directly on Mary's post-Pentecostal life.

Place of her life, death, and burial

As to tradition, there is some testimony for Mary's temporary residence in or near Ephesus, but the evidence for her permanent home in Jerusalem is much stronger. It has been seen that there is no absolute certainty as to the place in which Mary lived after the day of Pentecost. Though it is more probable that she remained uninterruptedly in or near Jerusalem, she may have resided for a while in the vicinity of Ephesus, and this may have given rise to the tradition of her Ephesian

76. cf. Matthew, 28:7, 10, 16; Mark, 16:7

77. John, 19:27

78. Acts, 8:14-17; Galatians, 1:18-19; Acts, 21:18

79. Acts, 2:42

death and burial. There is still less historical information concerning the particular incidents of her life. St. Epiphanius doubts even the reality of Mary's death; but the universal belief of the Church does not agree with the private opinion of St. Epiphanius. Mary's death was not necessarily the effect of violence; it was undergone neither as an expiation or penalty, nor as the effect of disease from which, like her Divine Son, she was exempt. Since the Middle Ages the view prevails that she died of love, her great desire to be united to her Son either dissolving the ties of body and soul, or prevailing on God to dissolve them. Her passing away is a sacrifice of love completing the dolorous sacrifice of her life. It is the death in the kiss of the Lord (*in osculo Domini*), of which the just die. There is no certain tradition as to the year of Mary's death.

Baronius in his Annals relies on a passage in the Chronicon of Eusebius for his assumption that Mary died in 48 C.E.⁸⁰ It is now believed that the passage of the Chronicon is a later interpolation. Nirschl relies on a tradition found in Clement of Alexandria⁸¹ and Apollonius⁸² which refers to a command of Our Lord that the Apostles were to preach twelve years in Jerusalem and Palestine before going among the nations of the world; hence he too arrives at the conclusion that Mary died A.D. 48.

Her Assumption into Heaven

The Assumption of The Virgin Lady into heaven has been treated as a special event The feast of the Assumption is most probably the oldest among all the feasts of Mary properly so called. As to art, the assumption was a favourite subject of the school of Siena which generally represents Mary as being carried to heaven in a mandorla.

80. Cf. Nirschl, *Das Grab der hl. Jungfrau Mariae*, Mainz, 1896, p.48

81. *Stromat*, vol.vi, p.5

82. Eusebius, *Church History*, p.21

SECTION TWO: CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

According to mainstream Christian doctrine, Mary remained a virgin at least until Jesus was born.⁸³ Most Protestants do not specifically claim that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus, but the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox Churches, and many in the Anglican Church maintain that Mary also remained a virgin throughout the rest of her life.⁸⁴

The New Testament recounts her presence at important stages during her son's adult life (e.g., at the Wedding at Cana and at his crucifixion). Also, she was present at communal prayers immediately after Jesus' Ascension. Narratives of her life are further elaborated in later Christian apocrypha, who give the names of her parents as Joachim and Anne. Christian churches teach various doctrines concerning Mary, and she is the subject of much veneration. The area of Christian theology concerning her is known as Mariology. The conception of her Son Jesus is believed to have been an act of the Holy Spirit and to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah that a virgin would bear a son who would be called Emmanuel ("God with us"),⁸⁵ The Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches venerate her as the Ever-Virgin Mother of God (Theotokos), who was specially favored by God's grace (Catholics hold that she was conceived without original sin) and who, when her earthly life had been completed, was assumed bodily into Heaven. Some Protestants, including certain Lutherans and Methodists, embrace veneration of Mary and also hold some of these doctrines. Others, especially in the Reformed tradition, question or even condemn the devotional and doctrinal position of Mary in the above traditions.

83. Mt. 1:25, Lk. 1:34–35

84. "Catholic Encyclopedia: The Annunciation". Newadvent.org, 1907-03-01. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01541c.htm>. Retrieved 2010-03-02; also see please "Catholic Encyclopedia: The Blessed Virgin Mary". Newadvent.org, 1912-10-01. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464b.htm>. Retrieved 2010-03-02

85. The Hebrew text is ambiguous as to whether the woman in question is a "young woman" or a "virgin"; St. Matthew, following the Jewish Septuagint translation into Greek gives "virgin" unambiguously.

The Roman Catholic tradition has a well established philosophy for the study and veneration of the Virgin Mary via the field of Mariology with Pontifical schools such as the Marianum specifically devoted to this task.⁸⁶

Immaculate Conception of Mary

Catholics believe in the Immaculate Conception of Mary, namely that she was filled with grace from the very moment of her conception in her mother's womb and preserved from the stain of original sin. The Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church has a liturgical feast by that name, kept on 8 December.⁸⁷ Mary, under title of the Immaculate Conception, is the patroness of the United States. (This doctrine is often confused with the Virgin Birth of Jesus and the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, both discussed below.)

The corresponding feast in other rites may go by other names, such as, in the Byzantine Rite, the Feast of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos. However, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is part of the teaching of the Catholic Church, and the title of "The Immaculate Conception" has been given to many Eastern Catholic church buildings, including the cathedral in Detroit of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.⁸⁸

Eastern Orthodox reject the Immaculate Conception,⁸⁹ principally because their understanding of ancestral sin (the Greek term corresponding to the Latin "original sin") differs from that of the Roman Catholic Church, but also on the basis that without original sin (i.e. fallen human nature), Mary would have likewise been separated from the rest of us by a special condition.⁹⁰ Some Orthodox believe that Mary was conceived like any one of us, inherited the sin of Adam, but was cleansed from it when Christ (God incarnate) took form within her. This, coupled with the belief that she never committed any sin made her the

86. Mariology Society of America <http://www.mariologicalsociety.com>; also see please <http://www.servidimaria.org/en/attualita/promotori2/promotori2.htm>

87. "Catholic Encyclopedia: Immaculate Conception". Newadvent.org. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm>. Retrieved 2010-03-02.

88. For other Eastern Catholic churches dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in Pennsylvania alone, see The Unofficial Directory of Eastern Catholic Churches in Pennsylvania

89. "Conception of the Theotokos". Orthodox Wiki. 2009-02-15. http://orthodoxwiki.org/Conception_of_the_Theotokos. Retrieved 2010-03-02.

90. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin Books, 1963, pp. 263–264

perfect vessel. Nevertheless, this remains an area on which the Orthodox Church has not made any definitive statement, so a variety of views may be found.

Calvinist and Lutheran Protestants reject the idea that Mary was preserved from original sin from her very first moment.⁹¹ However, many Protestants of the Pentecostal tradition, especially those influenced by Charles Finney, do not believe in original sin in the sense that Catholics do, if they affirm the doctrine at all.⁹² This renders the Immaculate Conception a non-question for them.

This doctrine must be contrasted with the more widely held doctrine that Mary committed no sin in her life. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception proclaims not only that Mary committed no actual sin, but that she was preserved from original sin, and this from the moment of her conception. Many may highly venerate Mary (as do many Protestants, Anglicans, and certainly Eastern Orthodox), but do not thereby indicate their acceptance of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as taught by the Roman Catholic Church.

Virgin birth of Jesus

The Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed both refer to Mary as "the Virgin Mary". This alludes to the belief that Mary conceived Jesus through the action of God the Holy Spirit, and not through intercourse with Joseph or anyone else. That she was a virgin at this time is affirmed by Eastern Christianity, Roman Catholicism and many Protestants. Rejection of this is considered heretical by many, but not all, traditional Christian groups.

The Gospel of Matthew describes Mary as a virgin who fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah.⁹³ The Hebrew word *almah* that appears in this verse, and the Greek word *parthenos* that Jews used to translate it in the Greek Septuagint that Matthew quotes here, have been the subjects of dispute for almost two millennia, since *almah* simply means young woman, rather than virgin (in Hebrew, the word *betulah* would be an unambiguous translation). This disagreement is related to the question of whether Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of Jesus' birth. Regardless of the

91. "Religious Tolerance comparison of Roman Catholic and Protestant beliefs". [Religioustolerance.org. http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_capr.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_capr.htm). Retrieved 2010-03-02.

92. "Charles Finney: The Controversial Evangelist". [Enrichmentjournal.ag.org. http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200601/200601_118_Finney.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200601/200601_118_Finney.cfm). Retrieved 2010-03-02

93. Isaiah, 7:14

meaning of this verse, it is clear that the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke consider Jesus' conception not the result of intercourse and assert that Mary had "no relations with man" before Jesus' birth.⁹⁴

Perpetual virginity of Mary

The perpetual virginity of Mary, a doctrine of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox Christianity affirms Mary's "real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made Man".⁹⁵ According to this Church dogma, Mary was ever-virgin (Greek *ἀειπαρθενος*) for the remainder of her life, making Jesus her biological and only son, whose conception and birth are held to be miraculous. The doctrine of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary was also upheld by all of the early Protestant Reformers including Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli.⁹⁶ A number of New Testament passages are sometimes interpreted as contradicting the doctrine. St. Matthew says of Jesus "... aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?"⁹⁷ suggesting that Jesus had siblings. St Mark records an event at which "... Jesus' mother and brothers arrived".⁹⁸ However, since at least the time of the Desert Fathers these verses have usually been interpreted as referring to cousins or relatives of Jesus.⁹⁹

Dormition and assumption

For both the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches Mary's assumption into heaven is seen as an instance of the resurrection of the body.

According to Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox tradition, between three and fifteen years after Christ's Ascension, in either Jerusalem or Ephesus, Mary died while surrounded by the apostles. Later when the apostles opened her tomb, they found it empty and concluded that she had been bodily assumed into Heaven.¹⁰⁰

This doctrine was present in apocryphal works since the end of the fourth century, and was formally taught by St. Gregory of Tours in the sixth century. The bodily

94. Mt., 1:18; Mt., 1:25; Lk., 1:34

95. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, P. 499

96. <http://www.mariology.com/sections/reformers.htm>

97. Matthew, 13:55–56

98. Mark, 3:31

99. *Revue Biblique*, 1895, pp. 173–183.

100. "Mary, Mother of Jesus." Wikipedia. January 4, 2005

Assumption of Mary seems to have been accepted in both Western and Eastern Churches from the sixth century onwards, and went virtually uncontested until the Reformation.¹⁰¹

In 1950, speaking *ex cathedra* (infallibly) in his encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Dogma of the Assumption, in which he stated that "at the end of her earthly course, Mary was assumed into heavenly glory, body and soul."¹⁰²

101. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., "Mary, the Blessed Virgin" *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford UP, 1997, pp. 1047-48

102. *Munificentissimus Deus - Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XII*, issued November 1, 1950

SECTION THREE : CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF MARY

Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran, as well as some Methodist Christians venerate Mary. This veneration especially takes the form of prayer for intercession with her Son, Jesus Christ. The Hail Mary prayer is one such example. Additionally it includes composing poems and songs in Mary's honor, painting icons or carving statues of her, and conferring titles on Mary that reflect her position among the saints. She is also one of the most highly venerated saints in both the Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches; and several major feast days of the liturgical year are devoted to her.

Roman Catholic view

The "Blessed Virgin Mary", sometimes shortened to "The Blessed Virgin" or "The Virgin Mary" is a traditional title specifically used by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholics, and some others to describe Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.

The belief in the corporeal assumption of Mary was formally declared to be dogma by Pope Pius XII in 1950. Pope Pius XII states in *Munificentissimus Deus*: "We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory. Hence if anyone, which God forbid, should dare willfully to deny or to call into doubt that which we have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic Faith".¹⁰³ This is an example of an invocation of papal infallibility.

The dogma does not state if Mary's assumption occurred before or after any physical death. As stated by Ludwig Ott "the fact of her death is almost generally accepted by the Fathers and Theologians, and is expressly affirmed in the Liturgy of the Church",¹⁰⁴ to which he adduces a number of helpful citations, and concludes that "for Mary, death, in consequence of her freedom from original sin and from personal sin, was not a consequence of punishment of sin. However, it seems fitting that Mary's body, which was by nature mortal, should be, in conformity with that of her Divine Son, subject to the general law of death." In keeping with the historical consensus of the Church, Pius XII himself almost

103. Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved on 2010-03-25

104. Bk., III, Pt., 3, Ch., 2, p.6

certainly rejected the notion of Mary's "immortality" (the idea that she never suffered death), preferring the more widely accepted understanding that her assumption took place after her physical death. The Feast of the Assumption is celebrated on August 15.

In a less dogmatic context, the Roman Catholic tradition also has a more pronounced emphasis on Acts of Reparation and the Sorrows of Mary and a number of prayers for this purpose appear in the official *Raccolta* Catholic prayer book.

Eastern Orthodox view

In the Eastern Orthodox, Eastern Catholic and Oriental Orthodox traditions, the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, died, after having lived a holy life. Eastern Orthodox do not believe in the immaculate conception, with the exception of some Old Believers, on the contrary believing that she was the best example of a human lifestyle. The surviving apostles were present at and conducted her funeral. However Thomas was delayed and arrived a few days later. He said that he would not believe this had happened unless he saw the body of Mary. Peter expressed dismay that Thomas continued to doubt what the other apostles told him. Upon opening the tomb, Thomas revealed that he had witnessed the absent body of the Theotokos being taken to heaven by angels. While many Orthodox Christians believe this to be true, the Orthodox have never formally made it a doctrine. It remains a holy mystery. The Eastern Orthodox and Greek-Catholics celebrate this event on August 15. The Oriental Orthodox celebrate it on August 22. The feast day of the Dormition ("falling asleep") of the Theotokos is preceded by a two week fasting period.¹⁰⁵

Anglican view on Mary

Mary's special position within God's purpose of salvation as "God bearer" (theotokos) is recognised in a number of ways by some Anglican Christians. The Church affirms in the historic creeds that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, and celebrates the feast days of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. This feast is called in older prayer books the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 2 February. The Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin on March 25 was from before the time of Bede until the 18th century New Year's Day in England.

105. Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved on 2010-03-25

The Annunciation is called the "Annunciation of our Lady" in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Anglicans also celebrate in the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin on May 31, though in some provinces the traditional date of July 2 is kept. The feast of the St. Mary the Virgin is observed on the traditional day of the Assumption, August 15. The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin is kept on September 8.

The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is kept in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, on December 8. In certain Anglo-Catholic parishes this feast is called the Immaculate Conception. Again, the Assumption of Mary is believed in by most Anglo-Catholics, but is considered a pious opinion by moderate Anglicans. Protestant minded Anglicans reject the celebration of these feasts.

Prayer with the Blessed Virgin Mary varies according to churchmanship. Low Church Anglicans rarely invoke the Blessed Virgin except in certain hymns, such as the second stanza of *Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones*. Following the 19th century Oxford Movement, Anglo-Catholics frequently pray the rosary, the *Angelus*, *Regina Caeli*, and other litanies and anthems of Our Lady. The Anglican Society of Mary maintains chapters in many countries. The purpose of the society is to foster devotion to Mary among Anglicans.¹⁰⁶

Protestant views of Mary

Protestant churches originated in Western Europe after 1517. The discussion of Protestant views on Mary and mariology is difficult, because, unlike the Orthodox or Roman Catholic Christians, Protestants have a wide range of conflicting views. Therefore Protestant views usually make generalization about Mary difficult.

Some early Protestants venerated and honored Mary. Martin Luther said Mary is "the highest woman", that "we can never honour her enough", that "the veneration of Mary is inscribed in the very depths of the human heart" and that Christians should "wish that everyone know and respect her". John Calvin said, "It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of his Son, granted her the highest honor." Zwingli said, "I esteem immensely the Mother of God" and "The more the honor and love of Christ increases among men, so much the esteem and honor given to Mary should grow". Thus the idea of respect and

106. Taken from Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia..Retrieved on 2010-03-25

high honour was not rejected by the first Protestants; the practical implications for Mariology are still a matter of debate.¹⁰⁷

John Wycliffe's views on Mary

The pre-Lutheran reformer, John Wycliffe, who in many other areas rejected Catholic creedalism, reflected the Marian spirit of the later Middle Ages in one of his earlier sermons: "It seems to me impossible that we should obtain the reward of Heaven without the help of Mary. There is no sex or age, no rank or position, of anyone in the whole human race, which has no need to call for the help of the Holy Virgin".¹⁰⁸

Martin Luther's views on Mary

Despite Luther's harsh polemics against his Roman Catholic opponents over issues concerning Mary and the saints, theologians appear to agree that Luther adhered to the Marian decrees of the ecumenical councils and dogmas of the church. He held fast to the belief that Mary was a perpetual virgin and the Theotokos or Mother of God.¹⁰⁹ Special attention is given to the assertion, that Luther some three-hundred years before the dogmatization of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX in 1854, was a firm adherent of that view. Others maintain that Luther in later years changed his position on the Immaculate Conception, which, at that time was undefined in the Church, maintaining however the sinlessness of Mary throughout her life.¹¹⁰ Regarding the Assumption of Mary, he stated, that the Bible did not say anything about it. Important to him was the belief that Mary and the saints do live on after death.¹¹¹ "Throughout his career as a priest-professor-reformer, Luther preached, taught, and argued about the veneration of Mary with a verbosity that ranged from childlike piety to

107. Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia., Retrieved on 2010-03-25

108. "Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary". *Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: Robert Appleton Company. 913. [http:// en. wikisource.org/ wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_\(1913\)/Devotion_to_the_Blessed_Virgin_Mary](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Devotion_to_the_Blessed_Virgin_Mary)

109. Remigius Bäumer, *Marienlexikon Gesamtausgabe*, Leo Scheffczyk, ed., (Regensburg: Institutum Marianum, 1994), 190

110. *Bäumer*, 191

111. *Bäumer*, 190

sophisticated polemics. His views are intimately linked to his christocentric theology and its consequences for liturgy and piety."¹¹² Luther, while revering Mary, came to criticize the "Papists" for blurring the line, between high admiration of the grace of God wherever it is seen in a human being, and religious service given to another creature. He considered the Roman Catholic practice of celebrating saints' days and making intercessory requests addressed especially to Mary and other departed saints to be idolatry.¹¹³

John Calvin's views on Mary

John Calvin accepted Mary's perpetual virginity and the title "Mother of God". He considered himself the real follower of Mary[citation needed] because he freed her from misuses of these titles and undeserved "Papist" honour which is due only to Jesus Christ, and for returning this honour to him alone.¹¹⁴ Calvin stated that Mary cannot be the advocate of the faithful, since she needs God's grace as much as any other human being.¹¹⁵ If the Catholic Church praises her as Queen of Heaven, it is blasphemous and contradicts her own intention, because she is praised and not God.¹¹⁶

Karl Barth's views on Mary

Karl Barth (1886-1968), a Reformed Protestant, was a leading 20th century theologian. Aware of the common dogmatic tradition of the early Church, Barth fully accepted the dogma of Mary as the Mother of God. In his view, through Mary, Jesus belongs to the human race; through Jesus, Mary is Mother of God. Barth also agreed with the Dogma of the Virgin Birth. It meant to him that Jesus

112. Eric W. Gritsch, H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess (eds.), ed., *The One Mediator, The Saints, and Mary, Lutherans and Roman Catholic in Dialogue*, VII. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, pp. 235

113. *Luther's Works*, 47, pp. 45f; see also, *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, VIII, p. 29

114. John Calvin. "On John 2:1-11"; *Commentary on John 1*. [http:// www. ccel.org/ ccel/ calvin/calcom34.viii.i.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom34.viii.i.html). Retrieved 2008-05-19

115. John Calvin, *Works, Serm. de la proph, de Christ*: Op.cit., 35, 686

116. John Calvin. "On Luke 1:46-50". *Harmony of the Evangelists. 1*, [http:// www.ccel. org/ ccel/ calvin/calcom31.ix.ix.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom31.ix.ix.html). Retrieved 2008-05-19

as a human does not have a father and that as the Son of God he has no mother. The Holy Spirit, through whom Mary conceived, is not just any spirit, but it is God himself whose act must be understood spiritually and not physically.¹¹⁷ Mary is "full of grace" according to Barth, but this grace is not earned but totally given to her. Regarding Mary's virginity after birth, Barth argued that the Church adopted this position not because of Mary but in defence of its Christology. Barth considered the Roman Catholic veneration of Mary a terrible mistake and heresy.¹¹⁸

117. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatic I*, 2, 219

118. "Wherever Mary is venerated, and devotion to her takes place, there the Church of Christ does not exist" (*Church Dogmatics*, 1, 2, 154). "Catholic mariology is a cancer, a sick theological development, and cancers should be cut out" (*Church Dogmatics*, 1, 2, 153). "The heresy of the Catholic Church is its mariology and Marian cult." (*Church Dogmatics*, 1, 2, 157)

SECTION FOUR : MARY IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Mary in the Scriptures of 1st Century

"God sent his only Son, born of a woman . . . ".¹¹⁹ Except for this reference, no mention is made of Mary in the earliest Christian writings -- the letters of St. Paul. Only the four Gospels, written between 65 and 100 A.D. give any details of her life. They are the prime sources for later Christian devotion to Mary.

Mark's Gospel says simply that Jesus is "the Son of Mary," yet relates nothing about the events of his birth and family life. For Mark, being a disciple who believes in Jesus is more important than any ties of flesh and blood. He recalls Mary as a believer, a disciple of her Son, who does the will of God.¹²⁰

Luke's beautiful narration of the events surrounding the birth of Christ portrays Mary as "the handmaid of the Lord." Drawing, probably, on early Jewish-Christian devotion to the mother of Jesus, his Gospel presents her as one of the faithful remnant of Israel, "the Anawim," "the people of the land" who, despite the hardships they experienced from one conqueror to another, remained faithful to their God. Complete trust in God, no matter what comes, is their strength. Luke's Gospel pictures Mary as a believer who is a model for every ordinary Christian. Life can be transformed when someone says to God, as she did: "Be it done to me according to your word."

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant, from now on will all ages call me blessed".¹²¹

Matthew's Gospel, intent on tracing Jesus' descent from David through Joseph, presents Mary less conspicuously than Luke. This Gospel, however, strongly insists on Mary's unique virginal conception: ". . . before they lived together she was found with child through the Holy Spirit".¹²² Later, this belief in her virginal conception would bring Mary an honored title: the Mother of God.

John's Gospel, the last of the four, speaks twice of Mary. At Cana in Galilee she intercedes with her son for a newly married couple and he changes the water in

119. Gal., 4:4

120. Mk., 3:31-35

121. Lk., 1:16-18

122. Mt., 1:18

wine.¹²³ On Calvary she stands beneath the cross at Jesus' death.¹²⁴ At Cana and on Calvary Jesus calls his mother "Woman," which early Christian tradition saw as an allusion likening her to the first woman, Eve. In God's plan, Mary, by her faith, reversed the failure of Eve and so became the new "mother of all the living." Through the centuries the stories of Cana and Calvary have led Christians to seek Mary's intercession with her Son and to rely on her as a mother with compassion for those in need.

Mary in the Apocryphal Writings and Stories of the 2nd Century

Popular Christian stories about Christ, Mary and the apostles originating in Syria, Palestine and Egypt from the mid-2nd century, greatly influenced the way ordinary Christians imagined Mary's life. These stories, attempting to supply details omitted in the Gospels, went beyond and sometimes contrary to the indications of the Scriptures. They have inspired art, liturgy and Christian devotion to Mary over the centuries.¹²⁵

"The Gospel of James," one of these stories written about 150 A.D., portrays the childhood of Mary in this way:

"When Mary was one year old, Joachim made a great feast and invited the priests and scribes, and the whole people of Israel assembled.

