

Maryam in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism

Comparative Analysis

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Introduction

The article focuses on the importance of Maryam (the mother of Jesus) and her position in the prophetic religions, namely Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The misconceptions and judgments arising in the faith of Christianity have been solved by the Quran. The competing claims about Maryam and her pregnancy without a husband are handled by the Quran. The author takes Maryam as a drama of rejection and vindication that has three different but interconnected aspects. The first aspect is the prophetic revolt against the traditional authority, the second factor is the rejection of Christians and Jews to Muhammad being the last prophet of Islam, and the third factor is the connection between prophecy and matters of primal creation and the apocalypse.

For a closely related comparison, see [Mary In Islam And Christianity](#).

The issue of Maryam's pregnancy

The first factor deals with the tension between the notion of prophecy and the assumptions made regarding female sexuality. The main issue was the pregnancy of Maryam, which occurred without any husband. To solve the misperceptions about Maryam, the Quranic verses emphasize her purity and consider her pregnancy to be a result of God's favour upon her and His will. Thus, the author believes that the character of Maryam is typical of those of the prophets. Chapter 3 of the Quran (Surah Al-Imran) narrates the whole incident from the birth of Maryam to the birth of Isa (Jesus), and throughout the chapter, the purity of Maryam is asserted.

The author sheds light on the questions that arose after the detailed narration of Maryam's story, how God accepted and nurtured her, and