"And Joachim brought the child to the priests, and they blessed her saying, 'O God of our fathers, bless this child and give her a name renowned for ever among all generations.'

"And all the people said: 'So be it, so be it. Amen . . . '

"And the child became three years old, and Joachim said: 'Call the virgin daughters of the Hebrews and let them accompany the child to the temple of the Lord with lamps burning in their hands.'

"And they went up to the temple of the Lord.

123. Jn., 2:1-12

124. Jn., 19:25-27

125. All these informations taken from Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia. Retrieved on 2010-03-25

"And the priests received her and kissed her and blessed her, saying: 'The Lord has magnified your name among all generations; in you the Lord will show redemption to the children of Israel'.

"And he sat her on the third step of the altar. And the Lord gave her grace and she danced with her feet and all the house of the Lord loved her.

"And her parents returned home marveling and praising the Lord because their child did not turn back.

"And Mary was in the temple of the Lord to be nurtured like a dove; and she received food from the hand of an angel."

The story proceeds to give details of Mary's marriage to Joseph, who is portrayed as an old widower with his own children. It relates new wonders and signs that accompanied the birth of Jesus in a cave. The account, by presenting Mary as a sheltered virgin absorbed in the service of God in the temple, sought to defend the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth. Unfortunately, it pictures her removed from the ordinary, uneventful village life that Scripture suggests was hers.

By the 5th century, a church honoring Mary's birthplace and home, suggested by this apocryphal story, was built close by the Temple site in Jerusalem. The Church of St. Ann, the mother of Mary, stands on that place today.

Mary's Death and Assumption into Heaven

Stories from the 5th century (or perhaps earlier) recount Mary's later life, her death and assumption into heaven -- events unreported by the four Gospels.

The legends describe Jesus appearing to Mary in the house on Mount Sion in Jerusalem where she lived after Pentecost. Her Son tells her she is soon to die. From all parts of the world the apostles gather to bid her farewell:

"Stretching out his hands, the Lord received her holy soul. And when her soul departed, the place was filled with a sweet smell and bright light.

"And a voice from heaven proclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women.'

"Peter and John, Paul and Thomas, ran to embrace her feet and receive her holiness; and the twelve apostles laid her holy body on a bier and bore it forth.¹²⁶

126. Ps. John: *The Dormition of Mary*, 4th century

"Instructed by Jesus, Peter and the other apostles took her body to be buried in a new tomb near Gethsemane in the Kidron Valley, where miracles of healing accompanied her burial.

"Three days later, angels took her body to heaven."

By the year 600, a feast called the Dormition of Mary, honoring her death and assumption into heaven, was celebrated in Jerusalem and in the churches of the East. Some centuries later it would pass into the Western churches known as the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.

One of the first churches in Christendom dedicated to Mary was built over her tomb near Gethsemane around 400 A.D. Today, a church still marks this site in Jerusalem.

In the 7th century, Theothekno, bishop of Palestine, preached a homily on the feast of Mary's Assumption, August 15:

"Rejoice with the Mother of God,
with angels and saints,
and celebrate this great feast:
the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

"On earth she was a fruitful virgin,
in heaven she intercedes for all;
through this blessed woman,
the Spirit's gifts still flow upon us,
and her words teach gentle wisdom.

"At her assent the earth blossomed;
she sought good things for the poor.
Now in heaven her care is undiminished,
near her Son she seeks the good of us all".¹²⁷

Early Palestinian Shrines Honoring Mary

Early devotion to Mary developed as certain ancient sites in Palestine associated with Jesus and his mother:

127. All these sources have been taken from Wikipedia, *the free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved on 2010-03-25

- At Bethlehem, the grotto of Christ's birth was held sacred.
- At the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem, grottoes recalling his agony in the garden and ascension were frequented by early Jewish Christians. Mary's grave, too, was honored in this area.
- At Jerusalem, the sites where Jesus died and was buried were remembered.
- On Mount Sion in Jerusalem, the early church met for worship on the site where the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and the disciples at Pentecost.
- At Nazareth, where the sites of Jesus' early life were remembered.

Jerusalem and much of Palestine were laid waste by Roman armies in 70 A.D. and again after the Jewish revolts of 132-135 A.D. Most of the native population was deported, but a remnant of Palestinian Christians kept alive the memories and traditions of these holy places where Mary was honored along with her son.

The Christian "Holy Land" of the 4th Century

In 313 A.D., the Emperor Constantine not only legalized Christianity after centuries of persecution, but contributed resources for its development. He built great churches on the sites associated with Christ's birth, death, resurrection and ascension, making Palestine a vital spiritual center of the Christian world.

From 335 A.D. onward, Christian pilgrims from all over the empire -- bishops, priests, lay people -- flocked to the Holy Land. They celebrated fervently the liturgy of the Jerusalem church which turned the ancient sacred sites and other shrines into a visual gospel. Pilgrims wanted to see the manger, the wood of the cross, anything that survived from Jesus' time. Relics (sometimes authentic, sometimes not) were offered for their devotion. Returning home with their memories, with relics and souvenirs, they celebrated the feasts and sacred places they experienced in the Holy Land in their own liturgies, churches and shrines.

Mary, the Mother of God: 431 A.D.

Controversy also stimulated devotion to Mary in the early church. In 431, the Council of Ephesus repudiated Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, for refusing to honor Mary with the title "Mother of God." The title safeguards Christian belief in the mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus is God and man. The church did not seek to make Mary a goddess; otherwise she could not have given

birth to Christ as someone truly human. She could be called Mother of God, however, because Jesus who was born from her was truly Son of God from all eternity.

Popular feeling for Mary ran high in the Christian world after the council, and churches dedicated to her arose in almost every important city. In the city of Constantinople alone, 250 churches and shrines in her honor were built before the 8th century. Pictures, icons of Mary holding her divine child multiplied, especially in churches of the East, where they became objects of special devotion.

Europe as a Holy Land: 11th – 15th Centuries

The Muslim conquest of Palestine in the 7th century brought the holy places under non-Christian rule that became increasingly hostile towards Christian pilgrims. When the Turks threatened the ancient Christian shrines with destruction, the Christian nations of Europe sought to reconquer the Holy Land in the Crusades of the 11th century.

During these disturbed times, the shrines and relics of Palestine were re-duplicated or transferred to the countries of Europe. In Spain, France, England, Italy, Germany and the Lowlands, great medieval shrines honoring Mary, like those in the Holy Land, arose in places like Chartres, Montserrat, Walsingham, and Loretto. This "European Holy Land" became the setting for the early medieval Christian's devotion to the Mother of God.

Medieval Devotion to Mary

The Christian people of the Middle Ages, suffering constantly from disease, famine and war which they were helpless to do anything about, turned anxiously to Mary for assistance. Simple faith led them to trust her to intercede for them with her Son as she did for the ordinary people at the marriage feast of Cana.

Since she was a compassionate mother who had experienced the sufferings of Calvary, they petitioned her for cures from sickness, for protection and help. Her kindness and power were proclaimed everywhere -- in the sermons they heard, in art and song and prayer.

Meditating on the Life of Mary

Popular classics like "The Meditations on the Life of Christ," a book dating from the 13th century, nourished medieval devotion to Mary. Widely circulated, it

taught Christians to see the lives of Jesus and Mary through a kind of "pilgrimage of the imagination." By meditating on the stories of the Gospel, embellished with additional details and legends, one could experience Christ and his saints and learn from them how one should live.

Stories from the "Meditations," appealing and tender as the following short excerpt from the Nativity of Jesus shows, greatly influenced the way medieval Christians saw Mary and inspired also the works of so many medieval artists.¹²⁸

". . . the emperor wrote a proclamation that the whole world should be registered, and everyone go to his own city. So obeying the command, Joseph started on his way with our Lady, taking with him an ox and an ass, since she was pregnant and the road five miles long from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. They arrived like poor owners of animals.

"Now they could not find an inn when they arrived at Bethlehem, because they were poor and many others were there to register, too.

"Pity our Lady, and see this delicate girl, only 15 years old, as she walks so carefully, tired by the journey and jostled by the crowds. They were sent away by everyone, the childlike mother and the old man, Joseph, her husband.

"When they saw an empty cave that people used when it rained, they entered it for shelter. And Joseph, who was an expert carpenter, probably closed it in some way. . . . When Jesus was born, Mary wrapped him in the veil from her head and laid him in a manger. The ox and the ass knelt with their mouths above the manger and breathed on the infant as if they knew the child was poorly clothed and needed to be warmed in that cold season.

The mother knelt also to adore him and to thank God, saying, 'I thank you, Father, that you gave me your Son and I adore you, eternal God, and you, Son of the living God, my Son.' Joseph also adored him.

"Then Joseph took the ass's saddle and pulled out the stuffing of straw and placed it near the manger so that our Lady might rest on it.

"She sat down and stayed there, her face turned constantly toward the manger, her eyes fixed lovingly on her dear Son."

128. Loc.cit

The Protestant Reformation

The Protestant reformers of the 16th century attacked the low standards that began to mar European devotion to Mary in late medieval times. They condemned superstitious practices exaggerating Mary's power and position, some of which seemed to place her above Christ himself. Luther or Calvin never rejected veneration of Mary totally. They saw her as a model whose humble faith Christians could imitate. Yet the reformers discouraged Marian pilgrimages and shrines, suppressed her feasts, and forbade prayers for her intercession.

The Catholic Church, while acknowledging abuses in devotion to Mary, upheld the privileges and practices which long-standing Christian tradition accorded her as the Mother of Jesus.

Catholic Devotion to Mary from the Reformation to Today

Within the Catholic world of Europe and America, devotion to Mary flourished from the 17th century until the time of the Second Vatican Council in the 20th century. Devotion to Mary during this time strongly influenced every aspect of Roman Catholic culture and piety. Among Eastern and Orthodox Christians also, devotion to Mary continued to be strong.

In the Western church, numerous religious communities and societies, such as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Marists, the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Legion of Mary, were founded under her patronage. They sought to imitate Mary's motherly concern to bring the message of her Son to all peoples through their mission work in schools, hospitals and missions throughout the world.

The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), summed up the church's belief about Mary and devotion to her:

"We turn our eyes to Mary who shines forth on the whole community of believers as a model of virtues. Faithfully meditating on her and contemplating her in light of the Word made man, the church enters more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation.

"For Mary unites in herself the great teachings of faith, and so she calls believers to her Son and his sacrifice and to the love of the Father.

"Seeking the glory of Christ, the church becomes more like her and progresses in faith, hope and love, seeking and doing the will of God in all things . . .

"Just as the Mother of Jesus, glorified in body and soul in heaven, in the image and beginning of the church as it is to be perfected in the world to come, so, too, does she shine forth on earth, until the day the Lord comes, as a sign of sure hope and solace to the People of God during its sojourn on earth".¹²⁹

Feasts of Mary

The Calendar of the Catholic Church, with its feasts, scriptural readings and prayers, is a good guide to Christian belief about Mary and her role in our life. The universal calendar, revised in 1970, celebrates feasts of Mary almost every month.

There are major feasts of Mary and feasts of lesser rank. Many of the feasts originate early on in the churches of the east, which still celebrate them today. Besides these feasts, devoted particularly to Mary, other feasts of our Lord, like the feast of Christmas, the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Presentation give Mary a special place.

The major feasts of Mary point to the most important reasons for honoring Mary, and they explain our relationship to her. They contain the substance of the Church's belief about her.

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God

This feast, closely connected to the feast of Christmas, is the most important and oldest of the major feasts of Mary. It is based on the source of her privileges: her motherhood. Jesus Christ, God's Son " born of a woman",¹³⁰ came to deliver us from sin and make us children of God. He is also Mary's Son, and she, his mother, helps bring his blessings to the world. She is

"truly the Mother of God and of the Redeemer...not merely passively engaged by God, but freely cooperating in the work of our salvation through faith and obedience".¹³¹

129. Lumen Gentium 65, 68

130. Galatians 4,4

131. Lumen Gentium 53,56

Mary was not simply a passive instrument in God's hands; rather she discovered and accepted new dimensions to her motherhood as her life unfolded. Scripture indicates signs of her new unfolding motherhood.

At the marriage feast in Cana in Galilee, where Jesus worked his first miracle, Mary is "the Mother of Jesus" who manifests

" a new kind of motherhood according to the spirit and not just according to the flesh, that is to say Mary's solicitude for human beings, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs. At Cana in Galilee there is shown only one concrete aspect of human need, apparently a small one and of little importance ("They have no wine"). But it has a symbolic value, this coming to the aid of human beings means, at the same time, bringing those needs within the radius of Christ's messianic mission and salvific power".¹³²

Mary's care for humanity and its needs would not be limited to her earthly life; it lasts "without interruption until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect."¹³³

Whether in her own lifetime or from her place in heaven, Mary's solicitude for human beings looks, above all, to making known the messianic power of her Son. At Cana in Galilee she told the servers at table, "Do what he tells you".¹³⁴ In all her care for others, she points out Jesus to them.

Throughout her life, then, Mary was a follower of her Son. At the foot of the cross, her motherhood reached a new maturity when Mary experienced her Son's redeeming love for the world. Her spirit was touched and refined by the mystery of his death and resurrection.

From his cross, Jesus, seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing there, said to Mary, "Woman, behold your son".¹³⁵

"The words uttered by Jesus signify that the motherhood of her who bore Christ finds a 'new' continuation in the Church and through the Church, symbolized and represented by John".¹³⁶

132. Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* 21

133. *Lumen Gentium*, 62

134. John, 2,5

135. John, 19, 25-27

136. *Redemptoris Mater*, 24

Before Pentecost, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus, the disciples "continued with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren".¹³⁷

"Thus Mary who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes- by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit- present in the mystery of the Church. In the Church too she continues to be a maternal presence, as is shown by the words spoken from the cross: 'Woman, behold your son.' 'Behold, your mother.' "

The Immaculate Conception of Mary

Like the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated during Advent, is related to the mystery of Jesus. To fulfill her unique role in the mission of Jesus, Mary was conceived free from original sin through the foreseen merits of her Son.

"To become the Mother of the Savior, Mary, 'was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role' The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as 'full of grace.' In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace".¹³⁸

Though Mary's Immaculate Conception is her unique privilege, it is a sign that, even before his birth, Christ's saving work affects generations that preceded him. The grace of Christ present when she was conceived is an affirmation that Christ's grace is present in past generations, as well as generations to come.

The feast of the Conception of Mary appeared in the Roman calendar in 1476. After the dogmatic definition of 1854, it became the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

The Assumption of Mary

As the Feast of the Immaculate Conception proclaims the grace of Christ in Mary before he was born, so the Feast of the Assumption points to the fulfillment of that grace, when Mary was taken, body and soul, into heaven to share in the glory of her Son's Resurrection. The Church proclaimed this dogma in 1950:

137. Acts, 1: 14

138. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 490

"The Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.' The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians."

Like the mystery of her Immaculate Conception, the Assumption of Mary is significant for all humanity, since she anticipates our resurrection with Christ in glory. She was taken up to heaven as "the beginning and the pattern of the Church in its perfection, and a sign of hope and comfort for your people on their pilgrim way".¹³⁹

Feasts of the Lord in which Mary has a special place

The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple

The Feast of the Presentation, an ancient feast also with roots in the early Jerusalem church, celebrates the day when Mary and Joseph brought their infant Child to the Temple of Jerusalem to present him to God according to Jewish custom. Though a feast of Jesus Christ, who is revealed as Messiah to the aged Simeon and Anna, faithful Israelites waiting for the Messiah, it is also a feast of Mary. Simeon becomes the messenger of a "Second Annunciation" as he tells Mary

"of the actual historical situation in which her Son is to accomplish his mission, namely in misunderstanding and sorrow".¹⁴⁰

In the reading from St.Luke, Simeon says to Mary:

"This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed- and you yourself shall be pierced with a sword- so that the thoughts of many hearts will be laid bare".¹⁴¹

"While this announcement on the one hand confirms her faith in the accomplishment of the divine promises of salvation, on the other hand it also reveals to her that she will have to live her obedience of faith in suffering, at the

139. *Preface of the Assumption*

140. Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 16

141. Luke, 2 : 22-40

side of the suffering Savior, and that her motherhood will be mysterious and sorrowful".¹⁴²

The Annunciation of the Lord

The feast, recalling the angel Gabriel's visit to Nazareth to announce to Mary God's invitation that she should be the mother of a Divine Son, is primarily a feast of Jesus Christ. It celebrates God become incarnate, the Word made flesh, as a loving gift to humanity and all creation. Yet Mary had an important role in the mystery of the Incarnation.

Though troubled by the angel's extraordinary words, Mary accepts the invitation in faith.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word".¹⁴³

Like faithful Abraham, who "believed against hope," Mary accepted the mysterious plan of her Creator and consented to its consequences by the dim light of faith. She is a model for believers who make "a pilgrimage of faith."

The primary reading for this feast is the story of the Annunciation from St. Luke's Gospel.¹⁴⁴ The feast is celebrated nine months before the feast of Jesus' birth.

The Visitation

The feast of the Visitation celebrates Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth who was with child. At their meeting, John the Baptist, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy, and Elizabeth cried out in a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb".¹⁴⁵ Jesus Christ, in Mary's womb, is recognized as God's blessing.

Mary, too, is praised for her faith.

"Blessed is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled."

A feast of the Incarnation, the Visitation is also a feast of Mary whose responds with her song of praise:

142. Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 16

143. Luke, 1 : 38

144. Luke, 1 : 26-38

145. Luke, 1 : 39-40

"My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit finds joy in God my savior".¹⁴⁶

The feast of the Visitation celebrated between the feast of the Annunciation and the feast of the birth of John the Baptist.

Other Feasts of Mary

The major feasts of Mary and feasts of our Lord in which she has a special place present the essential teaching of the Church about her.

Mary is also honored in other feasts, some ancient and others of more recent origin. The feasts of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Presentation in the Temple arose from stories and celebrations of the early Jerusalem church. Other feasts of Mary, like the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, celebrate more recent appearances and devotions.

One should remember that the Catholic Church's approval of apparitions, like Lourdes, or of private revelations, like devotion to the Miraculous Medal, is not an infallible confirmation of their historical truth. Rather it is an assertion by the Church, after investigation, that this special place or way of venerating Mary can bring spiritual nourishment to those who are drawn to it. These signs encourage people to prayer, penance and the celebration of sacraments.

"Even when a 'private revelation' has spread to the entire world, as in the case of Our Lady of Lourdes, and has been recognized in the liturgical calendar, the Church does not make mandatory the acceptance either of the original story or of particular forms of piety springing from it".¹⁴⁷

The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Three important births are celebrated in the Roman calendar: the birth of Jesus, of Mary, and of John the Baptist. Mary's birth has been celebrated from ancient times, though her birthplace or time of birth are not mentioned in scripture. As far back as the 5th century a church was built on the traditional site of her birth in Jerusalem on the site of the pool of Bethesda,¹⁴⁸ near the Temple and a feast in

146. Luke, 1 : 41

147. *Behold Your Mother*, NCCB 100

148. John, 5 : 1-9

honor of Mary's birth was celebrated. By the 8th century the feast was celebrated in the Church of Rome.

The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The present memorial of Mary's presentation in the Temple as a child originated in Jerusalem at the church built there in her honor. It celebrates Mary's dedication to God. The feast became popular in the western church in religious communities, where members renewed their vows on this day, remembering the one who called herself "the maidservant of the Lord."

Dedication of St. Mary Major

This optional memorial celebrates the dedication of the great church of St. Mary Major, built in Rome after the Council of Ephesus in 431. Still one of the main churches of the Eternal City, the church was built to honor Mary as the Mother of God and reflected the growing devotion to her among Christians everywhere. One of the great Icons of Mary is revered in this ancient Roman Church.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

The feast, an optional celebration, was originally celebrated by the Carmelite order in Europe in the Middle Ages. It was first listed in the Roman calendar in 1726

Our Lady of the Rosary

Originally this feast was celebrated in thanksgiving for Mary's intercession, after the defeat on October 7, 1571 of Turkish naval forces that threatened Europe. Today the feast is a special remembrance of the spiritual power of the Rosary.

Our Lady of Sorrows

Christians of the Middle Ages and later centuries developed a lively devotion to Mary in her sorrows, which were foretold by the old man, Simeon, when she brought the Child Jesus into the Temple.¹⁴⁹ As the first disciple of her Son, she entered into his paschal mystery; her motherhood matured and took new form as she accepted her part of his cross.

149. Luke, 9 : 23

In fact, Mary is a model for Christians who wish to follow the words of Jesus, "Take up your cross each day and follow me." Christians seek in her faith support for our own. Over the centuries her sorrows are remembered in various feasts and by devotions that influenced some of the great works of Christian art, such as the Pieta and the Stabat Mater.

In the western church, religious orders, especially the Order of Servites, promoted devotion to the Sorrowful Mother.

Traditionally, seven sorrows are ascribed to her:

1. Mary hears the prophecy of sorrow from Simeon.
2. Mary flees with the Child into Egypt.
3. Mary experiences the loss of the Child Jesus in Jerusalem.
4. Mary meets her Son on the road to Calvary.
5. Mary stands beneath the cross of Jesus.
6. Mary receives the body of Jesus taken down from the cross.
7. Mary sees her Son's body placed in the tomb.

Today the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows is celebrated the day after the feast of the Holy Cross.

The Queenship of Mary

In the Old Testament, royal titles are commonly given to God and those specially anointed by God. Titles of royalty were given to Jesus and Mary from earliest times by Christians as signs of the special power they possessed. In prayers and hymns like the *Salve Regina* and the *Regina Coeli*, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is called Queen.

Instituted in 1955, this feast follows the feast of the Assumption, as it points to Mary's privileged place in heaven. Mary "was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things".¹⁵⁰

150. Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, p. 59

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mary is honored as "the patroness of the Americas." The feast originated in the apparition of the Blessed Virgin to Juan Diego, a humble Mexican worker, in 1521.

Our Lady of Lourdes

Pope Pius X included the feast of our Lady of Lourdes in the Roman calendar in 1908, just 50 years after the report of Mary's apparitions at the grotto of Massabielle near Lourdes, in France. There Mary identified herself as the Immaculate Conception.

Immaculate Heart of Mary (Saturday after the Feast of the Sacred Heart)

Closely related to the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the optional memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was instituted in 1942. The feast honors Mary who treasured the mysteries of Jesus and "pondered them in her heart."

Other feasts and times dedicated to Mary

Besides the feasts of Mary in the Roman calendar, she is honored in the particular calendars of various rites, nations, regions and religious communities.

Since the 18th century, the calendar months of May and October have been devoted to Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. Originating Spain and Italy, where Mary was honored with "May Devotions", litanies, the rosary and other special prayers, the practice, spread worldwide.

Mary's Death and Assumption into Heaven

Stories from the 5th century (or perhaps earlier) recount Mary's later life, her death and assumption into heaven -- events unreported by the four Gospels.

The legends¹⁵¹ describe Jesus appearing to Mary in the house on Mount Sion in Jerusalem where she lived after Pentecost. Her Son tells her she is soon to die. From all parts of the world the apostles gather to bid her farewell:

"Stretching out his hands, the Lord received her holy soul. And when her soul departed, the place was filled with a sweet smell and bright light.

151. Taken from Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia. Retrieved on 2010-03-25

"And a voice from heaven proclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women.'

"Peter and John, Paul and Thomas, ran to embrace her feet and receive her holiness; and the twelve apostles laid her holy body on a bier and bore it forth.¹⁵²

"Instructed by Jesus, Peter and the other apostles took her body to be buried in a new tomb near Gethsemane in the Kidron Valley, where miracles of healing accompanied her burial.

"Three days later, angels took her body to heaven."

By the year 600, a feast called the Dormition of Mary, honoring her death and assumption into heaven, was celebrated in Jerusalem and in the churches of the East. Some centuries later it would pass into the Western churches known as the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.

One of the first churches in Christendom dedicated to Mary was built over her tomb near Gethsemane around 400 A.D. Today, a church still marks this site in Jerusalem.

In the 7th century, Theothekno, bishop of Palestine, preached a homily on the feast of Mary's Assumption. August 15:

"Rejoice with the Mother of God,
with angels and saints,
and celebrate this great feast:
the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

"On earth she was a fruitful virgin,
in heaven she intercedes for all;
through this blessed woman,
the Spirit's gifts still flow upon us,
and her words teach gentle wisdom.

"At her assent the earth blossomed;
she sought good things for the poor.
Now in heaven her care is undiminished,
near her Son she seeks the good of us all."

152. Ps. John, *The Dormition of Mary*, 4th century

SECTION FIVE : DEVELOPMENT OF MARIAN CULTURE

Much later, the Council of Ephesus in 431 formally sanctioned devotion to the Virgin as Theotokos, Mother of God, (more accurately translated as God bearer) allowing the creation of icons bearing the images of the Virgin and Child. Devotion to Mary was, however, already widespread by this point. The early Church Fathers saw Mary as the "new Eve" who said "yes" to God as Eve had said no. The non-canonical Gospel of James, written around 150, is an example of early recognition of Mary, advocating her perpetual virginity. Mary, as the first Church canonized Saint, whereas St. Dismas the penitential thief was canonized by Jesus on the cross, and Mother of Jesus, was deemed to be a compassionate mediator between suffering mankind and her son, Jesus, who was seen as King and Judge. Biblical support for this position was found in the story of the Marriage at Cana whereat Mary entreated Jesus to turn water into wine.¹⁵³ Elizabeth's praise of Mary "blessed art thou among women" and "who am I that the mother of my Lord would visit me?" in Luke 2 are also cited, among other passages of Scripture.

Early representations show Mary as the "Throne of Heaven" with Mary and the Child Jesus both crowned as Royalty. She was further identified with the Bride in the Old Testament Song of Solomon, by such noted theologians as St. Bernard of Clairvaux. She became the prototype for the Church itself. During the Middle Ages, and especially in France, the great Cathedrals were thus named for Mary. The Marian Rosary was popularized by the followers of St. Dominic.

The image of Mary as Queen was softened somewhat by Mary as Mother of the Child Jesus. St. Francis of Assisi popularized the image of the Nativity scene using live animals. This representation of the helpless Jesus suckled by his mother brought Christmas into the hearts and homes of the people. And, as journeys to the Holy Land became difficult, Mary's role in the Passion story became part of the popular Stations of the Cross as the Mother of the suffering Jesus. During the great plagues such as the Black Death, Mary became greatly popular as a compassionate intercessor and protector of mankind against the just judgment of God.

Devotion to the Virgin Mary as the "new Eve" lent much to the status of women during the Middle Ages. Women who had been looked down upon as daughters of

153. Gospel of John, Chapter 2

Eve (first woman), came to be looked upon as objects of veneration and inspiration. The veneration of Mary both as woman and prototype of the Church was greatly responsible for transforming the Germanic Warrior code into the Code of Chivalry. This reinterpretation of women flowered in the Courtly Love poetry of Medieval and Renaissance France. Mary, as the original "vessel of Christ" may have also influenced the legends of the Holy Grail. Her selflessness, obedience and virginal humility were reinterpreted in the literary figure of Sir Galahad, finder of the Grail.

This devotional tradition was attacked during the Reformation. The consequent Council of Trent had a major impact on continued Marian devotions. The new Roman Catechism, prepared by Charles Borromeo in 1566, greatly encouraged the veneration of the saints and of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Catechism taught that Saints are close to God; he listens to their prayers. Then council also promulgated the continued veneration of religious paintings, stating that pictures are useful examples for the imitation of the saints. Vatican Two specifically confirmed that teaching.

Marian prayers

The earliest known Marian prayer is the *Sub tuum praesidium*, or *Beneath Thy Protection*, dating from late 2nd century. A papyrus dated to c. 250 containing the prayer in Greek was discovered in Egypt in 1917, and is the earliest known reference to the title *Theotokos*, confirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 431:

Beneath your compassion. We take refuge, O Mother of God: do not despise our petitions in time of trouble: but rescue us from dangers, only pure, only blessed one.

In the twelfth century indications of a regular devotion can be noted in a sermon by Bernard of Clairvaux (*De duodecim stellis*), from which an extract has been taken by the Roman Catholic Church and used in the Offices of the Compassion and of the Seven Dolours. Stronger evidences are discernible in the pious meditations on the *Ave Maria* and the *Salve Regina*, usually attributed either to St. Anselm of Lucca (d. 1080) or St. Bernard; and also in the large book "*De laudibus B. Mariae Virginis*" (Douai, 1625) by Richard de Saint-Laurent. Among many other Marian prayers, the Holy Rosary is the most popular one and it is a key "devotional path" to the veneration of the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic

Church and has been a source of inspiration for a number of Roman Catholic figures.

Currently, popular Roman Catholic devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary include the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Marian Movements and Societies

Throughout the centuries the devotion to and the veneration of the Virgin Mary by Roman Catholics has both led to, and been influenced by a number of Roman Catholic Marian Movements and Societies. These societies, form part of the fabric of Roman Catholic Mariology since they contribute to the *sensus fidelium*, a century-old sense of the faithful, shared by the Magisterium. Today many Marian societies exist around the world.¹⁵⁴

As early as the 16th century, the Holy See endorsed the Sodality of Our Lady and Pope Gregory XIII issued a Papal Bull commending it and granting it indulgences and establishing it as the mother sodality. Other organizations such as Marians of the Immaculate Conception were formed, yet faced the challenges of wars in Europe.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw a number of missionary Marian organizations such as Company of Mary, the Marianists, Marist Fathers and Marist Brothers. Some of these missionaries, e.g. Saint Peter Chanel and Saint Marcellin Champagnat were martyred as they travelled to new lands.

The 20th century witnessed the formation of Marian organizations with millions of members, e.g. the Legion of Mary and Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima. Other lay organizations based on specific Marian devotions were formed, e.g. Our Lady's Rosary Makers that distributes millions of free rosaries a year or the Marian Movement of Priests that counts over 100,000 Catholic priests among its members.

Major Marian shrines

A large number of shrines to the Blessed Virgin exist on all continents, and they draw a large number of pilgrims every year. Major shrines considered most significant for their apparitions and miracles include:

154. University of Dayton on Marian Organizations

The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in Lourdes, France
The Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City, Mexico
Our Lady of Fátima in Fátima, Portugal, Loreto, Italy
Black Madonna of Częstochowa in Częstochowa, Poland
The Basilica of Our Lady, Queen of Ireland in Knock, Ireland

Other reported apparition sites include Medugorje, which is not considered a shrine by the Holy See, yet receives a large number of pilgrims every year. The number of pilgrims who visit some of the approved shrines every year can be significant. E.g. Lourdes with a population of around 15,000 people, receives about 5,000,000 pilgrims every year and within France only Paris has more hotel rooms than Lourdes.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BLESSED MARYAM (MARY) IN ISLAM

Chapter Two

THE BLESSED MARYAM (MARY) IN ISLAM

SECTION ONE: BIOGRAPHY OF MARYAM

Mary (مريم "Maryam" in Arabic), the mother of Jesus (Hazrat Isa MABPWII), is considered the most righteous woman in Islam. She is the only woman mentioned by name in the holy Qur'an. Her name is mentioned more times in the Quran than that of the New Testament.¹⁵⁵

According to the Qur'an, Jesus (called 'Isa in Arabic) was born miraculously by the will of God (Allah Subhanuhu Wa Taala) without a father. His mother is regarded as a chaste and virtuous woman and is the most highly respected woman figure in Islam. The Qur'an states that Jesus (Isa) was the result of a virgin birth, but that neither Mary nor her son was divine.

In the Qur'an, no other woman is given more attention than Mary. The nineteenth chapter (Surah) of the Qur'an is named after her and is, to some extent, about her life. Of the Qur'an's 114 chapters (Surahs), she is among only eight people who have a chapter (Surah) named after them. In Islam, she is generally referred to as Maryam, Ummu Isa (Mary, the mother of Jesus). For Muslims she is a symbol of submission to God and piety.

Mary is one of the most highly regarded women in Islam. There are several verses in the Qur'an praising her and confirming that she was an extremely chaste and pious woman. Other righteous women in Islam, although not mentioned by name in the Qur'an, include: Asiyah, foster mother of Prophet Musa (Moses), Khadijah, wife of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) ; and Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad (PBUH).

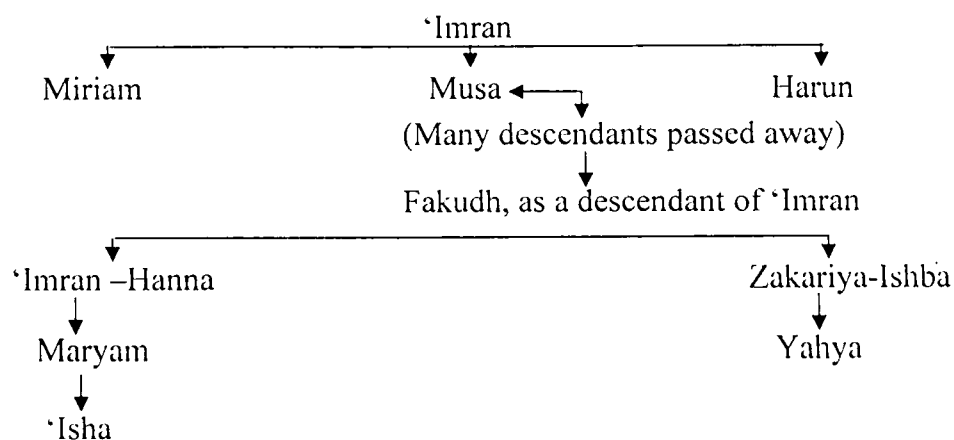
Maryam's Genealogy

The Qur'an informs us that the father of Mary was 'Imran and the classical Muslim scholars unanimously accept that she was from the line of the prophet David. Differences of opinion emerge, however, over the intervening genealogy, most probably due to a lack of familiarity with such foreign names and consequent error in recording them in the Arabic orthography. According to the

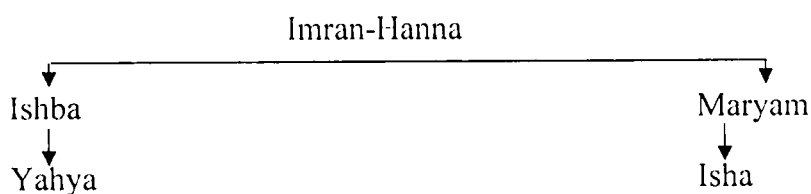
155. Anyone can easily prove this after making comparison between the New Testament and the Glorious Quran about mentioning Maryam (Mary).

Spanish exegete al-Qurtubi, 'All these differences are mentioned because the Prophets and Messengers are all descendants one of the other.' The following genealogy (taking into account orthographic variations), which is attributed to Ibn Ishaq or directly to the Prophet's companion Ibn 'Abbas, is the most generally accepted: Maryam bint 'Imran ibn Yashim ibn Misha ibn Hazqiya ibn Yawish (ibn Isha ibn Yahushafat) ibn Sulayman ibn Dawud ... (i.e., Maryam, daughter of 'Imran, son of Yashim, son of Misha, son of Hazqiya, son of Yawish, son of Isha, son of Yahushafat, son Solayman, son of Dawud...). Although the name of her mother is not supplied in the Qur'an, it is universally accepted as Hanna bint Faqudh.¹⁵⁶ This genealogy is from her father side. According to Ibn Khaldun, the name of Maryam's father was Ioachim¹⁵⁷ who is Joachim in Christian tradition.

On the other hand, from her mother side the genealogy of Maryam (Mary) is in this way:¹⁵⁸



According to a different genealogy¹⁵⁹, Ishba and Maryam were sisters, daughters of 'Imran and Hannan. Therefore the genealogy may be in the following way:



156. Aliah Schleifer, *Mary The Blessed Virgin of Islam*, Fons Vitae, 1998, pp. 22-23

157. Ibn Khaldun, *Ibar*, vol. 2nd, p.144

158. According to the well accepted opinions of Muslim Scholars all over the world.

159. For further discussion, cf. A.M.Charifi, Christianity in the Quran commentary of *Tubari* (English Translation), in *Islamochristiana*, 1980, vol.5th, p.110; also see please al-Masudi, *Murudj*, vol. 1st, pp. 120-1 and al-Tabari, *Tafsir*, vol.3rd, p.144

However, the said genealogy clearly indicates that Maryam was from the ascendancy of Imran, father of Musa and Harun, through her mother; because of which Almighty Allah (SWT) addressed Maryam as the sister of Harun.¹⁶⁰ Maryam is therefore called a sister of Harun, and the use of these three names – Imran, Harun and Maryam, has led to the supposition that the Quran does not clearly distinguish between these two Maryams, of the Old Testament (Torah) and New Testament (Gospels). The Quran mentions two families as being especially chosen: those of Ibrahim and of Imran.¹⁶¹ It is the family of Imran, important because of Musa and Harun, to which Maryam belongs. It is not necessary to assume that these kinship links are to be interpreted in modern terms. The words ‘sister’ and ‘daughter’, like their male counterparts, in Arabic usage can indicate extended kinship, descendancy or spiritual affinity. This second Imran, together with Harun, can be taken as purely Quranic. M. Hamidullah’s literal rendering of *ukht Harun* in a marginal note of his translation of the Quran clearly refers to Maryam as a member of the family of Imran.¹⁶² Al-Baidhawi, a famous commentator of the holy Quran, in his prominent book *Tafsir-e- Baidhawi* claimed so. According to Al-Ghazzali, the Quran not only links Maryam to her direct father Imran (Joachim) but also to her ancestor Imran (Amram), the father of Musa and of Haron, whence the description "sister of Haron" which the Quran likewise uses, is to show that Mary is of the same race as the two brother prophets.

As a whole, Muslim commentators are of the opinion that as Maryam came from the highly respected family like the family of Imran, she was called sister of Harun according to general norms of Semitic tradition. Similarly Isa (May Allah be pleased with him) is also called son of Dawud because of his belonging to Dawud’s genealogy. Muslim tradition is also clear that there are eighteen centuries between Imran, father of Harun and Imran, father of Maryam. However, Maryam was definitely a loyal member of the world famous family like the family of Imran and Dawud from her both sides i.e., both from Ibrahim, about the dignity

160. يَا أُخْتُ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكَ امْرَأً سَوْءًا وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمَّكَ بَيْتًا (Al- Quran, 19:28). All translations taken from *The Noble Quran* by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al- Helali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Madinah, K.S.A., 1420 A.H.

161. إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (Al- Quran, 3:33)

162. M. Hamidullah, *The Translation of the Holy Quran*, Paris, 1956, p.289; see also please M. Hamidullah, *Le Prophete de l’Islam*, Paris, 1959, vol.1st, p.415

of this long family Allah ((SWT) clearly declared: “Allah chose Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran above all people”.¹⁶³

Identity of Her Family

According to the holy Quran, undoubtedly the family tradition of Maryam was the blessed family of all. The Quran narrates her father in the name of Imran which in Arabic means prosperity. Really he was prosperity because of his daughter Maryam and his grandson Isa (MABPWH). However, her father Imran himself was a prophet, a leader of the Israelites and at the same time the chief priest of *baitu l muqaddis*, the great Temple of Jerusalem. Her maternal uncle was Prophet Zachariah (Zarariyya) who was later on replaced by Imran in the same mosque (Temple). Her mother, although unnamed in the Quran, is identified as Hannah in Arabic or Saint Anne in Judeo-Christian tradition, was a very committed devotee to Allah (SWT) while her maternal aunt Ishba, or Saint Elizabeth in Judeo-Christian tradition, also was a devotee like her sister Hanna who was married to the prophet Zachariyya (Zachariah). Thus it is very clear that Maryam was very lucky and fortunate woman because of the tradition of her prophetic family.

The Birth of Mary

According to Muslim tradition it is, more or less, well known to all that Imran and Hanna, father and mother of Maryam, were childless for a long time. Even they reached at their very old ages that they had no possibility for giving birth to a child. Nonetheless, Imran’s wife Hanna was barren. One day, while walking in a garden, Hanna saw a bird setting in the branch of a tree was feeding her young, being more affectionate to it. This sight aroused Hanna’s desire for a child.¹⁶⁴

According to another tradition, for many years the couple remained childless. Whenever Hanna saw another woman deeply affectionating to her child, her longing for a baby increased. Although years had passed, she never lost hope. She

163. The Verse is: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ* (Al-Quran, 3:33)

164 10. Al-Baidawi, Taken as a source from internet; Al-Maqdisi, *Le Livre de la Creation et de l’Histoire*, Paris, 1963, vol. 3rd, p.122. Taken as a source from, V. Kurtuwa S.J., *Mary in Islam*, Calcutta, 1954, translated in Bangla as *Islam Dharmee Mariyam* by Sister Mary Uginia, Jasor, 1988, pp.8-9

still then kept a strong belief in her mind that one day Allah would bless her with a baby, on whom she would shower all her motherly love.¹⁶⁵

Therefore, she turned to the Lord of the heavens and the earth and pleaded with Him for a child. She would offer the child in the service of Allah's house, the temple of Jerusalem, if her prayer for a child would be granted. She had, however, forgotten that, according to Jewish law, this would be impossible if she would give birth to a female child. Finally, Allah granted her request. When she learned that she was pregnant she was the happiest woman, and thanked Allah for His most kind gift. Her overjoyed husband Imran also thanked Allah very much for His mercy.

Al-Baidhawi adds that Imram's wife was barren and advanced in age. One day she saw a bird feeding her young and so she herself longed for an offspring. She prayed to God for a child and promised to present it to the Temple at Jerusalem. God heard her prayer and she gave birth to Mary.

Definitely Mary's birth story in the Qur'an, begins while she is still in her mother's womb. The mother of Mary said, "O my Lord! I do dedicate into Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service: So accept this of me: For Thou hearest and knowest all things."¹⁶⁶ When Mary was delivered, she said, "O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!"¹⁶⁷ She had expected her baby to be a boy who would grow up to be a scholar or religious leader. The Qur'an continues "...and God knew best what she brought forth — 'And no wise is the male like the female. I have named her Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from Satan, the Rejected'".¹⁶⁸ It is clearly understood that by the verse that Allah (SWT) accepted Mary as her mother had asked.¹⁶⁹

The above mentioned Quranic verses, thus, describe the response of God to the vow and to the prayer of Hanna, mother of Maryam. Therefore it is very clear that

165. According to the Tafsir of the Quran, 3:35 *إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ*

166. *إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ* (Al Quran, 3:35)

167. *فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيدهَا بِكَ وَذَرَيْتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ* (Al-Quran, 3:36)

168. Loc. cit

169. The verse is: *فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَلْبَسَهَا ثِيَابًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّىٰ لَكَ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ* (Al Quran, 3:37)

the wife of Imran, and mother of Mary, out of her devotion to God vowed to dedicate the child in her womb to the sacred service of God and asked God to accept her vow. Her hopes were in a male child who will be brought up to service the places of worship and be dedicated to serve God. Delivering a female child, she realized that things did not go according to her plan, but decided to fulfill her vow, and *Maryam* was the name of the child. And she made a prayer for her newly born asking God to protect her and her offspring from Satan.

Meanings of the name 'Maryam'

The Holy Quran mentions the mother of Isa (MABPWH) as Maryam. In the holy Quran this holy name is mentioned thirty four times, though this name is somewhat confused with the sister of Musa and Harun, Miryam¹⁷⁰ only in the three verses: 19:29, 3:31 and 66:2.

The word 'Maryam' is not an Arabic word; rather it originally comes Hebrew word 'Miriam'. But Arabic pronunciation of this Hebrew word is not that of Hebrew language; rather it makes similarity with Greek and Syrian pronunciation 'Maryam'. The word 'Maryam' is as used in the Quran as the word 'Musa', 'Isa', 'Ibrahim' and many more non-Arabic words are used. As the word 'Maryam' was not used in any Arabic writing before the Quran was ascended in Arabic.¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, some Arabic linguists are of the opinion that the word 'Maryam' may come from the root word 'Rama' which means transfer. As Allah (SWT) directly transferred His word, 'Kun' through Maryam to a human being Isa, one of His best messengers without a contribution of a man, so it has become appropriate that she is called Maryam, a transferor. Some of them say that Maryam means 'al-abidah'¹⁷² meaning a pious woman who always obeys to what Allah commands and prevents herself from what Allah forbids. Again, some said that the word means 'al-khadimah (the servant)¹⁷³ which also means the same. Thus, according to latter linguists, since Maryam was the real servant to Allah (SWT), she is named by this name, 'Maryam'.

170. According to Hebrew scriptures specially the Holy Torah: Exodus, 6:20 and Numbers, 26:59; the daughter of Amram and Joshabed, Miriam, was the elder sister of Moses and Aron. It is she who hid among the bushes of the Nile the basket with baby Moses, her younger brother, in it.

171. A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, Baroda, 1938, p.262; and also see please J. Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Edinburgh, 1900, vol.3rd, p.278

172. Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.3rd, p.310, at the article titled 'Maryam'.

173. J.M.Abd-el-Jalil, *Marie et l' Islam*, Paris, 1950, p.20

However, verbally whatever meanings may be included by the word ‘Maryam’, but really the name indicates the historical figure of Islamic religious tradition, mother of Isha, daughter of Imran and Hanna, the most blessed and chaste woman of more than 2000 years ago from now.

Mary protected from the touch of Satan at the time of birth

According to the Holy Quran and the prophetic tradition, Maryam was well protected by Allah (SWT) from the touch of Satan just after her birth. It was because of her mother Hanna’s heartfelt prayer to Allah (SWT) for saving her daughter from the touch of Satan when she prayed in the language of the Quran: “I commend her (Maryam) and her offspring (Isa) to your protection from Satan, the Rejected”.¹⁷⁴ It is also clear by the well-known Hadith: “Every child that is born, is touched (or stung) by Satan and this touch makes it cry, except Maryam and her son (Isa)”.¹⁷⁵ This tradition is generally used in support of the impeccability (isma) of Isa, Maryam and all prophets.¹⁷⁶

Please make sure that their privilege of preservation from Satan does not set them on a higher place than the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this regard Muhammad ‘Abduh, a modern commentator of Egypt, insists that all three, (Maryam, Isa and all prophets MABPWT), share the same quality of ‘isma.¹⁷⁷ Therefore there is no special dignity of Maryam and her son, Isa over Muhammad (PBUH). As contrast to this, by using all these Islamic documents Christian Scholars always try best to prove the supremacy of Maryam and her son, Isa, not only over Muhammad (PBUH) but also over all the prophets.

Presentation of Mary at the Mousqe as a Servant

According to the Holy Torah,¹⁷⁸ Hebrew first-born male children had to be presented in the (temple) mosque. Such a law would lead pious Jewish parents to observe the same religious rite with regard to other favourite children. This inclines one to believe that Imran and Hanna presented in the Temple their child,

174. وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (Al- Quran, 3:36)

175. قَالَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ مَا مِنْ نَبِيٍّ آدَمَ مَوْلُودٌ إِلَّا يَمَسُّهُ الشَّيْطَانُ حِينَ يُولَدُ فَيَسْتَهْلُ صَارِحًا مِنْ مَسِّ الشَّيْطَانِ غَيْرَ مَرِيَمَ وَابْنَهَا (Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitabul Anbiya, Hadith no. 641); Sahih Muslim, Kitabul Fadail, Hadith no.146 and 147; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol.II, Hadith no. 233, 274-5, 288, 292, 319, 368, 523; and also see please Tafsir of Surah Imran, verse number 31. Translation of the Hadith taken from the Translation of the Meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari (Arabic English) by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Delhi, 1984

176. Loc, cit

177. Muhammad ‘Abduh, Tafsir al-Mamar, Cairo, 1947, vol.3rd, pp.291-2

178. 24. Exodus, 13:2 and 13:12

which they had obtained by their long, fervent prayers. Though it is not clear at what age they presented Maryam in the mosque. But it is well known that Maryam might be presented in the mosque twice: just after the birth according to very common tradition and it was temporary presentation of her, and on the other hand she was permanently presented when she might be at three years old. Though at her first time presentation there was no problem at all, as it was very common to all. When she was presented as a servant permanently by her parents according to their prayer, it created some hard problems. Because it was forbidden for women to serve the mosque as men did. So at the very beginning the Jewish scholars (Rabbies) refused to take Maryam as a permanent servant for the mosque. But Zachariah (Zachariyyah) did understand the fact truly that it was not normal case like other female children. Rather he understood that it was a very special case which Allah (SWT) Himself wants to execute. So, he made the rest of Jewish scholars convince in favour of the case and they all understood that this female child was not a child like other female children rather she definitely would be extra-ordinary one through whom Allah (SWT) would fulfill a great achievement for them. After all, they were not only agree to give the permission to take her as a permanent servant for the mosque rather they were competitors to one another for being a guardian of this holy woman. Even they were quarreling to one another for this reason. Zachariah demanded himself as a guardian of her on the basis of close relationship being uncle to Maryam. This kind of Zachariyyah's logic over her even was refused by them all. For solving this problem there had to arrange a lottery. At last as a lottery winner Zachariyyah (Zachariah) became her guardian.

Zachariah as Maryam's Guardian

Hannah had a big problem in reference to her promise to Allah, for females were not accepted into the temple, and she was very worried. Her sister's husband, Zachariah, comforted her, saying that Allah knew best what she had delivered and appreciated fully what she had offered in His service. She wrapped the baby in a shawl and handed it over to the temple elders.

As the baby was a girl, the question of her guardianship posed a problem for the elders. This was a child of their late and beloved leader, and everyone was eager to take care of her. Zachariah said to the elders: "I am the husband of her maternal

aunt and her nearest relation in the temple; therefore, I will be more mindful of her than all of you".¹⁷⁹

As it was their custom to draw lots to solve disagreements, they followed this course. Each one was given a reed to throw into the river. They had agreed that whoever reed remained afloat would be granted guardianship of the girl. All the reeds sank to the bottom except Zachariah's own reed. With this sign, they all surrendered to the will of Allah and made him the guardian.

Her Upbringing under the Guardianship of Zachariah

Thus, according to the will of Allah (SWT), she was assigned into the care of Zachariah. He built a room for her just beside the mosque. From there she used to serve the mosque regularly cleaning and sometimes washing along with other servants like her. Besides, she used to pray to Allah being stayed within her room. In the rest of times she used to study religious knowledge from her uncle. Her mother was still alive. Sometimes, she came to her and consolidated herself by seeing Maryam. She was always very different from other female children. Generally she was incomparable gentle, intelligent, devotee and patient girl. Each and every one of the mosque showed highly affectionate to her. Really she was very honoured person to all.

She was very attentive in worship of Almighty Allah (SWT). She used to say her midnight prayer in her room. Apart from these she used to recite *the holy Jabur* (the Salm) with deep attention.

From her girlhood she was very beautiful and her beauty got fulfillment in the course of time. Therefore Zakariyah became more careful to her. When he willed to go out, he locked her door so that no one could enter into her room. She didn't hesitate in it, rather she would feel comfortable because of unbroken meditation in the locked room. In this way Maryam under the full protection of her uncle came to adulthood. The holy Quran clearly states in this regard:

"So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance. He made her grow in a good manner and put her under the care of Zachariyyah. Every time he entered *Al-Mihrab* (the praying place) to visit her, he found her supplied with sustenance

179. According to the Tafsir of the verse: ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ الْعَجَبِ يُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَقُولُونَ أَفَلَمَنَّهُمْ الْإِنْسَانُ بِكَلْمِ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (Al Quran, 3:44)

(food). He said: 'O *Maryam*! From where have you got this?' She said: 'This is from Allah. Verily, Allah provides sustenance who He wills, without limit'.¹⁸⁰

So Mary was accepted by God, and was brought up in a good manner after she was put under the care of Zachariyyah. Through her devotion and righteous upbringing and the prayer from her mother, Mary became the best woman to ever live as depicted in the Quran:

"And (remember) when the angels said: 'O *Maryam* (Mary)! Verily, Allah (God) has chosen you, purified you (from polytheism and disbelief), and chosen you above the women of the world.'¹⁸¹

Maryam's Relationship to Joseph

In the Bible, Mary is first engaged and later married to Joseph (Jurayji) the carpenter from Nazareth. The Qur'an and other Muslim sources mention him hardly at all, and if so, he is still never referred to as the husband but only as a guardian of Mary.

Mary attained puberty, and she began to stay with Zachariah's wife during the courses of her menstruation, and after completing the menstrual cycle and performing the *ghusl* (the major ritual ablution, which entails the washing of the whole body), she would return, ritually pure, to her *mihrab*. Mary increased in worship until there was no person known at that time who approached her in the time of worshipping. Being physically capable at this stage in her development, Mary began her service at the Temple (Mosque). It is at this point that Joseph (Jurayji) the Carpenter begins to appear in the accounts of her life. However since Joseph is never mentioned in the Qur'an or Hadith material, the information supplied concerning him, and especially about his connection with Maryam, is expressed with extreme caution. Such accounts are either concluded with a prudent '*wa'allahu a'lam*' ('and Allah knows best') or prefaced with the words 'it is said', 'they say' (the identity of the source being left unspecified) or, at times, 'Christian sources say'. The following discussion can hence be no more than an attempt to clarify the elements which recur with the most frequency and appear to have been most widely acquiesced in by Islamic scholarship.

180. فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكِ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (Al Quran, 3:37)

181. وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ (Al-Quran, 3:42)

Joseph is said to have been Maryam's cousin, a carpenter who was also in service at the Temple. As a result, he became aware of Maryam's devoutness and the palpable excellence of her worship. They both made use of a source of water in a grotto on the Mount of Olives (*Jabal al-Zaytun*).¹⁸² Then there is a solitary account found in Ibn Hisham's *Sira* (biography of the Prophet), and attributed to Ibn Ishaq. This account implies a second casting of lots:

It was Jurayj the priest, a man of the Israelites, a carpenter, whose arrow separated out, who took responsibility for Maryam. And it was Zachariah who had been her guardian before this time. The Israelites had suffered a terrible calamity, and Zachariah had grown too old to bear the responsibility of Maryam; thus they cast lots for her, and Jurayj the priest won, and took the responsibility.

The same account is found in Tha'labi's collection of prophetic biographers (*Qisas*), still uniquely attributed to Ibn Ishaq, except this time it is Joseph (Jurayji) the Carpenter who cast lots and gains responsibility for the guardianship of Mary. Due to the solitary attestation of this anecdote, the lack of reference to it in the Qur'an and Hadith, and the confusion of identities in the two versions, it must be discarded as unreliable. In fact, in traditional Muslim sources (Jurayji) Joseph's relationship with Maryam is frequently not clarified, or he is mentioned as her companion and relation only, because there is no revealed basis for anything more specific, such as the statement that he was her fiancé and later became her husband, both of which are generally attributed to the Gospels, if mentioned at all. Ibn al-Qayyim further claims that Maryam and Joseph (Jurayji) were from different tribes and thus could not have been married to each other as this was against Jewish law.¹⁸³

The annunciation of Isa to Maryam by the Angel

Before the conceiving Hazrat Isa, the angel, Gebrail announced to Maryam about this especial event. Just after hearing the news from the angel she became astonished. But she did not refuse to obey the command of Allah (SWT). Since then she was waiting for the promised time that she was going to conceive a desired prophet named Isa according to the will of Allah (SWT) but with anxiety of people's extreme criticism behind the event. However, about this noble event of the history Allah (SWT) himself clearly described in the below mentioned chapters and their subsequent verses:

182. J.M. Abd-ed-Jalil, *Marie et l'Islam*, Paris, 1950, p.26

183. *Mary The Blessed Virgin of Islam*, op.cit., pp. 28-29

In the chapter (3) three of the Quran, Allah (SWT) clearly states

(Remember) when the angels said: "O Maryam (Mary)! Verily, Allah gives you the glad tidings of a Word ("Be!" - and he was! i.e. 'Isa (Jesus) the son of Maryam (Mary)) from Him, his name will be the Messiah 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), held in honor in this world and in the Hereafter, and will be one of those who are near to Allah." "He will speak to the people in the cradle and in manhood, and he will be one of the righteous." She said: "O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me." He said: "So (it will be) for Allah creates what He wills. When He has decreed something, He says to it only: "Be!" - and it is. And He (Allah) will teach him ('Isa (Jesus)) the Book and Al-Hikmah (i.e. the Sunnah, the faultless speech of the Prophets, wisdom), (and) the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel).

And will make him ('Isa (Jesus)) a Messenger to the Children of Israel (saying): "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I design for you out of clay, a figure like that of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's Leave; and I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I bring the dead to life by Allah's Leave. And I inform you of what you eat, and what you store in your houses. Surely, therein is a sign for you, if you believe. And I have come confirming that which was before me of the Taurat (Torah), and to make lawful to you part of what was forbidden to you, and I have come to you with a proof from your Lord. So fear Allah and obey me. Truly! Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him (Alone). This is the Straight Path"¹⁸⁴

In the chapter (19) nineteen of the Quran, Allah (SWT) said more clearly

And mention in the Book (the Qur'an, O Muhammad the story of) Maryam (Mary), when she withdrew in seclusion from her family to a place facing east. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our Ruh (angel Jibril (Gabriel)) and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects. She said: "Verily! I seek refuge with the Most Gracious (Allah) from

184. إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (45) وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (46) قَالَتْ رَبُّ أَلَيْسَ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (47) وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ (48) وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلَقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنزِّلُ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدْرِيُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمُ إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (49) وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَأَحِلَّ لَكُمُ بَعْضُ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَنْفُخُوا اللَّهُ وَأَطِيعُوا (50) إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ (Al Quran, 3:45-51)

you, if you do fear Allah." (The angel) said: "I am only a Messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son." She said: "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?" He said: "So (it will be), your Lord said: 'That is easy for Me (Allah): And (We wish) to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (Allah), and it is a matter (already) decreed, (by Allah).'" "So she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place (i.e. Bethlehem valley about 4–6 miles from Jerusalem). And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said: "Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten and out of sight!" Then (the babe 'Iesa (Jesus) or Jibril (Gabriel)) cried unto her from below her, saying: "Grieve not: your Lord has provided a water stream under you. "And shake the trunk of date-palm towards you, it will let fall fresh ripe-dates upon you." "So eat and drink and be glad. And if you see any human being, say: 'Verily! I have vowed a fast unto the Most Gracious (Allah) so I shall not speak to any human being this day.'"¹⁸⁵

Anxiety of Jurayji (Joseph)

Joseph, her cousin and guardian (acting in the absent of Zachariah, was the first person who observed that Maryam was conceived. So he became very anxious. Whereas he knew her as a religious woman because of some years' working together in the mosque.

On the other hand he could not be blind in it. So, he asked her about it being very worried about, which is narrated by Al-Tabari¹⁸⁶ in his exegesis of the Quran as a subject matter of the prophetic tradition (Hadith) and this event is shortly mentioned below:

Wahab ibn Minbah said that when Maryam became pregnant her relative named Jurayji (Joseph) lived near her. Both of them used to serve the mosque. They served the mosque with pleasure. Joseph knew her as an extreme religious and chastity one. In spite of that he could not free from confusion after knowing about

185. وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْفِيًّا (16) فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا (17) قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتُ نَفِيًّا (18) قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا (19) قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ نَفِيًّا (20) قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلِيُّ هَيْئًا وَلِتَجْعَلِ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَقْضِيًّا (21) فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَاتَّخَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا (22) فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنَسِيًّا (23) فَأَادَاهَا مِنَ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تُخْرِجَنِي فَمَا جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا (24) وَهَرَوَى إِلَيْكَ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا حَبِيًّا (25) فَكَلِمِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَمَاذَا قَرَّبْتَ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَخَذَا فَعَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا (Al-Quran, 19:16-26)

186. Al-Tabari, *Tafsirul Quran*, vol.16, p. 43

Maryam's pregnancy. By knowing it he, at first, became very anxiety. Since then he was always thinking about and could not come to a conclusion and he had no any single doubt about her chastity.

So, one day he asked her about the fact in a series of question. At the very beginning he requested her to answer the question only for his mental satisfaction and he also said to her that he raised all those questions to be answered not because of that she was an unchastity rather for knowing the actual fact. Then she said to her, "yes, you can say". Joseph said, " I have no intention to say like this, but I cannot but say". " Say to me please, "can a tree become a tree without a seed"? Then she replied to his question positively that a tree also be a tree without a seed according to the will of Allah (SWT). Then he asked her, "can a tree sustain without water?" She replied also positively. He again asked her, "a child can be born without a man?" She then said to him, "yes, it can be". She also added more that you should know that the Almighty Allah (SWT) created tree without seed in the day of creation and what trees we are seeing today surely come from those trees. You should know that it is Almighty Allah (SWT) who increases the tree and sustains it without water. Surely it becomes by His power. At first, Allah (SWT) created these differently and independently then He makes water as their basic ingredient to life. Or you would like to say that Allah cannot create a tree until He takes the help of water. Cannot Allah (SWT) create tree without water? Then Joseph said to her that no, I had not said that. I do know that Allah (SWT) can do what He wishes, indicates, orders and says; and that is undoubtedly done. Then Maryam said to him as well, you should know that it is Almighty Allah (SWT) Who created Adam and his wife, Hawa without taking help of male and female participation. By hearing all these sayings from Maryam Joseph clearly understood that whatever is in her womb surely is done by the command of Almighty Allah (SWT). He asked nothing to her as it is her merely secret matter. Then Joseph took upon his shoulder all the activities of his own and what Maryam did in the Mosque for providing somewhat comfortable to her.

Mis-propaganda of Satan

When Maryam was at her sixth month of pregnancy, Satan in the disguise of an old man made mis-propaganda near the villages around the mosque against her chastity that she was illegally conceived. By this propaganda most of the people were convinced that Maryam was no longer a chastity one. Even Maryam's aunt, mother, and her other close relatives also believed. Then, for proving her chastity,

she told them what happened to her. But no one could keep trust on her. At that time she was cursed by each and every body. After all, they decided that they would get her out of the mosque as punishment of her illegal pregnancy. According to their unanimous decision, they would exile her to a deep forest. For executing the decision the cruel people were employed. They would beat her mercilessly after bringing her from the mosque. As a result of bitter punishment she fallen on the earth senselessly. They took her from the ground of mosque as bleeding body towards the foot of the Bethlehem mountain and threw her there as dead one where she remained for very long senseless. At that time she was at the sixth month of her pregnancy. It was impossible to alive on her part. But Allah (SWT) saved her life to fulfill his promise. After long time she regot her sense and said, "O my Lord! May your plane be fulfilled through me." Since then she used to live there on the fruits and always spent her time by remembering the name of Allah(SWT) and attentively worshipping Him.¹⁸⁷

Imposing guilty to Zachariah

After Maryam, Satan targeted Zachariah for blaming the same. He convinced most of the people that for this illegal pregnancy not only Maryam was responsible but also Zachariah was responsible at the same portion. As no one but he was given permission to enter into her room. And taking this opportunity he did so. For this wrong doing he had to be punished like Maryam. Though some of them were not convinced by such activities, rather they were saying that such illegal activity might not be held by a prophet like Zachariah whom we had been knowing for a long time. But most of them were very much convinced that Zachariah would have to be punished like Maryam. It is a matter of astonish that they never doubted Joseph with whom she used to work together in the mosque, rather they rigorously doubted her legal guardian Zachariah who was at the same time a prophet and main priest (Imam) of the mosque. Undoubtedly in this event it is easily proved that it was Satan (Iblis) who had a chance to blame both Zachariah and Maryam and made people convince to believe his propaganda. Apparently Satan was successful in blaming Zachariah and Maryam but most of the Jewish people were captured in the net of Satan's propaganda.¹⁸⁸

187. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jannati Dash Ramanir Jibini (Bangla)*, Dhaka, 2004, p.29

188. *Ibid.*, pp.24-25

Fleeing away of Zachariah from the mosque and slain down (martyrdom)

Al-Masudi in his book *Kitab Marudj al-Dhahab*¹⁸⁹ wrote that Jews spread the panic blaming Zachariah and for this reason they took the decision to kill him. After knowing their conspiracy he became very anxious and some of his well-wishing people requested him not to stay in the mosque in this moment and they also suggested him to take refuge in a safe place. According to their opinion, he was going to the forest. The village people followed him according to the direction of Satan. Understanding their arrival to him, he prayed a refuge to a tree in front of him. Then the tree was taking him in its lap for saving him from the village people while Satan was unshackling him turning his shirt from back side. As a result, back side of his shirt was being seen from outside of the tree. Though at the beginning it was very difficult to find out him, but with the help of Satan, people knew the tree by seeing a portion of his cloth which was hanging from inside of the tree. They understood that this was the tree inside of which Zachariah fled. But it was impossible to bring him out of the tree. So, according to Satan's advice they all decided to cut the tree. Then they collected a cutting machine and killed Zachariah by cutting the tree. According to a reliable source¹⁹⁰ it is narrated that when they were cutting Zachariah from his head side he prayed to Allah (SWT) for granting him refuge; Allah (SWT) said to him that you had already did wrong by praying refuge to a tree (while) being a prophet. If you prayed to me instead of the tree I would help you. As you prayed to the tree in the place of mine, you would have to bear this punishment for such mistake. You would take this present punishment in lieu of the punishment of hereafter.

Then Zachariah prayed to Allah (SWT) saying such prayers: O my Lord! Please forgive me, I am ready to take this punishment willingly in lieu of the torment in hereafter. It is also in reliable narration that after finishing such prayers Zachariah was remembering the names of Allah (SWT) while his enemies were cutting him from his head to feet. Thus Zachariah became martyrdom by most of his Jewish people because of an offence with which he had no connection and behind which there was only Satan's propaganda along with his rival groups' jealousy to him. At last the Satan and rival people laughed to one another because their motive was succeed through killing of Zachariah and getting Maryam out of the mosque.

189. Les Prairies d'Or, trans. By C. Barbier de Meynard. Paris 1861, vol I, p.121

190. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jammat-i-Dash Ramanir Jibini* (Bangla), Dhaka, 2004, pp.24-25

Delivery of Maryam and Birth of Hazrat Isa

After getting out of the mosque, Hazrat Maryam was living alone at the feet of the mountain Bethlehem hoping for the desired moment. She was slowly coming to take experience of that moment about which she had no preparation. This was not only an event but also a risk moment. Thinking such about the event she took the decision to come back to the locality. But in the way receiving the pain of delivery she sat under the palm tree by the road. Pain delivery increased slowly and in the increasing of it she was at a loss. At the same time she was very hungry. So, she had no enough energy to bear that pain. Because of unbearable pain even she said: "Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten and out of sight!"¹⁹¹ And at the same time she prayed to Allah (SWT) to help her from that pain. In the response to her prayer the Angel Gebrail came to her with the especial mercy of Allah (SWT) saying to her: "Grieve not: your Lord has provided a water stream under you."¹⁹² "And shake the trunk of date-palm towards you, it will let fall fresh ripe-dates upon you."¹⁹³ "So eat and drink and be glad..."¹⁹⁴

After receiving the message she truly saw water spring under her feet and ripen dates in the tree. Then she emotionally expressed her feeling that her Lord had helped her while her relatives rejected. She added that it is Allah (SWT) Who is fully enough for her.

Then she turned the trunk of the tree and it reached the ripen dates to her. She took some dates and ate; and drunk water from the spring. In it she was free from hungry and got energy. After then she felt deep sleeping in her two eyes and slept very soon. And in this deep sleeping she delivered her world famous son Hazrat Isa (MABPWH). In it she felt no hardship and pain. In her sleeping condition she heard the heavenly news of her son. Hearing the news she awoken from sleep and saw her son in her lap. She was very happy having it in her lap and thanked Allah (SWT) for this beautiful son. She remembered the annunciation of the Angel that she would get most fortunate son who would be one of the great prophets and she herself would be the best of women. Thinking that annunciation and feeling its subsequent result she considered herself the most fortunate one on the earth. Now

191. قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا (Al Quran, 19:23)

192. فَنادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَا نَحْنُ رُبُّكَ فَجَعَلْ رُكَّعًا سَرًّا (Al-Quran, 19:24)

193. وَهَرُوي إِلَيْكَ بِجِدْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا حَمِيمًا (Al-Quran, 19:25)

194. فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَرَقِي عَيْنًا (Al-Quran, 19:26)

she always embraced the son and thanked Allah. As if she forgot all the previous pains and sorrows which she passed away just before her childbirth. From now she started to feel pleasure and pleasure.

Maryam and the three Magi of the east

Though the holy Quran and the Hadith have not indicated anything about this specific event, some Muslim Historians mentioned it in their writings as a folklore story. Al-Masudi,¹⁹⁵ for example, mentioned that when Hazrat Isa was born, a Quraish king sent a group of three wise men to him with valuable gifts like gold. According to the description, they started their caravan, after seeing a specific star and its indication, and at last they reached at Bethlehem in Palestine where they met Hazrat Maryam and her new born child, Hazrat Isa. They saluted her and her child first and greeted them both and gave some precious gifts bored with them to her for the baby on behalf of the king. It is said that at the time of Hazrat Isa's birth some Quraish wise men saw a specific kind of star which they never saw before and they also observed that this star was moving from south-east to north-west. They explained it as a sign of fortunate for human being which possibly indicated to them the birth of a great man on the earth who would show the right path before mankind and would lead them to the perfection. So their wise men requested king to follow that star. According to their suggestion the king selected that group of wise men for following the star and they were requested to go ahead along with the star and they had firm belief that where the star would disappear, they would find the long desired new-born child. At last they reached at Bethlehem in Palestine where Hazrat Maryam stayed with her baby.

Al-Tabari,¹⁹⁶ in his *Annals*, also mentioned this event as a true description.

Coming back to the locality with her son

Maryam thought that she should not live there in the mountain with her son. Any how she would return to the village. She in the meantime also heard the heavenly message: O Maryam! Return to your house. In it there were also more sayings like this: seeing your son people would ask you many questions. You would not answer to their questions but giving indications by your hands. And would say to them that I was fasting in the name of Allah (SWT), so I could not say anything.

195. Al-Masudi, quoted in *Islam Dharma Maryam* (Bangla) translated by Sister Mary Euzernia from V. Courtois, S.J., *Mary in Islam* (English), Calcutta, 1990, PP.36-37

196. Al-Tabari, source taken from *Islam Dharma Maryam* (Bangla) translated by Sister Mary Euzernia from V. Courtois, S.J., *Mary in Islam* (English), Calcutta, 1990, PP.36-37.

If you have anything to ask, please ask this child son. Hearing such heavenly message Maryam returned to the house. With her coming back to the village, all the villagers cursed her: About this event Allah (SWT) himself said in the Quran in this way: “And if you see any human being, say: 'Verily! I have vowed a fast unto the Most Gracious (Allah) so I shall not speak to any human being this day’”.¹⁹⁷ Some said to her: Alas! How a wrong deed have you done! While you were a daughter of a very pious man and your mother never did wrong thing. How was it possible on your part while you yourself was a servant to the mosque. Thus each and every one of the locality cursed her. Maryam patiently heard all those sayings but never answered to them. Only she indicated by her hands that she was in fasting by the name of Allah (SWT). So she could not say with you and if you want to know the fact, ask this new born child, he would inform you the real fact.

Conversation of the new born child with the visitors

When people insisted Maryam on speaking about the son and insulted her, the new born baby said to them from the cradle: “I am surely gift of Allah’s mercy, son of Maryam.”¹⁹⁸ After hearing from the infant all became astonish. They never hear such nice and clear sayings from an infant. Some of them said that definitely Maryam learnt magic and because of her magic the infant could speak so. At the same time other group of people supported this statement that without magic such event was impossible. Then the child, astonishing all, said: “Surely I am gift of Allah (SWT), son of Maryam; Allah has gifted me his holy book and He selected me on the earth as a prophet for you”.¹⁹⁹ In it people became more astonished. This time they thought that he might be a prophet, without being a prophet no infant could say so and he never be as a result of magic. Then again the new born baby said to them astonishing them more: “My Lord always blesses me. He has directed me to continuously worship Him and give advice towards people being obedient to my mother”.²⁰⁰ After hearing such clear-cut speech from the child Isa, nobody had single doubt in being prophet of Isa. All of them declared together that truly he is a prophet. To the child they showed their deep respect laying down their heads. Then Maryam turned her baby to her chest being very much delighted. In the holy Quran Allah (SWT) himself clearly stated in this regard: “Verily I am a slave of Allah(SWT), He has given me the Scripture and made me

197. فَإِنَّمَا تَرِيَهُ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أُخْذًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا (Al Quran, 19:26)

198. قَالَ إِنِّي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنَا نَبِيٌّ الْكِتَابِ وَجَعَلَنِي بَشِيرًا

199. وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ (Al-Quran, 19 : 31)

200. وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا - وَتَرَىٰ بَوَالِدِيٍّ لَّمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ (Al-Quran, 19 : 31-32)

a Prophet; And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me Prayer (Salat) and obligatory donation (Zakat), as long as I live. And dutiful to my mother, and made me not arrogant, unblest. And peace (Salam) be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive! Such is `Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam(Mary). It is a statement of truth, about which they doubt”²⁰¹ At last they were capable to understand that son of Maryam is really the prophet of Allah (SWT) and no prophet could be from a unchastely woman. So Maryam undoubtedly is a chastity one. After recognizing their fault they properly accepted Maryam and her son.

Living again in the Mosque (Baitu`l Muqaddis)

After understanding their fault they all apologized to Hazrat Maryam and came ahead to help her. Then they built again a house adjacent to the mosque for Maryam and her son. Since then Maryam with her son had been living there again and spending her most of times in worshipping and remembering Allah(SWT). In this way the child `Isa was getting grow with the religious devotion of her mother and other devotees of the mosque. Sometimes Hazrat `Isa, according to request of the presence, raised on the *Mihrab* for advising the people. People were amazed by hearing his voice and lecture. But there was a rival group under the leadership of the then established Jewish Rabbis who were very jealousy to `Isa. They were in number majority and so they were very strong group who always dominated the mosque activities.

Because of their jealousy to `Isa, they did not recognize him as a prophet rather they spread again defame against him like before and even made conspiracy to kill him. After knowing such things Hazrat Maryam took the decision to leave the house for a comparatively safer place.²⁰²

Fleeing away to Egypt

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Some commentators of the holy Quran, indirectly mentions this event by the following verse where Allah (SWT) said: “And We made the son of Maryam and his mother as a sign, and We gave them refuge on high ground, a place of rest, security and flowing streams”.²⁰³ Here by the word high ground authors of *Tafsire*

201. وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا (31) وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ قَالَ إِبْنِي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنَابِي الْكِتَابَ وَحَفَلَنِي نَبِيًّا (30) وَحَفَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا إِبْنِ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَنْتُمْ يَحْفَلَنِي حَتَّىٰ أَسْتَأْذِنَ (32) وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا (33) ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ (34) (Al Quran, 19:30-34)

202. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jamati Dash Ramanir Jibini* (Bangla), Dhaka, 2004, pp.28

203. وَحَفَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَأَوْتَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَىٰ رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ (Al Quran, 23:50)

Jalaline explained that it might be Jerusalem, Damascus or a place of Palestine. Al-Baidawi was of the opinion that it was Ramla or Egypt. There are many disputes about her fleeing to Egypt among writers and historians. Al-Masudi held that it was Hazrat Ishba (Elizabeth) who fled to Egypt with Hazrat Maryam and her son, Hazrat Isa in order to save Hazrat Isa from the cruelty and angry of the Jewish king Hirod. Al- Thalib in his book *Qasasu 'l Ambiya* clearly mentioned that after hearing the news of the birth from the three wise men coming from the southeast side, king Hirod took the decision to kill him. Then Allah (SWT), by an angel, ordered cotton carpenter Hazrat Yosuf, a faithful guardian of Hazrat Maryam in the absence of Hazrat Zachariyyah to flee to Egypt with Hazrat Isa including his mother Hazrat Maryam. And it was also informed to Maryam by the angel that she would have to flee to Egypt with her son Hazrat Isa led by her relative and guardian Hazrat Jurayji (Joseph). On the other hand, both of them were aware of Hirod's conspiracy but they did not know how they did against the conspiracy. So, being ordered by Allah (SWT) Hazrat Maryam left Palestine towards Egypt riding on an ass with her son Hazrat Isa led by Hazrat Jurayji (Joseph). In Egypt she used to work in cotton processing and sometimes used to collect fallen crops from the lands for maintaining their lives. While collecting the crops she bored her son on one side of her shoulder and basket on other side. She used to live there in this way until Hazrat Isa was at twelve years old of his age.

Returned to Galileo

According to the description of *Qasasu 'l Ambiya*, after the death of Hirod Hazrat Maryam was ordered again like before to return to the holy land of Jerusalem with Hazrat Isa. She came to the mountain village Nasarat of Galileo this time with her son Hazrat Isa according to the direction of Hazrat Jurayji. Since then the followers of Hazrat Isa are called Nasara after the village name Nasarat.

Coming back to the Bethlehem for living safely

Being embarrassed by the cruel behavior and deep conspiracy Maryam came out of the house for going to a safer place. After thinking for a long she decided to return to the Bethlehem mountain as this place was well known to her. She with her son came back to the previously known place Bethlehem where she built a house for permanently living there in.

Both of mother and son used to spend their maximum times in the worship of Allah (SWT) and remembering his names. Sometimes 'Isa used to come to locality for preaching the message of Almighty Allah (SWT). Here they had no sufficient food. They were hunger in the most of the time. Sometimes Hazrat 'Isa

came out of the house and entered into the deep forest for collecting fruits and vegetables and these were their foods on which they lived. Thus, they both spent their time being hunger but in full devotion of worshipping Allah (SWT), remembering His name and preaching His message. This house is still now a place of deep respect to both of Christians and Muslims and they all visit the place showing their utmost regard.²⁰⁴

Death of Hazrat Maryam

Mawlana Abdul Hakim, in his book,²⁰⁵ mentions that one day Hazrat `Isa went to the deep forest for the collection fruits and his mother was alone in the house like before. After then the angel Azrail (the angel of death) came to Maryam to take away her life and she died. After some hours Hazrat `Isa returned to house but he found her mother slept. He called her mother again and again but she did not respond to her son. Then Hazrat `Isa touched her mother and he understood that she had died. He could not keep patience and cried out. Even he became senseless for crying a long time. It is said that forest animals and birds as if were crying with him. After having sense he willed to call people for burying her mother's dead body. In the meantime he looked some people coming towards him. Hazrat `Isa informed them about his mother's death and said that it is about impossible on my own part to bury the dead body. So, he sought their cardinal help in this regard. In the response to his request they said to them: O `Isa, the messenger of Allah (SWT)! We are not human being rather we are the angels of Allah (SWT) and we have come here to bury your mother's dead body. They also said to him: We come with required heavenly cloths and perfumes for her. Then Hazrat `Isa with their help buried her mother by the mountain. After burring the dead body they all themselves disappeared.

204. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jammati Dash Ramanir Jibini* (Bangla), Dhaka, 2004, p.29

205. Loc. Cit

SECTION TWO : THE PLACE OF HAZRAT MARYAM IN ISLAM

Maryam as the virgin mother

Among the persons of Sacred History mentioned in the Quran, the Virgin Maryam occupies an important position on the historical and dogmatic plane. In addition to being the object of as many as thirty-four direct or indirect references, Mary also gives Surah Ninteenth its name and is its central figure as the mother of Jesus. The characteristic note of references to the Virgin in the Quran and, to an even greater extent, in Islamic tradition, can be seen both in the information about her genealogy and her childhood—a part of which is more detailed than in the four Gospels—and in the language and way of narration which are seen to be particularly significant. Without going deeply into the question of the validity of the information and of the vast Islamic exegetics or "Mariology" to which it has given rise, we will limit ourself here to recalling that the sources of Islamic tradition are, in this connection, the *Arab Gospel of Childhood*, the *Protogospel of James*, the *Gospel of Pseudo Matthew*, the traditions of judaizing Christians and the *Hadith*.

To confirm the extraordinary value of the person of Maryam, the fact that to her, alone among creatures, and to her Son, is attributed a nature exempt from all sin, is sufficient. We know that the Islamic religion ignores the concept of original sin; it attributes to man, however, a natural defectibility which makes him impure and imperfect from birth. Nevertheless, in a famous *Hadith* attributed to the Prophet, it is affirmed that: "Every child is touched by the devil as soon as he is born and this contact makes him cry. Excepted are Mary and her Son".²⁰⁶ From this *Hadith* and from verses 35-37 of Sura III, Muslem commentators have deduced and affirmed the principle of Maryam's original purity. God, in fact, according to the Quranic text, granted the wish of Hanna who consecrated to him Maryam, about to be

206. قَالَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ مَا مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مَوْلُودٌ إِلَّا يَمَسُّهُ الشَّيْطَانُ حِينَ يُولَدُ فَيَسْتَهْلِكُ صَارِحًا مِنْ مَسِّ الشَّيْطَانِ غَيْرَ مَرْيَمَ وَابْنِهَا -- I. M. Hanif, *Sahih Muslim bisharh al-Nawawi*, Book of Qadr, Vol. 16 (al-Matba'at al-Misriyyah bi al-Azhari, 1930) p. 207; Please see also *Sahih al-Buhkari*, Kitabu'l Anbiya, Hadith no. 641; *Sahih Muslim*, Kitabu'l Fadail, Hadith no.146 and147; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. ii, Hadith no. 233, 274-5, 288, 292, 319, 368, 523; and also see please Tafsir of Surah Imran, verse number 31. Translation of the Hadith taken from the Translation of the Meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari (Arabic English) by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Delhi, 1984

born, and the One to whom she would give birth²⁰⁷ God predestined Mary and purified her, raising her above all women.²⁰⁸

After this premise it is not surprising that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, though only implicitly contained in verses 31 and 37 of the third chapter, is univocally recognized by the Islamic religion. The recognition arises without difficulty also from the repeated and always unanimous evaluation of the extraordinary person of Mary and of her pure life²⁰⁹ which set her, with her Son, above every other created being.

Mary's childhood, as seen through the Quranic narration and Islamic tradition, is entirely a miracle. Mary grows under direct divine protection; she is nourished daily by angels²¹⁰ and has visions of God every day. Everything contributes to making her and her Son a sign for mankind.²¹¹ But if the detailed narration of Mary's childhood confirms the exceptional value of her person, it is necessary to stress that the greatness of Mary is completely related to the extraordinary event constituted by the birth of her son Jesus. The fearful and sweet vicissitudes that precede and accompany the birth and the childhood of her whom God chose above all women, are, in fact; nothing but the prelude to the coming of the Messiah.²¹² Therefore, in the intentions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the whole Islamic tradition, the advent of the Man generated by the Word²¹³ finds in the history of the little Mary the mysterious preceding fact that prepares the believer, even more than the Gospels themselves do, for an expectation full of awe and hope.

207. Al Quran, 3:37 (Vers is mentioned before).

208. Al-Quran, 3:45 (Full Vers is mentioned before)

209. Almighty Allah said: وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ (Al-Quran, 3:42); In another vers He mentioned: وَاللَّيْلِ أَحْضَنَتْ فَرْحَهَا فَمَحَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْتَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ (Al-Quran, 21:91); Allah also said: وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْضَنَتْ فَرْحَهَا فَمَحَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكَتَبْنَا وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَائِمِينَ (Al-Quran, 66:12)

210. (Al-Quran, 3:33) إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

211. (Al-Quran, 21:91); وَاللَّيْلِ أَحْضَنَتْ فَرْحَهَا فَمَحَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْتَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَأَوْتَيْنَاهُمَا (Al-Quran, 23:50) إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ

212. (Al-Quran, 3:40) قَالَ رَبِّ أَلَيْسَ لِي عَلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَنَيْتُ الْكِبْرُ وَالْمُرَاتِي عَاقِرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ

213. (Al-Quran, 3:45) إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

This atmosphere, so charged with expectation and wonder, certainly does not disappear at the moment of the annunciation—a moment that for Mary is the highest and most mysterious one in her earthly life, and that reveals to her at last the significance of her function in the history of men. The Quran does not indicate the place in which this mystery was carried out.²¹⁴ It asserts, on the contrary,²¹⁵ that God sent his Spirit under the semblance of a handsome young man who, similarly to what is narrated in the *Gospel of Pseudo Matthew*, was the Archangel Gabriel (Gebrail), often identified in ancient time with the Spirit of truth or with times divine Spirit (*Ruhu'l-Amin* and *Ruhu(A)llah*)²¹⁶ It should be pointed out that in the Quranic version Mary does not utter the *fiat* which expresses her responsible acceptance of the divine will. Here she merely asks: "How can I give birth to a son if no man has touched me?"; receiving the answer; "Just so! God creates what he wants: when he decides something, it is enough that he should say: let it be! and it is".²¹⁷ A version that confirms the typically Islamic sense of the absolute authority and power of God, and the complete submission of man to his will.

The Quran then narrates that Mary, feeling the moment approach in which she would give birth, withdrew to a lonely place in the East. Muslim exegetics are not unanimous in recognizing Bethlehem as the place of the Messiah's birth nor does it seem to have attached much importance to the question. It lingered, on the contrary, on the episode of Mary who, tired and sad, invokes death.²¹⁸ The Spirit of truth answers her once more, bringing to her both spiritual and material comfort. Here, in fact, is inserted the well-known and delightful story of the Virgin who quenches her thirst with the water of a stream that suddenly gushes out under her feet, and who feeds on the dates of a palm tree.

214. (Al-Quran, 19:16) وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّيَدَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا

215. (Al-Quran, 3:42) وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ (Al-Quran, 19:17) فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا

216. Al-Quran, 19:17, mentioned before.

217. (Al-Quran, 3 : 47) قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَلَيْسَ بِي وَالدُّ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

218. فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَاتَّبَعَتْهُ بِهٖ مَكَانًا قَرِيبًا (22) فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَىٰ جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا نَسِيًّا (23) فَوَدَّعَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزِنَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا (24) وَهَزَيْ إِلَيْكَ جِذْعَ النَّخْلَةِ نَسَافِطُ عَلَيْكِ رُطَبًا حَلِيًّا (25) فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَإِمَّا تَرَىٰ الْأَفْئِدَةَ كَغَيْظِ الْوَيْطَانِ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكِ وَاصْبِرْ لِمَا أَلْفَيْتِ أَصْحَابُنَا يَوْمَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا بِكَلِمَاتٍ لَّيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ سَأَلُوا رَبَّكَ يَقُولُوا صَدَقْتَ فَجِئْنَا بِكَ بِالْبَقَرَةِ وَأَكْبَرْنَا بَدَلِهَا زَيْنًا لَهِيبًا وَجِئْنَا بِهَا نِسَاءَ الْيَتِيمَ ذَاتَ الْأَعْيُنِ الْمُؤْسَمِئَاتِ وَسَأَلُوا رَبَّكَ يَقُولُوا صَدَقْتَ فَجِئْنَا بِكَ بِالْحَقْلِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَاللَّيْلِ فِي الْوَيْطَانِ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكِ وَاصْبِرْ لِمَا أَلْفَيْتِ أَصْحَابُنَا يَوْمَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا بِكَلِمَاتٍ لَّيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ سَأَلُوا رَبَّكَ يَقُولُوا صَدَقْتَ فَجِئْنَا بِكَ بِالْحَقْلِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَاللَّيْلِ فِي الْوَيْطَانِ (Al-Quran, 19:22-26)

The Quran gives no details about the birth of Jesus. It at once presents Mary who, returning among her people and showing them the Child, becomes the object of terrible slanders. The episode, brief but dramatic, is suddenly solved when the Infant, speaking unexpectedly from the cradle, takes his Mother's defence and exonerates her from all blame.²¹⁹ This miracle, to which the Quran refers more than once,²²⁰ is among those that have made most impression on the imagination of Moslem believers and that are still alive in their conscience. The episode, however, has also a Charismatic importance for Islamic theology, since the fact that the Child speaks from the cradle is a violation of natural laws and therefore bears witness to the greatness of the Spirit that is in him.

The Quran does not give us any other information on the Virgin's life, while tradition recalls various and partly conflicting versions of the last years of her earthly presence and of her ascension to heaven. But neither the Quran nor tradition give the story of the *Transitus Mariae* (ascension of Maryam to Heaven).

The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) defended Mary's virginity

Those who do not know the Islamic religion may be surprised to learn that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) defended Mary's virginity, or that he recognized her as the woman chosen by God for a function that was to be unique in history. The Prophet's commitment to defend her and exalt her is a unique role in the history of religions, He also explains his harsh condemnation of the Jews,²²¹ for blaming Maryam and refusing to admit Mary's unique role in the history of human civilization. It is necessary to clarify, however, that, also for Muhammad, Mary is unimaginable if dissociated from her Son: the divine election and the purity of the Mother are directly proportioned to the qualities of the Son; the moment of their interdependence is greatly felt, therefore, since the historical greatness of Mary is conditioned by that of her Son, and the Son in his turn depends on his Mother, who constitutes the indispensable promise for his presence on earth. In the Quran

219. (Al-Quran, 19: 30-33)

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا (30) وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا (31) وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا (32) وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا (33)

220. Al-Quran, 3:46; the verse is mentioned before; Allah also said: قَالُوا نُؤْتِدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَنَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبَنَا (Al-Quran, 5:113) وَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ قَدْ صَادَقْتُنَا وَتَكُونُ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

221. (Al-Quran, 4: 156) وَبِكْفَرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَى مَرْثِمٍ نُهْمَانًا عَظِيمًا

Jesus Christ is called repeatedly Isa ibn Maryam—"Jesus son of Mary"²²²—a name which if it will become perhaps the best known one in the Islamic world, will also be the one that characterizes most the figure of Jesus Christ. This correlation, which has led Moslem religious thought to affirm the indissolubility of the dual concept Mary-Jesus and to base its refutation of Christian doctrine on it, seems to have its foundation in the principle of necessity. The negation of Christ's divinity finds its reason, in fact, precisely in Mary's human nature; that is, in the genetic relationship which, entailing the transmission of properties, would exclude a leap of quality from Mother to Son.

This conception, in which there is also inherent idea of the primacy of the female line over the male line (in the Quranic narration of Mary's life, while the person of Zachariah, the Virgin's uncle and guardian, is thwarted by the constant presence of the Angel of the Lord, and that of Joseph is completely ignored), is due, in our opinion, more than to the influence of the apocrypha, to an ancient way of feeling that is characteristic of the Semites of Arabia. It is a way of feeling which, is also alive in Muhammad and which leads to mental operations of the analogical type, to a thought geared less to speculation than to the pursuit of parallelisms, to the concordance of diverse but congruent elements, and therefore to the vision of a firm reality, because it is founded on perfect and therefore immutable relationships, which seem to exclude the possibility of gradual evolution.

The virgin birth of Jesus

The Qur'an states that Jesus was the result of a virgin birth, but describes Mary and her son not as divine but as "honoured servants".²²³ To deny Jesus divinity, he is compared in with Adam²²⁴ who was created with neither father nor mother. Both Mary and Jesus are stated to - a proof of their humanity as tafsirs indicate. The most detailed account of the annunciation and birth of Jesus is provided in Sura 3 and 19 of the Qur'an wherein it is written that God sent angel to announce that she could shortly expect to bear a son, despite being a virgin.

The Qur'an discusses Mary's miraculous pregnancy as well. "Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East. She

222. ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ (Al-Quran, 5:75); also mentioned: وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ (Al-Quran, 19:34)

223. وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ (Al-Quran, 21:26)

224. إِذْ مَثَّلَ عِيسَى عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَهَيْئَةِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (Al-Quran, 3:59)

placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects".²²⁵ After seeing the angel, she said: "I seek refuge from thee to (God) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear God".²²⁶ The angel Gabriel responded: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a pure son".²²⁷ She asked: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"²²⁸ The Angel Gabriel said: "So (it will be): thy Lord said, 'That is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us.' It is a matter (so) decreed".²²⁹ Mary then becomes pregnant.

After conceiving Jesus, Mary went away with the baby to a distant place.²³⁰ "And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree. She cried (in her anguish): "Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten!"²³¹

Maryam blessed with miraculous event

Hazrat Maryam was always blessed by the special grace of Almighty Allah (SWT) through out his whole life i.e. from before the birth to after the death. She herself witnessed so many miraculous events throughout her life. Allah (SWT) exhibited through her the miracle like birth of a child without father. Her birth was also a miracle to her parents because her father was too old to give birth of a child while her mother was barren. So her birth was undoubtedly a miracle from Almighty Allah (SWT) and the birth of her child was a miracle to her from Allah (SWT).

Fortunate woman with heavenly provisions

Hazrat Maryam was undoubtedly a fortunate and lucky woman of the world who received heavenly fruits while she stayed in the mosque. As far as our knowledge

225. (Al-Quran, 19:16-17) وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّيَدَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْفِيًّا (16) فَأَتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا

226. (Al-Quran, 19:18) قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ نَعِيمًا

227. (Al-Quran, 19:19) قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا

228. (Al-Quran, 19:20) قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا

229. (Al-Quran, 19:71) وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَقْضِيًّا

230. (Al-Quran, 19:22) فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَاتَّبَعَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصْبًا

231. (Al-Quran, 19:23) فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا نَسِيًّا

is concerned no woman on the earth received such heavenly fruits. However, by seeing such heavenly fruits near Maryam her guardian Hazrat Zachariya, prophet and Imam of the Baitu'l Muqaddis, also became astonished to know that how dearest and nearest to Allah (SWT) she was for whom Allah (SWT) sent heavenly fruits. On the other hand he was also inspired more to the devotion of Allah (SWT) than earlier by her through observing such miraculous event. Being inspired so by Maryam he prayed to Allah for granting him a son and he was blessed by a son, Hazrat Yahya.

The miracle of water spring

At the time of the birth of Hazrat Isa, she got water beside her. After the delivery she opened her eyes and saw her baby in her lap and found water just beside her while it was most impossible to get water. After drinking water she thanked Allah (SWT) very much for granting her the most urgent need in that crucial moment. She realized that it was none but Almighty Allah (SWT) Who granted water for her and gave at her lap such a very beautiful child. Many of her auto-biographic writers are of the opinion that after gaining the baby at her lap and after drinking water, as if she totally forgot all pains and sorrow bore just before this moment. However, later on this place worked as a water source for the local inhabitants for many years.

The miracle of the palm-tree

The miracle of the palm-tree which is mentioned in the Quran but not in the Bible is an important miracle for Muslims. In this narration, Mary finds herself behind a withered palm-tree in the wilderness and she wishes if she had died before this. The voice of God cries out to her "shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee".²³² The miracle is counterpart to the miracle of the Mihrab. In both instances, Mary is nourished by Allah, however, in the first case, the fruits come without her having to do anything other than remember God in the prayer-niche. Whereas, in the second case, she must have participated in the miracle by shaking the tree. Ruzbihan Baqli, a commentator of the Quran has stated the two miracles are miracles of pure grace and active faith.

232. وَهَزَيِ إِلَيْكَ بِجَدْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا حَلِيًّا (Al-Quran, 19:25)

In his commentary, he has also stated that Mary's substance is the substance of original sanctity. According to some Muslims, Mary personifies clemency and Mercy, therefore, she is the human manifestation of the Basmalah.

Joseph, the magi, and manger are not mentioned in the Qur'anic narration. In Quran and Hadith, Allah was Mary's only Provider. Muslims do not accept the virgin birth of Jesus as evidence of Jesus being God.

The Quran states: "The similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: 'Be.' And he was".²³³

(Remember) When the angels said O Mary! God Gives thee Good News of a son through a Word from Him! His name shall be the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, honoured in this world and in the next, and of those who Are Granted Nearness to God!²³⁴

And he shall speak to the people in the cradle, and when of middle age, and he shall be of The Righteous.²³⁵

She said My Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me? He Said, That is as it shall be. God Creates what He Pleases. When He decrees a thing He says to it "Be" and it is!²³⁶

The Qur'an also declares that one of the reasons (amongst many listed) for the punishments of The-God upon the People of the Book – "God has sealed their hearts"²³⁷ is for their "uttering a monstrous lie against Mary".²³⁸

This is understood by some to refer to the accusations of wanton unchastity which was directed by some against Mary in her lifetime and which (Jewish sources consider to be anti-Semitic) interpretations recorded in the Talmud. In fact the

233. (Al-Quran, 3:59) *إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ*

234. (Al-Quran, 3:45) *إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ*

235. (Al-Quran, 3:46) *وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ*

236. (Al-Quran, 3:47) *قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَلَيْسَ لِي بِوَلَدٍ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ*

237. (Al-Quran, 4:155) *فِيمَا نَقُضِيهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بَعِيرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَعِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا*

238. (Al-Quran, 4:156) *وَبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا*

Qur'an includes Christians, Jews (including Karaites and Samaritans), and "Sabians" (a Qur'anic term interpreted to refer to the Mandaeans) among the People of the Book.

Sura 5 (Al-Ma'ida) 116-119 includes the Prophecy of the Judgment Day where "Jesus son of Mary" will be questioned by God as regards those who worship him and Mary, and that Jesus will deny them:

“And when God will say O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men: Take me and my mother for two gods beside God? He will answer Holy art Thou! I could never say that which I had no right. If I had said it, Thou wouldst have surely known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is Thou alone Who Art the Knower of all hidden things

I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me - Worship God (Arabic: Allah), my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them, but since Thou didst take me up, Thou hast been the Watcher over them, and Thou art Witness over all things

If Thou punish them, they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them, Thou surely art the Mighty, the Wise.

God Will Say This is a Day when only The Truthful shall profit by their truthfulness. For them are Gardens beneath which streams flow; therein shall they abide forever. God Is well Pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him! That indeed is the Supreme Triumph!”²³⁹

From all these versus one mentally pictures Mary, driven out of town, out of sight to Bethlehem valley 4-6 miles from Jerusalem, in the pain of labor, and in fear of what is going to happen to her. It is her first child, she has no husband. What will her people, the Jews, say? What will they do? How will she react? With all that, she wishes that she was dead, but the God who gave her the miracle, the God to Whom she worshipped, to Whom she devoted her life, did not forsake her. A voice came from beneath her, soothing and comforting her, and guiding her. And

239. وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ آتَيْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَّ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعَلَّمَ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (116) مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (117) إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبْدُكَ وَإِنْ تُغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (118) قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمَ يَتَّبِعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَإِنْ نَعْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَمَا لَهُمْ قَائِلِينَ بِالْعَبَاثِ (Al-Quran, 5: 116-119) رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

when she gave birth, the voice instructed her not to speak or explain, but make a vow of silence and everything will work out.

"Then she brought him (the baby) to her people, carrying him. They said:

'O *Maryam!* Indeed you have brought a thing which is greatly evil! O sister of *Haron* (i.e. O you who we consider the like of *Haron*, who was a pious man at the time of Mary)! Your father was not a bad man (adulterous), nor was your mother an unchaste woman.' Then she pointed to him (to the baby). They said:

'How can we talk to one who is a child, in the cradle?'²⁴⁰

Mary gives birth to the child, and takes him back to her village. And there Mary meets the Jews. Upon seeing her with her baby, they are struck. In their eyes, she has done a heinous crime. Their argument was: 'How could you do something so evil! We always considered you a model person of piety, and you come from a pious family -- known and respected!'. But Mary obeys the commands of her Lord. She is quiet and points to the baby

Maryam as a permanent virgin

Mary always remained a virgin even after the birth of Jesus. In this particular context, Aliah Schleifer, in her book, mentions that Tabari paraphrases the meaning of 19:20 thus: 'When no mortal has touched me, either from the point of view of *halal* [allowed acts] or *haram* [forbidden acts].' Thus, because of Mary's purity of body and soul, she is entitled *al-batul*. She is called the Virgin Mary in the Christian context, thus stressing the physical aspect of her purity, but the Arabic word, *al-batul* implies more, as the scholars have noted.

According to the classical dictionary *Lisan al-'Arab*, the root of *batul*, *b.t.l.*, has the sense of 'severance', and the original meaning of the words *batul*, *batil*, and *batila* is: a palm shoot which has separated itself from its mother tree. The verb which is related to the form *batul* is *tabattala*, and the phrase *tabattala ila Allah* means to withdraw or to cut oneself off in order to devote oneself sincerely to divine worship. Thus, if God's servant severs all concerns and devotes himself totally to His worship, he has *tabattala*, i.e., has separated himself from

240. فَكَلِمِي وَاشْرَبِي وَفَرِّجِي عَيْنًا فِيمَا تَرَبَّرْتِ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا (26) فَأَنَّتْ بِهِ فَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ حَسِبْتُنَا فَرْسًا (27) يَا أُخْتَ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكَ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَعْثًا (28) فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا (Al-Quran, 19: 27-29)

everything except the cause of God and obedience to Him. *Lisan al-'Arab* further states that 'the *batul* among the women' is the woman who separates herself from men, having no desire or need for them. Thus, Mary the Virgin [*al-'adha*] was called *batul* because of her abstention from marriage and her severance from all worldly preoccupations in order to worship God. *Batul* may also refer to physical beauty, in addition to spiritual excellence; consequently, al-Khazin describes Mary as the most beautiful and the most excellent of women of her time.

Mary's characteristics of spiritual and bodily purity are reiterated in the various stories and accounts of her life, one of which is found in Wahb ibn Munabbih's tale about Joseph the Carpenter's awareness of her pregnancy, which at first he found to be unacceptably bizarre: 'Then he considered what he knew about her religiousness and her worship,' at which point he realised that the situation was beyond his ken. Another account found in *Fada'il* literature portrays Mary's physical purity:

Sa'id ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz said: 'In the time of the Israelites there was a spring [or well] in Jerusalem around the site of the Spring of Silwan. If a woman was accused of adultery or fornication, she would drink from this spring. If she were guilty, she would die. So when Mary became pregnant, they brought her there. She drank from it, and nothing happened except good. And she prayed to God not to let her be dishonoured as she was a believing woman, and the spring dried up.'

From the perspective both of the customary practices of the Jews at the time of Mary's birth, and of those presented in the Qur'an and Sunna. Mary's dedication to worship and her conscious abstention from marriage are characteristics which set her apart from the ordinary. For Jewish believers, such dedication had previously reserved for men, and did not entail lifelong abstention from marriage. And as the following discussion indicates, the fact that Mary was chosen to possess these characteristics is an even greater distinguishing factor in the Islamic context, as it places her outside the realm of what is generally advised for the believers, male or female ...

The Quranic injunctions at 33:35 and 24:33 apply to both men and women; thus Muslim women are normally expected to marry, and to remarry in case of widowhood or divorce. An exception to this condition is found in the special status of the widows of the Prophet who were prohibited from marrying after his death.

Another exception is the Blessed Virgin, who was designated never to marry, to remain together with her son, as a 'sign for (all) peoples'....²⁴¹

The last of the two hadiths emphasise the importance of choosing a path of moderation, in spite of the fact that it may be difficult for the fervent believer who wants to abandon him or herself to total worship, ignoring marriage and other worldly attachments. But Mary, the universal symbol of female purity and piety, was permitted to do what was forbidden to others.²⁴²

Mary's names and titles in Islam

Qānitah: In Surah of the Banning,²⁴³ Mary is called of the Qanitah. The Arabic term implies the meaning, not only of constant submission to Allah, but also absorption in prayer and invocation, meanings that coincides with the image of Mary spending her childhood in the Mihrab. In this way, Mary personifies prayer and contemplation in Islam.

Siddiqah: Mary is called Siddiqah twice in the Quran.²⁴⁴ The Arabic term means "She who accepts as true" or "She who has faith". The term has also been translated "She who believes sincerely totally".

Sājidah: means "She who prostrates to Allah in worship". The Quran states: "O Mary! Worship your Lord devoutly: prostrate yourself."²⁴⁵ While in Sujud, a Muslim is to praise Allah and glorify him. In this motion, which Muslims believe to be derived from Marian nature, hands, knees and the forehead touch the ground together.

Rāki'ah: means "She who bows down to Allah in worship". The Quran states: "O Mary!.. bow down in prayer with those men who bow down"²⁴⁶ The command was repeated by angels only to Mary, according to the Muslim view. Ruku' in Muslim prayer Salat has been derived from Mary's practice.

241. (Al-Quran, 21:91) وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابِتًا أَيْ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

242. *Mary: The Blessed Virgin of Islam*, Op.cit. pp. 65-69

243. (Al Quran, 66:12) وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُنِيَ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَانِتِينَ

244. لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَلَاثَةٌ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (73) أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (74) مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَأَنَّا بِاِكْلَانِ الطَّعَامِ أَنْظَرُ كَيْفَ بُيِّنَ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ أَنْظَرُ أَيُّ يُؤْفَكُونَ (Al-Quran, 5:73-75)

245. (Al-Quran, 3:43) يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

246. Loc.cit

Tāhirah: means “She who was purified”.²⁴⁷ According to a Hadith, the devil did not touch Mary when she was born, therefore she did not cry.²⁴⁸ So, she was a purified woman (Tahirah) in the world.

Mustafia: means “She who was chosen”. The Quran states: “O Mary! Allah has chosen you and purified you and again he has chosen you above all women of all nations of the worlds”.²⁴⁹ According to the interpretations, the first election is intrinsic. Allah has chosen the virgin in herself and for herself, and the second time he has chosen her in regard to the world and for a divine plan.

Nur: One of the most important passages, both from the generally Islamic as well as from the specifically Maryami point of view, is the Verse of Light along Light) and with the three verses that follow it. Mary has been called Nur (Umm Nur (the mother of one who was Light). The Verse of Light, also contains the virginal symbols of the crystal, the star, the blessed olive tree, and oil, which according to Muslims, refer to the purity of Mary.

Waliyah: There is among Muslims a divergence of opinion concerning whether Mary was a Prophetess(Nabiyah) or a Saint(Waliah). Most Muslims believe that prophecy is reserved for men only and that Mary was simply a saint. Even those who believe Mary was a prophetess, agree that she had no law-giving function.

Sa'imah: means “She who fasts”. Mary is reported to fast one half of a year in Muslim tradition. The Quran says God told Mary “And if any man sees you, say, I have vowed a fast to the Most Gracious, and this day I will enter into no talk with any human being”.

Ma'suma: means “She who never sinned”. According to the Quran, Allah protected Mary from Satan.²⁵⁰

Many other names of Mary can be found in various other books and religious collections. In Hadith, she has been referred to by names such as Batul and Adhraa (Ascetic Virgin), Masturah (meaning veiled) and Marhumah (enveloped in Allah's Mercy).

247. (Al-Quran, 3:42) وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

248. *Sunani ibn Nasai*, Chapter no. 4 and Hadith no. 331

249. Al-Quran, 3:42, mentioned above.

250. إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ - فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذَرِّيَتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (Al-Quran, 3:35-36)

Maryam as a sinless woman

According to the holy Quran and Hadith, Hazrat Maryam was a sinless woman. No sin touched her. It is Allah (SWT) Who Himself saved and protected her from her birth to death. Allah (SWT) kept her and her child away from the touch of Satan. Allah (SWT) Himself quoted her mother in the holy Quran who prayed to Him for saving Maryam and her generation from the cursed Satan. The holy Quran says:

"... (Mother of Maryam said) I seek refuge with You (Allah) for her and for her offspring from Shaitan (Satan), the outcast".²⁵¹

Allah (SWT) granted her prayer and preserved Maryam and her son, Hazrat Maryam from the touch of Satan. In this line of the Quranic spirit the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Every child that is born, is touched (or stung) by Satan and this touch makes it cry, except Maryam and her son (Isa)".²⁵²

Because of this holiness Maryam was brought up in the holy place of the mosque and guided by the prophet Zachariah and cared by the angel and directly helped by Allah (SWT). When the angel said to her that she would become a mother of the prophet Isa, she said to the angel being very much conscious about her chastity: "O my Lord! How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?"²⁵³

When she realized that it would be in the plan of Allah (SWT), she became self convinced and waiting for that desired moment. After the delivery her new-born child witnessed from the cradle about his mother chastity. The holy Quran recorded this miraculous witness in the language of the child Isa in this way:

251. Al-Quran, 3:36, Mentioned before.

252. قَالَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ مَا مِنْ نَبِيٍّ آدَمَ مَوْلُودٌ إِلَّا يَمَسُّهُ الشَّيْطَانُ حِينَ يُولَدُ فَيَسْتَهْلِكُ صَارِحًا مِنْ مَسِّ الشَّيْطَانِ غَيْرَ مَرْتَمٍ وَأَيُّهَا (Sahih al-Buhkari, Kitabul Anbiya, Hadith no. 641); Sahih Muslim, Kitabul Fadail, Hadith no.146 and 147; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol.II, Hadith no. 233, 274-5, 288, 292, 319, 368, 523; and also see please Tafsir of Surah Imran, verse number 31. Translation of the Hadith taken from the Translation of the Meanings of Sahih AL-Bukhari (Arabic English) by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Delhi, 1984

253. (Al-Quran, 19:20) قَالَتْ رَبِّ أُمَّيْ يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا فَعَلَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ. (Al-Quran, 19:20) قَالَتْ رَبِّ أُمَّيْ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ نَبِيًّا; 3:47)

"He will speak to the people in the cradle and in manhood, and he will be one of the righteous." "I am the slave of Allah and His messenger to you, O children of Israel! And be clear that my mother is always a chastity one".²⁵⁴

Many of the Quranic commentators explained this verse to further step that only because of proving Maryam as a virgin and chastity one Allah (SWT) made the child Isa able to talk with the people.

Sinless is a major quality of prophet. Though her sinless never indicate that she was a prophet, but Ibn Hazam hold that it was only Maryam who might have the probability to become a prophet.²⁵⁵ Al Baidhawi did not accept the possibility for becoming prophet. In this regard he mentioned the Quranic verse 12:109 where Allah (SWT) said: "And We sent not before you (as Messengers) any but men unto whom We revealed, from among the people of the townships".²⁵⁶ Thus, by mentioning this verse, Al Baidhawi rejected the opinion of Ibn Hazam and he viewed Maryam, with the line of Quranic term Siddiqah,²⁵⁷ as the woman of the truth, just next to the prophet.

Maryam as the best woman of the world

According to the Holy Quran Hazrat Maryam was the best woman of the world. The Quran clearly states: And (remember) when the angel said: " O Maryam! Verily, Allah has choosen you, purified you and choosen you above the women of the world".²⁵⁸ Here the verse definitely proves that Hazrat Maryam was the best of women in the sight of Allah (SWT) whom Allah (SWT) chose for an extraordinary event. Hazrat Maryam also proved herself so in the cause of Allah

254. وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا - وَبِرَأْيِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ مَا مَنَعَهُمْ مِنْ طَاعَتِي وَأَنِصُّكَ بِالْحَقِّ إِنْ سَأَلْتَنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَأَجِبْكَ وَتَقَرَّبْ إِلَيَّ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنِصُّكَ بِالنَّفْسِ الْكَافِرَةِ وَالْجُنَّةِ الْمُنَكَّرَةِ (Al-Quran, 19:30-33) وَحَقَّ عَلَيَّ نَبِيًّا - وَحَقَّ عَلَيَّ مَبَارَكًا إِنَّ مَا كُنْتُ

255. Imam ibn Hazm, as well as others, were of the view that anyone who received revelation from Allah SWT was a prophet. Whether male or female it does not matter for being a prophet. Based on this definition, Maryam AS would be a Prophet.

256. The verdict of this verse is also supported by other verses like: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَمَسُّوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (Al-Quran, 4:43) وَإِلَّا رَحَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (Al-Quran, 21:7)

257. مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ انظُرْ كَيْفَ بَيَّنُّ لُهُمُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ انظُرْ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (Al-Quran, 5:75)

258. وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ (Al Quran, 3:42)

(SWT). When her whole community was deadly against her, she kept patience putting her unbroken trust on Allah (SWT).

It is also proved by many prophetic traditions of Islam that Maryam was the best of the holy women in the world. Imam Ahmad Ibn Hambal, in his book *Musnad*, mentioned some traditions. One day the Prophet (PBUH) said ,”Of the whole women of the world Maryam, daughter of Imran , Khadizah, daughter of Khawilad and Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, and Asiah, wife of Pharaoh are the best ones”.²⁵⁹ The Prophet said that if there was no Maryam, daughter of Imran, it was Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad would be the best woman in paradise. The Prophet also mentioned that Hasan and Hossain would be the major leaders in the paradise and if there was no Maryam, daughter of Imran, it was Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad would be the main woman in paradise

From the above mentioned Quranic verse and the prophetic traditions it is as clear as day light that Hazrat Maryam was the best woman of the World. None was like her. She was the only one and she is definitely an icon for all the religious women of the world.

259. عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَمَلُ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ كَثِيرٌ وَلَمْ يَكْمُلْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا أَسِيَةُ امْرَأَةِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَرْيَمُ بِنْتُ عِمْرَانَ وَإِنْ فَضَّلَ عَائِشَةُ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ كَفَضَلِ الرِّبْدِ عَلَى سَائِرِ الطَّعَامِ (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vo. 4, Hadith No.623); Musnad, Vol. No. 3, p. 54, 80, 135

SECTION THREE : MARYAM AND MUSLIM MYSTICS

Muslim mystics are very much influenced by the unconditional devotion of Hazrat Maryam. Many of them discovered some pertinent point of meditation from the fasting character of Hazrat Maryam. Al- Kalabadhi in his book *The Doctrine of the Sufis* mentioned that Muslims Mystics had become very much inspired by the fasting-vow of Maryam which means abstaining from men and presenting own self before Allah. As we see that when Maryam said: 'Verily! I have vowed a fast unto the Most Gracious (Allah) so I shall not speak to any human being this day'.²⁶⁰ Muslim mystics take her speech 'not saying' in her fasting condition as a sign for deep meditation in remembering Allah (SWT) throughout their sufi tariqas (mystic ways of practicing)

Al- Baqli in his Tafsir (Quranic commentary) explained the verse that here it certainly indicates Maryam's sincerity, honesty and deep attention to Allah (SWT). She spent her each and every single moment only for pleasing Almighty Allah (SWT). So she was bound to abstain from talking with people while she was in very important practice like fasting. To al-Baqli it is very important task for all mystics who want to please Allah (SWT) to be deep silent and alone for their personal meditation (moraqaba) like Maryam

Therefore, it is as clear as daylight that Maryam is an excellent example for sufi mystics for reaching to their highest goal.

260. فَكَلِمَاتِي وَأَشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَإِمَّا تَرِينِ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أَكَلِمَ الْيَوْمَ أَنسِيًّا (Al Quiran, 19:26)

SECTIO FOUR : MARYAM IN THE FOLKLORE AND OTHER STORIES

The name Maryam is often attached with many folklore traditions of Muslim world. Many female children are named by this particular name. For safely delivery many painful women pray to Allah through remembering this name. In many parts of India a plant tree named Maryam is given to the pregnant women for their secure delivery in the belief that when Maryam delivered her son she tightly touched the tree and delivered easily. So, according to their folklore traditions they keep the leaves and branches of that tree in water of a pot or glass and after some times the pregnant women drink that water in order to safely delivery. This folklore tradition is often heard in Persia and near east countries.

In many countries it is also heard that three dates are given to the mother of a new born child in order to reduce her pain. In it it is believed that Hazrat Maryam delivered her son under the tree of date and after delivering she ate three dates, and after eating dates she felt comfortable.

The ancient Muslim writers also mentioned a picture of Maryam preserved in Makkah during the period of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Azraqi, an ancient author of Makkah said that on the eight of Ramadan (December, 629- January 630) Muhammad (PBUH) entered the city of Makkah being victory and went inside the house of Makkah ordering to destroy all the images and shapes preserved therein except the image of Maryam in which she sat keeping her son, Hazrat Isa at her lap. It is also said that the Prophet (PBUH) kept this image under his hand and said to his companions to destroy all the images but the image under his hand. Azraqi also mentioned that this image was at Makkah till 63 A.H. After then there is no clear information found about the image whether it was destroyed or preserved.

Imam Muslim said that once a time there was seen a picture of Maryam and her son in the house of the Prophet's companions (Sahabi) and their next followers (Tabi'i).

Maryam is much venerated in Muslim folk tradition, often along with Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Muslim women have surely taken her as an ideal example and as a resource in time of trouble. Muslim and Christian traditions both honor her memory at Matariyya near Cairo and in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem there is Hammam Sitti Maryam (the bath of Maryam), near St.

Stephen's Gate, where it was believed Maryam once bathed; the place would be visited by women seeking a cure for barrenness.

Some plants have been named after Maryam; *Maryamiyya* or *Meramiyeh*, for example, are said to have acquired its sweet scent when Maryam wiped her forehead with its leaves. *Kaff al-Adhra*, *Anastatica hierochuntia* and *Cruciferae* are said as the dried seed-heads of which can last for years and are blown around the desert, the seeds germinating when water is available. The seed-head is thought to resemble a fist, hence the name; the Kaff or hand is well-known as a protection against the evil eye; it can be seen painted or carved, or worn as an amulet, generally known in Muslim circles as *Kaff Fatima*. This plant, however, has in time past been used not to avert the evil eye—though this concept may also have been present – but as a birth charm, soaked in water when a woman was in labour, and the water sometimes given to her to drink. This plant can still be found, but its folk usage seems to have died out.

Thus, from the foregoing discussion, it is clear that Hazrat Maryam holds a very important place in the holy Quran, the Prophetic tradition (Hadith), Islamic history and culture. She is a very prominent figure in Muslim mystical belief and practice, and also in Muslim folklore tradition and culture. Her position is above all the holy women of the world. She is the best woman on the earth. No woman can be compared with her in the context of patience and devotion due to the cause of Allah (SWT). It is Allah (SWT) who has named a chapter (Surah) of the Holy Quran by her name in her honor. Allah (SWT) has protected her from all dangers and defended her character as chastity, virgin and sinless one. She was born in a saint and prophetic family and brought up in the holy place of the mosque being continuously guided by a saint and prophet. From both sides she was given the most honors – being daughter of a prophet and being mother of a prophet. She was an extra ordinary woman because of whom many things had to be rethought and many ideas had to be reintroduced. Though in many traditions she is seen as a female prophet but in Islam she is not a prophet rather a Siddiqah. To sum up the whole discussion it can be surely said that she is the best and ideal example not only for the whole of Muslim women but also for the entire religious women of the world. She is a dignified figure for womanhood. May Allah (SWT) be pleased to her and blessed with her soul forever.

CHAPTER THREE

A Comparative Study of Mary (Maryam) Between Christianity And Islam

Chapter Three

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MARY (MARYAM) BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

From the discussion discussed so far it is very much clear to us that in both religious traditions – Christianity and Islam Mary is an important figure. She is incomparable to any other women in the world. Though Christianity and Islam similarly describe her in most cases, but there are basic and subtle differences in their description. In the following pages there will be an effort to describe those similarities and dissimilarities in the line with comparative study and finally giving an appraisal on such findings.

First of all, we should turn our attention to her name. She is known to Christians as Mary while as Maryam to Muslims. The English Gospels²⁶¹ have mentioned her as Mary while the Arabic Quran²⁶² as Maryam. In Christian tradition the name Mary means ‘star of the sea’, ‘devoted lady’, ‘loved one’, ‘highly esteemed one’ etc.²⁶³ In Islamic tradition Maryam means a pious woman, a dedicated servant, a transferor of God’s word ‘kun’ to the human being the prophet Isa, etc.²⁶⁴ It may be because of linguistically difference the same person is in two names. But these two names are giving the similar meanings. According to philologists, both the names-Mary and Maryam have originally derived from the Hebrew word ‘Miriam’ which also means the same meanings mentioned above. The Quranic name Maryam has correlation to the Aramic name Maryam and the Hebrew name Myriam or Miriam in compare to the English name Mary. The mother tongue of the prophet Isa was the original language of the Gospels (Injil) and it was Aramic (Ibrani) language. So we should give priority for mother of Isa the Aramic name ‘Maryam’ which is as same as the Quranic name Maryam. Therefore it is as clear

261. Luke, 1:27; Matthew, 1:18

262. فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا اُنْثَىٰ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْاُنْثَىٰ وَاِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَاِنِّي اَعِدُّهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (Al Quran, 3:36)

263. *Dictionary of Mary* (with complete references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church), Revised and expanded edition, Mumbai,2008, pp.306

264. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol.3rd, p.310,at the article titled ‘Maryam’ and J.M.Abd-el-Jalil, Marie et l’Islam, Paris, 1950, p.20

as daylight that the holy Quran properly preserves the original name of Mary with correct pronunciation. The English name Mary may come from the Greek name Maria of Aramaic version of Maryam. In this connection, the Arabic name Maryam is more closure to the original Aramaic name Maryam than the English Mary.

According to Christian tradition,²⁶⁵ the name of her father was Joashim and her mother's name was Anna. According to the Quranic description²⁶⁶ her father's name was Imran but the Quran does not say anything about her mother's name. The Quran mentions her mother as the wife of Imran. However, it is universally accepted to Muslims that her mother's name was Hanna bint Faqudh. Though the English name Anna and Arabic name Hanna are very close to each other but it is difficult to make similar between English Joashim and Arabic Imran. As the holy Quran clearly says her father's name as Imran, it is undoubtedly acceptable to all Muslims that her father's name was Imran.

On the other hand, her mother's name has not been mentioned in the Quran, so we cannot obviously demand that Hanna was her actual name. In spite of it, Hanna seems to be more correct name compared with name of Anna.

Both Christian and Muslim scholars are of the opinion that Mary's genealogy is Davidic ancestry. They both agree that Mary descends from the king and prophet David (Dawud). According to the Gospel of Luke,²⁶⁷ she descends from the Davidic line through Nathan, son of King David. According to the Quranic indication,²⁶⁸ she was of course from the offspring of Adam, Noah and Abraham through the line of her father Imran. Among the Muslim scholars, the Prophet's companion Ibn Abbas and his first autobiographer Ibn Ishaq held that Mary descends from the prophet David (Dawud) through thus: Maryam, daughter of 'Imran, son of Yashim, son of Misha, son of Hazqiya, son of Yawish, son of Isha, son of Yahushafat, son Solayman, son of Dawud. In the description of Luke we find forty people through whom Mary descends from David while in the narration of Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Abbas there were only eight people from David to Mary.

265. Apocryphal Gospel and the report of the Protoevangelium of James and many other Christian sources support this.

266. إِذْ قَالَتْ امْرَأَةٌ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (Al Quran, 3:35)

267. Luke, 3:23-31

268. إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (33) ذُرِّيَّةً نَقَّطَهَا مِنْ نَعْتِهَا مِنَ اللَّهِ سَمِيعٌ عَلَيْهِمْ (Al Quran, 3:33-34)

There are clear differences in the narration of both traditions in the context of Marian genealogy.

Both Christian and Islamic traditions are not confirmed about the actual date of Mary's birth. In spite of it, Christian traditions hold a probable year of her birth between 23 and 20 B.C.E.²⁶⁹ But Muslim scholars did not give any clear year of her birth. Rather they are somewhat dependent on the Christian traditions on this regard.

According to the Quran,²⁷⁰ Mary's birth was so desirable to her parents- Imran and Hanna who were childless for a long time. Even they reached at their very old ages that they had no possibility for giving birth to a child. Nonetheless, Imran's wife Hanna was barren. But they had profound belief in God that they would be blessed with a child. So, one day Hanna prayed to Allah for granting a child and promised to present it to the mosque of Jerusalem. Allah granted her prayer and she gave birth of a child named Maryam. After that according to her promise she also presented child Maryam to the mosque. This miraculous event has clearly been discussed in the holy Quran. But such discussion of this kind is not mentioned in the Gospels and even elaborately in the other Christian traditions. Though the presentation of Mary to the temple is recognized by Christian traditions,²⁷¹ but Christian scholars tried to show that it was according to the Jewish norm in which all the Hebrew first-born male children had to be presented in the temple. In the Quranic description it was because of her mother's vow, not of Jewish custom as Christian scholars say.

It it was based on the Jewish custom,²⁷² according to Christian source, Mary was not presented in the temple because she was a female child and Jewish custom was applicable for the first born male child. Then the question automatically comes: why did Hanna present her female child to the temple? In the response to this question it can easily be said that because of her vow that she would present to the house of Allah whoever children she would give birth. In her vow she never fixed for male child but she hoped that she would delivery a male child. After

269. *Dictionary of Mary*, Op.cit., p. 290

270. إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (Al Quran, 3:35)

271. Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1876, pp. 14-17 and 117-179

272. Exodus, 13:2 and 13:12

giving birth she was astonished by seeing her female child and said how she fulfill her promise.²⁷³

However, after consulting with Zachariah she took final decision to present her female child to the temple.²⁷⁴ So, it is sure that she fulfilled her promise not because of Jewish custom but due to her strong dedication for fulfilling the promise. This hidden event is not properly mentioned in the Gospels whereas the holy Quran obviously upholds it in a clear way.

According to the Holy Quran and the prophetic tradition, Maryam was well protected by Allah (SWT) from the touch of Satan just after her birth. It was because of her mother Hanna's heartfelt prayer to Allah (SWT) for saving her daughter from the touch of Satan when she prayed in the language of the Quran: "I commend her (Maryam) and her offspring (Isha) to Your protection from Satan, the Rejected".²⁷⁵ It is also more clear by the well-known Hadith: "Every child that is born, is touched (or stung) by Satan and this touch makes it cry, except Maryam and her son (Isha)".²⁷⁶ Thus the Quranic as well as the prophetic tradition obviously support the impeccability (isma) of Maryam and her son Isha. On the other hand, the Christian Gospels and their traditions have mentioned nothing about Mary's safe and free from the touch of Satan just after her birth.

As for the birth place of Mary Muslim traditions seem to be dependent on Christian sources. As the holy Quran and the prophetic tradition have not mentioned anything about her exact birth place. Therefore Muslim historians and commentators of the Quran took Christian sources to mention the birth place of Mary. According to Christian sources, her birth place may be Bethlehem, or a village three miles away from Bethlehem, or Jerusalem.

273. فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَئِنِ الذَّكَرُ كَانَلْتِي وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (Al Quran, 3:36)

274. فَضَلَّلْنَاهَا بِرُءُوسِهَا يَغْتُولِ خَمْسِينَ وَآلَتِهَا ثَمَانًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلْنَاهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّىٰ لَكَ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (Al-Quran, 3:37)

275. Al-Quran, 3:36 (mentioned above)

276. *Al-Bukhari*, Kitabu `l Anbiya, Hadith No. 641; *Sahih Muslim*, Fadil, Hadith No. 146,147; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnaad*, Vol. 2, 233,274-5, 288,292,319,368,523 and Tafsir of Surah 3 and verse no.36

In the holy Quran it is said that the prophet Zachariah was guardian of Mary during her stay in the temple.²⁷⁷ All the elders of the temple eagerly hoped to take this opportunity. So, to solve this problem they organized a lottery. And in it Zachariah wined to take this opportunity.²⁷⁸ From then till his death he accomplished his duty properly.²⁷⁹ But this historical event is not mentioned in the Christian Gospels, though Christian secondary sources indicated it only. On the contrary the original source like the holy Quran elaborately described it.

Christian sources have shown that Mary was betrothal to Joseph.²⁸⁰ After knowing her pregnancy Joseph hesitated to marry her but by an intuition of God he was confirmed that Mary conceived by the word of God and she was going to delivery a blessed child. Thus he (Joseph) was convinced by a divine dream to marry and got married her.²⁸¹ According to Christian tradition, from then they were husband and wife till they died. After her delivery Jesus was regarded as his son also. According to Christian sources, Mary spent her rest life with this gentle man. These sources also ensured that she had some children other than Isha (Jesus Christ).

On the contrary, from Muslim sources we can know that Mary never got married to any one. She was always virgin. She was a virgin mother. She conceived Isha by the divine command of Allah (SWT). Even she was not betrothal to Joseph (Yousuf). Even after delivery of Isha, she did not marry him. Some Muslim historians are of the opinion that Joseph was a cotton carpenter by profession. According to Muslim sources,²⁸² he might be a relative of Mary. He was also a saint man who spent sometimes at the temple for religious purpose. In the absent of Zachariya, he maintained the guardianship of Mary. He also helped Mary in many ways especially during his stay in the temple. Nowhere of Muslim sources confesses that Mary was betrothal to Joseph and was married to him. All Muslim sources collectively said that Mary was never betrothal and married to Joseph. Rather she was virgin till her death. Muslim sources condemn Christian sources for their transgression and excess sayings on the real fact. According to Muslim

277. Al Quran, 3:37 (mentioned above)

278. ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَقُولُونَ أَفَلَا لَهُمْ آيَاتُهُمْ بَكْفُلٍ مَرْتَبٍ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَتَخَصَّمُونَ (Al-Quran, 3:44)

279. Al-Quran, 3:37, (mentioned before)

280. Luke,1:27; Matthew,1:18

281. Matthew, 1: 19-21

282. J.M. Abd-ed-Jalil, Marie et l'Islam, Paris, 1950, p.26

sources Christian scholars imposed false statement on Mary. Muslim scholars here easily provide their simple logic that if Mary was betrothal and married to Joseph as Christian scholars said, what was the justification of fanatic Jews in the killing of Hazrat Zachariya? According to Christian sources, if Joseph married to Mary, it must be fact that there would not be a legal question of Isha's fatherhood and Mary's chastity. Then Mary could prove that Isha was conceived by her husband or Joseph could prove that Isha was his legal son. And the great controversy which was created by Mary's pregnancy and her child son would not be, if Mary was really married to Joseph.

Rather Jewish people could accept Mary and her child from the very beginning because of marital relationship between Mary and Joseph and they never condemn and curse Zachariah and killed him as well. As Mary was not betrothal and married to Joseph, Jewish people were very much astonished after hearing the news of Mary conceived and it was unbearable for them when they saw her with her baby. At that time she was very much challenged and threatened by the Jewish people and she herself bravely responded to their challenge in the way shown by Allah. By the miraculous event and witnessing of an infant like Isha remaining in his mother lap some of them were convinced that verily Mary was innocent and chastity one and her male child would be none other than a promised Messiah, a savior like a mighty prophet Moses.²⁸³ But the majority of Jewish people still remained unbelievable to Mary and her infant. They still now do not recognize Mary as a chastity one and her son, the prophet Isha as a prophet of the children of Israel. Rather they consider Isha as an illegitimate output of a cursed lady like Mary. On the other hand, those of Jews who supported Mary as a chastity one and considered her son as a Messiah, majority of them, especially after the death of Isha, were transgressors considering him as a son of God. They believed that Isha was begotten by the physical relationship of God with Mary.²⁸⁴ From this ground the concept of Trinity was created by Saint John Paul and present day's Christianity is based on this concept. Those who did not dishonor Mary and Isha like fanatic Jews on the one hand and did not impose divinity on Isha on the other,

283. For details see: Al Quran, 19:29-34 (Arabic text of the verses mentioned before).

284. Though this concept was finally accepted at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but it was originated by some of earlier Christian scholars even during the life time of Hazrat Isa (MABPWH) in secret. So, just after his departure his apostle John developed the theory of Incarnation according to which Jesus was none but God in human form while Saint Poul finalized the concept of Trinity. Please see for details R. Dean Peterson, *A Concise History of Christianity*, California, 1968, pp.79-80, 33-38

were very few in number. Both transgressing groups who were opposite to each other never accepted the middle thought. After the death of these few people both groups were succeeded in their propaganda being remain far away from the hidden truth which was published in the Holy Quran revealed on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) after 610 year passed away from the fact. It is only the holy Quran by which the truth seeking people will find the real fact happened at that time centering Mary and Isha. Therefore Muslim scholars are sure that Christian scholars wrongly and willingly said that Mary was betrothal and married to Joseph so that they accepted Jesus Christ as ascendancy to David from the side of fatherhood.

As it was well established custom among Jews that they counted genealogy of any body only from his or her father's side not from mother's side. That's why Christian scholars imposed Joseph as husband for Mary and as father for Isha in order to prove and convince Jews that Isha descended from the Prophet and King David. They, like Jews, did not consider genealogy from mother's side. For this reason unfortunately they accepted Joseph as husband of Mary and father of Jesus Christ. Though Jesus Christ was Davidic ascendancy through his mother's side and it was not important fact to Christian scholars to count Jesus Christ's genealogy. But Muslim scholars explicitly stated that Mary was never betrothal and married to Joseph. In this regard Muslim scholars considered Christian scholars' opinion as false and fabrication

As for Mary's visitation to the wife of Zachariah, Elizabeth Christian scholars have also made excess in order to prove that Jesus Christ, who was at that time in the womb of Mary, was superior to John the Baptist, who was also in the womb of Elizabeth. According to Christian sources, Elizabeth became pregnant before Mary conceived Jesus. So, John the Baptist was senior to Jesus Christ by age. Christian scholars confessed that though John the Baptist was senior to Jesus Christ by age, Jesus Christ was above on John the Baptist in the dignity, prestige and honor. For this reason, Christian scholars mentioned two specific events by which they tried best to prove that the position and place of John the Baptist was lower than that of Jesus Christ. Of these two events one was when Mary visited to the house of Elizabeth who was pregnant at that time. It is, according to Christian sources,²⁸⁵ that after seeing her (Mary) the infant (John the Baptist) leaped in the womb of Elizabeth. By this event Christian scholars tried to show that when John

285. Luke, 41-45

the Baptist was in the womb of his mother saluted and greeted Jesus Christ who was also in the womb of his mother. The other event was when Jesus Christ himself went to John the Baptist who was at that time baptizing Jews through water of Jordan River to be baptized in his hand.²⁸⁶ Though Jesus Christ came to be baptized in the hand of John the Baptist who said to him (Jesus Christ) that he would baptize people very soon through the purification of heart.²⁸⁷ Christian scholars are of the opinion that John the Baptist came to prepare the way of the long desired Messiah.²⁸⁸ Let us come to core point that is visitation of Mary to Elizabeth at which Christian scholars did surely excess according to Muslim scholars. Though Muslim scholars could not clearly say anything in this event, it seems to us that for this specific event they were merely dependent on folklore tradition and also on Biblical narrations. But they could not accept the fact in which Christian scholars say that the infant John being in the womb lifted for saluting Jesus Christ who was also in his mother's womb. To Muslim scholars it is exaggeration of Christian scholars about Mary and her child. Muslim scholars also provided argument that if the infant of Elizabeth lifted in the womb of Elizabeth it was due to natural cause not because of seeing Mary. It is very general logic according to medical science as well as practical reason that after six or seven month's pregnancy the infant of the womb naturally moves. So, here Christian saying that John the Baptist being in the womb of his mother saluted Jesus Christ by lifting inside of his mother is illogical to Muslim scholars which is not accepted in medical science as well.

Both Christian and Islamic sources, in major cases, agree to this point that the angel Gabriel came to Mary and he announced to Mary that she would bear a blessed child very soon in the command of God.²⁸⁹ Though Christian scholars exaggerated this event later on, the minority of them are still now held this same opinion. Those who exaggerated this event are of the opinion that after annunciation of the angel to Mary God himself, in the disguise of a young man, came to Mary (who was, at that time, sleeping in her room) for sexual intercourse and as a result of which Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary.

286. Luke, 3: 21; Matthew, 3:16

287. Luke, 3:15-17, Matthew, 3:11

288. Luke, 3: 4-6; Matthew, 3:3; Mark,1:2-3

289. Luke,1:26-38 and the Quran, 3:45-51, 19:16-21

According to their view, thus Jesus Christ was begotten by God's biological relationship with Mary. So he is the begotten son of God. He is God's biological son rather than spiritual son. But Muslim scholars vehemently reject this faked and baseless statement of Christian scholars. Whereas the holy Quran has already made it clear that Jesus Christ was created by the word of God in such a way which may be compared with the creation of Adam.²⁹⁰ On the other hand Allah (SWT) has clearly said many times in the holy Quran that He was not begotten and none was begotten by Him.²⁹¹ It is Allah who can create out of nothing,²⁹² He created the universe out of nothing, He created Adam from the earth and in the creation of Adam there was male and female relationship. If it is possible on the behalf of God, why cannot He create Jesus Christ only from his mother without his father? Therefore according to Islamic source like the Quran Christian scholars definitely exaggerated in imposing the divinity on Jesus Christ and her son. The Quran has explicitly displayed the exaggeration of Christian scholars in this specific regard about 610 years after the real fact.²⁹³ If the Quran was not sent down upon the prophet Muhammad, nobody could find the real truth. Because of this last and final revealed book like the Quran, the truth seeking people are able to know the original fact which happened in the past.

Muslim scholars are of the opinion that after Mary conceived Jesus Christ Satan falsely propagated against Mary and her guardian hazrat Zachariah that Mary surely became pregnant by Zachariah. In the disguise of an old man he convinced maximum Jews to understand that both Zechariah and Mary were equally responsible for that unethical and unlawful sexual intercourse. By such false propaganda of this kind people were very much angry to Mary first and then to Zachariah. People first came to Mary and found its testimony by observing her. Finally they took the decision to kill her. They tortured her mercilessly. As a result of their torture she fallen down on the earth being senseless and she was in such a position for a long time. Then they left her in their guess that she had died. After then they together rushed to Zachariah to kill him. After knowing their aim

290. *إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ* (Al Quran, 3:59)

291. *قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ - اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ - لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ - وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ* (Al-Quran, 112:1-4)

292. *إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ* (Al-Quran, 36:82)

293. *وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَىٰ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَغِيثٌ كَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمِ آلِ آدَمَ إِذْ أَنْبَأَ الطُّورُ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا (157) بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا* (Al-Quran, 4:157-158); See also: Al-Quran, 5 : 72-75, 5 : 116-120

some well-wishing persons of Zachariah requested him to flee away from the temple. According to their request, Zachariah had left the temple before they came to capture him. According to the suggestion of Satan, people got him from back side while he took refuge inside the tree. Then people killed him by cutting the tree. While all these tragedies are clearly mentioned in Islamic sources, are very slightly mentioned in Christian scholars. We cannot understand why Christian scholars are silent in these sorrowful events. As for their silent Muslim scholars think that if Christian scholars publish these events, their demand that Mary's betrothal and married to Joseph would be worthless. Because of such fear Christian scholars cannot discuss something more about these events.

It will be undoubtedly true that if Christian scholars did not recognize Mary's betrothal and married to Joseph, they obviously described these facts in details.

Here we usually see as before that Christian scholars have covered the real fact in order to prove their false statement. Fortunately the holy Quran and the prophetic traditions of Islam properly uphold the past events through rightly recording activities of misguided Jews and Satans against the prophet Zachariah and Mary.

Christian scholars did not say anything about Mary's living in the near able forest and mountain of Jerusalem. They are of the opinion that Mary did not need to live in such a place. Rather she, with her husband Joseph, lived at Nazareth in Galilee.²⁹⁴ On the contrary, to Muslim scholars she stayed for some times in a very safe place which may be the nearest mountain or forest of Jerusalem.²⁹⁵ She did not go there willingly rather she went there unwillingly. The fact was such that after being senseless by misguided Jewish people those people thought that she was dead and so they threw her in that place. After a long time she regained her sense and saw that she was not in the locality or in the temple rather she was in the mountain or the forest and she took the decision that she would spend her rest life in that place. She stayed there until she delivered Jesus Christ. The testimony of this event is also proved when Christian scholars say that Jesus Christ was not born in the ordinary house like common people rather he was born in very uncommon place outside the locality and after born he was kept in a manger²⁹⁶ in order to save him from cold weather. The Christian sources do not mention the presence of Joseph at the time of Mary's delivery; rather it is also

294. Luke, 2:4

295. According to the tafsir of the verse: فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَاتَّبَعَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَبِيًّا (Al Quran, 19:22)

296. Luke, 2:7

the tree.³⁰⁴ Then she emotionally expressed her feeling that her Lord had helped her while her relatives rejected. She added that it is Allah (SWT) Who is fully enough for her.

Then she turned the trunk of the tree and it reached the ripen dates to her. She took some dates and ate; and drunk water from the spring. In it she was free from hungry and got energy. After then she felt deep sleeping in her two eyes and slept very soon. And in this deep sleeping she delivered her world famous son Hazrat Isa. In it she felt no hardship and pain. In her sleeping condition she heard the heavenly news of her son. Hearing the news she awoken from sleep and saw her son in her lap. She was very happy having it in her lap and thanked Allah (SWT) for this beautiful son. She remembered the annunciation of the Angel that she would get most fortunate son who would be one of the great prophets and she herself would be the best of women. Thinking that annunciation and feeling its subsequent result she considered herself the most fortunate one on the earth. Now she always embraced the son and thanked Allah. As if she forgot all the previous pains and sorrows which she passed away just before her childbirth. From now she started to feel pleasure and pleasure.

On the other hand, the Gospels presented the description of the journey of Mary with Joseph from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and according to Gospels,³⁰⁵ Mary most probably delivered her child in the way to Bethlehem. The Christian scholars are of the opinion that after birth Jesus Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. It is also said that shortly after the birth of the child, the shepherds, obedient to the angelic invitation, arrived in the grotto, "and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger".³⁰⁶ Christian scholars suppose that the shepherds spread the glad tidings they had received during the night among their friends in Bethlehem, and that the Holy Family was received by one of its pious inhabitants into more suitable lodgings.

In the Quranic description we find the narration of a palm tree, trunk, ripen dates and spring which are not mentioned in the Gospels while in the description of Gospels we find information of grotto, manger, journey, shepherds and lodgings which are not mentioned in the Quran. In this regard, while the Gospels said about the accompany of Joseph with Mary, the Quran has clearly not mentioned.

304. Al-Quran, 19:24

305. Luke, 2:6-7

306. Ibid., 2:16

According to the Christian source,³⁰⁷ the child Jesus was circumcised after eight days were accomplished and his mother Mary was present at the time of the circumcision of Jesus Christ. The rite of circumcision was performed either in the synagogue or in the home of the child; it is impossible to determine where Jesus Christ's circumcision took place. At any rate, his blessed mother must have been present at the ceremony. Though Muslim sources did not say anything about this fact, it seems to us that Muslim scholars accepted this event discussed by Christian scholars.

Though Muslim sources did not say anything about the presentation of Jesus Christ in the temple, Christian sources³⁰⁸ recognized this event in the presence of Mary. Christian scholars said that as Jesus Christ was a Jew by born. His mother was dedicated and devoted Jew who followed religious law of Judaism. According to the Jewish law,³⁰⁹ for the recognition of the faith a woman had to present her first born male child in the temple forty days after the birth of the child. So, it was very general logic that Mary obviously followed that rule as a saint woman. As this event was not against the basic trends of Islam throughout the history, Muslim scholars cannot raise reservation against it. Rather they silently supported this Christian narration and in it there is nothing unacceptable thought from the side of the Quran and the Sunnah.

According to Christian sources, after finishing the presentation programme, the holy family either returned to Bethlehem directly, or went first to Nazareth, and then moved into the city of David. At any rate, after the "wise men from the east" had followed the Divine guidance to Bethlehem, "entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh".³¹⁰ The Evangelist does not mention Joseph's presence at that time. Here, from Christian Evangelist source, we easily find that Joseph was not present when the wise men came to visit the child. His absent in this crucial moment proves that truly he was not her husband. If he would be her husband, he was supposed to be there by Mary. As he was not by her, how can Christian scholars consider him her husband? As for this challenging question Christian scholars cannot answer rightly till now. Though the holy Quran and the Hadith have not indicated

307. *Ibid.*, 2:21

308. *Ibid.*, 2:31, 2:33

309. Leviticus, 12:2-8, Exodus, 13:2 and Numbers, 18:15

310. Matthew 2:11

anything about this specific event like the visit of the wise men to Isha, some Muslim Historians mentioned it in their writings as a folklore story. Both Al-Masudi and Al Tabari,³¹¹ for example, mentioned that when Hazrat Isa was born, a Quraish king sent a group of three wise men to him with valuable gifts like gold. According to the description, they started their caravan, after seeing a specific star and its indication, and at last they reached at Bethlehem in Palestine where they met Hazrat

Maryam and her new born child, Hazrat Isa. They saluted her and her child first and greeted them both and gave some precious gifts bored with them to her for the baby on the behalf of the king. From Muslim sources we are getting information that Muslim scholars have rightly mentioned the place wherefrom the wise men came out and they also clearly indicated the place the wise men went to; while Christian scholars could not mention definitely.

Muslim sources³¹² discussed that from the mountain or the forest Mary, being inspired by the divine intuition, came back to the locality with her child and as soon as she reached the village, the local people, in a group, came to visit her and her child. First of all, they were astonished after seeing her with her baby and then cursed her and baby equally. They asked Mary about the fact but Mary, according to command of Allah, remained silent as to their curious questions. It was heavenly plan that the baby, from his mother lap, would respond to their questions in stead of Mary herself. After hearing the answer to the question raised by themselves from the mouth of an infant like that child, Isha, the people were astonished once again. After this event the visitors were divided into two groups – some of them were convinced that Mary was really sinless and innocent; and her son would undoubtedly be the promised Messiah while the some other, though they were very few in number, were not convinced, rather they began to propaganda against them in another new shape. As maximum of the local people were convinced, they supported Mary and her son to live therein. So, because of their support, this time Mary with son was living again in the adjacent house to the Temple where she lived earlier.³¹³ But she could not stay there with peace for a long time, after short times she, because of Hirod's conspiracy and the

311. Taken from *Islam Dharme Maryam* (Bangla) translated by Sister Mary Euzernia from V. Courtois, S.J., *Mary in Islam* (English), Calcutta, 1990, PP.36-37

312. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jammati Dash Ramanir Jibini* (Bangla), Dhaka, 2004, pp.21-22, 25-26

313. *Ibid*, p.28

continuous hostility of some leading and local Jews, had to leave this place again for another safe place which is most probably a remote area of Egypt. It is said that she might go there with a caravan.³¹⁴

But in this regard, Christian sources show different thing that after being pregnant Mary always lived in her Husband's house of Bethlehem where Jesus Christ was born. Christian scholars never mentioned the dwelling place of Mary outside the locality. According to Christian scholars Mary was not challenged by the people about her new born child as he was born as the child of Joseph. So, to them there was no question among the people about the legality of the child. According to their opinion Jesus Christ was born and brought up as an accepted son of the holy couple. In order to save their child from the nonstop conspiracy and hostility of some jealous Jews and then the king of Palestine, Hirod, this noble couple went to Egypt.

So, here in the narration of such kinds we easily find gulf of differences between Islamic and Christian sources. Christian scholars tried to show the normal situation of Mary and Jesus Christ through Joseph while according to Islamic sources it was never a normal situation for Mary and her Child. According to Islamic sources it was Allah (SWT) Who protected them by miraculous events but to Christian scholars it was not Allah rather Joseph who protected them through marrying Mary and accepting her son as his son as well. For this reason, they repeatedly mentioned Joseph. Both sources are, more or less, in common point that Mary went to Egypt with her. But difference, like earlier, lies here that Christian sources said that she went to Egypt with her husband Joseph while Muslim sources said that she, with her son, went there accompanied by a caravan.

From Muslim sources³¹⁵ we know that in Egypt she used to work in cotton processing and sometimes used to collect fallen crops from the lands for maintaining their lives. While collecting the crops she bore her son on one side of her shoulder and basket on other side. When Isha became an enough jubilee he also helped her mother for maintaining livelihood. Thus both mother and son used to live there until Hazrat Isa was at twelve years old of his age. But Christian sources said that Joseph as Mary's husband collected livelihood for his wife and

314. According to the tafsir of the verse: وَأَوْتَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَىٰ رَثْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ (Al-Quran, 23:50); Al- Masudi and Al- Thalibi are of the opinion that it may be in Egypt.

315. *Islam Dharme Maryam* (Bangla) translated by Sister Mary Euzernia from V. Courtois, S.J., *Mary in Islam* (English), Calcutta, 1990, PP.38-39

son during their stay in Egypt. It is said in the Christian source that sometimes Jubilant Jesus Christ helped him in this regard but Mary's engagement in this context is not mentioned.

According to Muslim source, after the death of Hirod Hazrat Maryam was ordered again like before to return to the holy land of Jerusalem with Hazrat Isa. She came to the mountain village Nasarat of Galileo this time with her son Hazrat Isa. Since then the followers of Hazrat Isa are called Nasara after the village name Nasarat. This event is also mentioned in the Christian sources.³¹⁶ But Christian Gospel³¹⁷ confirmed Hosea's prophecy about the prophetic fulfillment of Isha during their return from Egypt. In the way to Nazareth from Egypt, Hosca met the couple and said them that their son would be a great prophet. Though Muslim sources said nothing about this event, but Muslim scholars seem to be positively silent but cautiously.

According to Muslim sources,³¹⁸ being embarrassed by the cruel behavior and deep conspiracy Maryam came out of the house in the village of Nazareth for going to a safer place. After thinking for a long she decided to return to the Bethlehem mountain as this place was well known to her. She with her son came back to the previously known place Bethlehem where she built a house for permanently living there in. Both of mother and son used to spend their maximum times in the worship of Allah (SWT) and remembering his names. Sometimes `Isa used to come to locality for preaching the message of Almighty Allah (SWT).

Here they had no sufficient food. They were hunger in the most of the time. Sometimes Hazrat `Isa came out of the house and entered into the deep forest for collecting fruits and vegetables and these were their foods on which they lived. Thus they both spent their time being hunger but in full devotion of worshipping Allah (SWT), remembering His name and preaching His message. This house is still now a place of deep respect to both of Christians and Muslims and they all visit the place showing their utmost regard. This description of such kind is not mentioned in the Christian sources. Rather they presented another event somewhat like this according to their understanding and thinking.

316. Matthew, 2:21

317. Ibid., 2:15

318. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jannati Dash Ramanir Jibini* (Bangla), Dhaka, 2004, pp. 28-29

Though it is not clearly mentioned in Muslim sources but Christian sources mentioned explicitly that after their settlement in Nazareth the couple used to go to the Temple regularly on the occasion of different religious festivals. They used to take Jesus Christ with them for the holy purpose. In it Jesus Christ himself was benefited much and deeply oriented with the prevailed religious norms and practices. From that time he was fed up with the traditional Jewish religious leaders because of their irreligious and unethical activities in the name of religion. Sometimes he shared his feelings with other people and inspired them to follow the correct teachings of the prophet Moses. Besides, Jesus Christ, at times, used to deeply engage himself for the worshiping of God that he could not maintain timetable. One day after finishing the prescribed and regular prayers, his parent came back to the house with others and they hoped that their son also came back with them. But after reaching the house they understood that their son had not come with them. Then they returned to the Temple for searching their son and they found him in the Temple worshiping deeply and lecturing elegantly on the teachings of the prophet Moses. The holy couple were so pleased by seeing him in such conditions and prayed to God for him.

Both Christian and Islamic sources obviously recognized numerous miracles held by Isha and during some miraculous events Mary herself was present. After seeing these events she felt proud of her son and sincerely thanked God. During the apostolic life of Jesus, Mary effaced herself almost completely. Not being called to aid her Son directly in His ministry, she did not wish to interfere with His work by her untimely presence.

About the death of Mary Muslim sources³¹⁹ mentioned the following event. One day Hazrat `Isa went to the deep forest for the collection fruits and his mother was alone in the house like as usual. After then the angel Azrail (the angel of death) came to Maryam to take away her life and she died. After some hours Hazrat `Isa returned to house but he found her mother slept. He called her mother again and again but she did not respond to her son. Then Hazrat `Isa touched her mother and he understood that she had died. He could not keep patience and cried out. Even he became senseless for crying a long time. It is said that forest animals and birds were crying with him.

319. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jamati Dash Ramanir Jibini* (Bangla), Dhaka, 2004, p. 29

After having sense he willed to call people for burying her mother's dead body. In the meantime he looked some people coming towards him. Hazrat `Isa informed them about his mother's death and said that it is about impossible on my own part to bury the dead body. So he sought their cardinal help in this regard. In the response to his request they said to them: O `Isa, the messenger of Allah (SWT)! We are not human being rather we are the angels of Allah (SWT) and we have come here to bury your mother's dead body. They also said to him: We brought required heavenly cloths and perfumes for her. Then Hazrat `Isa with their help buried her mother by the mountain. After burying the dead body they all themselves disappeared.

On the contrary,³²⁰ the Christian sources denied this event completely. According to Christian scholars, Mary died after Jesus Christ had died. They explicitly mention that she witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and after seeing that scenery she became senseless. Even, according to them, she was the first who saw the resurrection of Jesus Christ and believed it. Mary was a vital source of inspiration for the early Christian community. Though about the exact date and year of her death they are not still now sure, they all unanimously agree that she died after Jesus Christ had died. And at the same time they are also not confirmed about the exact place where she died. However, according to their more acceptable opinion she died most probably in 48 C.E. after had preached the religion for twelve years in Jerusalem and Palestine before going among the nations of the world. According to Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox tradition, between three and fifteen years after Christ's ascension, either in Jerusalem or in Ephesus, Mary died while surrounded by the apostles. Later when the apostles opened her tomb, they found it empty and concluded that she had been bodily assumed into Heaven. About the place of her death and burial, however, there are two opinions. According to one group, it was Ephesus where she died and was buried while other group says that in Jerusalem she died and was buried. There was a strong idea among Christians that Mary bodily assumed to the Heaven after her death.

About Mary Christians have developed some doctrines and many conceptions. According to mainstream Christian doctrine Mary remained a virgin at least until

320. *Dictionary of Mary, Op.cit.*, pp. 113-114; haer. LXXVIII, 11, P.G., XL, 716; cf. Nirschl, *Das Grabderhl. Jungfrau Maria*, Mainz, 1896, 48; Stromat, vi,5; Eusebius, *Church History* 1.21

Jesus was born.³²¹ Most Protestants do not specifically claim that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus, but the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox Churches, and many in the Anglican Church maintain that Mary also remained a virgin throughout the rest of her life.³²² But according to Muslim scholars she was always virgin from her birth to death. Needless to mention that she was not married to Joseph even not betrothal to him. This opinion of Muslim scholars is thoroughly opposition to that of Christian scholars.

The New Testament³²³ recounts her presence at important stages during her son's adult life (e.g., at the Wedding at Cana and at his crucifixion) and even she was present at communal prayers immediately after Jesus' Ascension. On the contrary, to Muslim scholars³²⁴ she might attend at several functions of the prophetic life of her son but they rejected her presence at the communal prayers after Jesus' ascension, rather she had died before Jesus ascended to heaven.

Undoubtedly she is the subject of much veneration both for Muslims and Christians. Though Christian scholars and common Christian people alike exaggerate but Muslim scholars and general Muslims never accept their exaggeration, rather they show their respect to her as much as should be given according to the Quran. Christian scholars say that she is the mother of God (Theotokos) in the sense that she bore Jesus Christ Who is real God in the flesh of man, according to their theory of incarnation. In the theory of Trinity Jesus is the son of God and according to this theory Mary is supposed to be the wife of God but finally they accepted Jesus as God Himself in stead of son of God. Therefore, in this sense Mary is the mother of God.³²⁵

On the contrary, all Muslims vehemently rejected the Christian theory of Trinity-God the sun, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit; and also rejected the theory of Incarnation in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the God in human body. So, it

321. 61. Mt. 1:25, Lk. 1:34-35

322. "Catholic Encyclopedia: The Annunciation". Newadvent.org. 1907-03-01, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01541c.htm>. Retrieved 2010-03-02; also see please "Catholic Encyclopedia: The Blessed Virgin Mary". Newadvent.org. 1912-10-01; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464b.htm>. Retrieved 2010-03-02

323. Luke, 2:51; John, 2:1-10; Matthew, 15:28; Luke, 13:12; John, 4:21; 8:10; 19:26; 20:15; Matthew, 8:29; Mark, 1:24; Luke, 4:34; 8:28; Matthew, 27:19

324. Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakim, *Jamati Dash Ramanir Jibini* (Bangla), Dhaka, 2004, p. 29

325. *Dictionary of Mary*, Op.cit., pp.349

is simply saying that there is no scope in the tradition of Islam that Muslim accept Mary as the mother of God according to the Christian theory of Incarnation or wife of God as per the theory of Trinity.

Muslim source supports the Christian (Catholics) belief that Mary was freed and saved the touch of Satan. But Muslim scholars reject the Christian concept that only Mary and Jesus Christ were born without original sin, rather according to the Quran and Sunnah each and every man and woman is born as sinless and innocent.³²⁶ It is for our kind information that in Islam there is no idea of original sin rather it is the Christian concept only.

Though Islamic source definitely recognizes the assumption of Jesus Christ in the Heaven but never accepts Mary's assumption to heaven like her sun. But Christian people (Catholics) strongly believe the assumption of Mary to heaven like her sun

Christian people do not hold these beliefs only in their mind but also take these beliefs in their practice. For this reason, they usually make shapes, images and statues of Mary in different sizes and at different level. Besides, they worship her on different occasions as Mother of God. On the contrary, Muslims respect her as ever virgin mother of Isha, sinless woman, an ideal and best woman in the world. Mary has especial status and dignity in different Muslim folklore traditions and mystic stories. Many Muslim mystics and saints were and are being still now influenced by Mary. But Muslims never draw her picture, shape her image and make her statue. Muslims must honor her but never worship her. Though Christian scholars impose divinity on her but Muslims are far away from imposing divinity on her.³²⁷ Rather Muslims regard her as a dignified human

326. I. M. Hanif, *Sahih Muslim bisharh al-Nawawi*, Book of Qadr, Vol. 16 (al-Matba'at al-Misriyyah bi al-Azhari, 1930) p. 207. Please see also for details: *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitabu 'l-Anbiya, Hadith no. 641; *Sahih Muslim*, Kitabu'l-Fadail, Hadith no.146 and 147; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. ii, Hadith no. 233, 274-5, 288, 292, 319, 368, 523; and also see please Tafsir of Surah Imran, verse number 31. Translation of the Hadith taken from the Translation of the Meanings of *Sahih AL-Bukhari* (Arabic English) by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Delhi, 1984

327. For detailed discussion see the Tafsir of the verses:

وَرَبُّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ أَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَّ بِالْهَيْبَةِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سَخَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (116) مَا قُنْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (117) إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُكَ

being not anything else beyond this. According to individual understanding of some Muslim scholars she may be a prophetess³²⁸ but true understanding of Islam never accept the concept that a woman be a prophet.³²⁹ Rather, according to Islam, she is a woman of truth (Siddiqah).³³⁰

Conclusion

From the forgoing discussion so far it is clear that in both religions- Christianity and Islam Mary has occupied a very important place. Both Christians and Muslims venerate her very much because of their religious purpose. To them she is the best woman of all and an incomparable woman in the world. She is not only mentioned in the Christian Gospels, rather she was prophesized in (the previous Scripture) Hebrew Scripture (Isaiah) before her birth and is also elaborately discussed in the later revealed Book, the noble Quran, after her death. No other woman is mentioned thus in the Holy Scriptures. She is the virgin mother of Jesus Christ. She was born in a holy family and brought up in the holy place. She was the most fortunated woman on the earth because of being a daughter of a prophet, her brought up by a prophet and finally her giving birth to a prophet. Undoubtedly she was very much committed and devoted to each and every injunction of Allah. She struggled a lot throughout her life in the cause of Allah. She is the best example of an ideal woman for those women who want to be good women. Many mystics and saints of both religions were, are being and will be influenced by her devotion, commitment and sacrifice. She was a source of inspiration not only for women but all human being regardless of creed, color, caste, nationality and gender. She was a holder of truth even when whole of her tribe were deadly

وَإِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَبِإِذْنِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (118) قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ; (Al-Quran, 5:116-119)

See see the Tafsir of the verses:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ (72) لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَلَاثَةٌ ثَلَاثَةٌ وَمَنْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَتَّهَمُوا عَمَّا يَفْعَلُونَ لَيْمَسُّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابَ أَلِيمٍ (73) أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (74) مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُفَانِ الطَّعَامَ انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ نُمْ انظُرْ أَيُّ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا (Al-Quran, 5:72-75)

328. Imam ibn Hazm, as well as others, was of the view that anyone who received revelation from Allah SWT was a prophet. Whether male or female, does not fact in this regard. Therefore, based on this definition, Maryam AS would be a prophet.

329. (Al-Quran, 21:7) وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحي إِلَيْهِمْ فَمَا سَأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

330. (Al-Quran, 5:75) مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ

against her. She was the flag and symbol of truth, fair, passion, devotion and belief.

Though Christian scholars have explicitly exaggerated on her in showing honor to her, Muslim scholars have not found the chance to make exaggeration about her. What the holy Quran and Sunnah say about her is the center of Muslim thought about her. According to the description of the Quran and the prophetic tradition of Islam, she is the best of all women and she will be a leader of paradise. The holy Quran mentions her name by several times and a chapter of the Quran has been named in her name. She was such a fortunate woman who got heavenly food here on this earth. In a nutshell it can be said that Muslims show honor to her as best as possible. But Muslims, like Christians, never impose divinity on. They never regard her Mother of God. They never draw her picture and make her image, shape and statue in her honor. On the other hand, Christians usually impose divinity on her, regard her as the Mother of God, draw her picture and make her statue for religious purpose and even they do worship her on the occasion of several religious festivals. Thus we can find both similarities and dissimilarities among Christians and Muslims as to Mary. In spite of this, Mary is the common ground for bridging the gape between Christian and Muslim people for the promotion of understanding inter-religious peace and harmony.

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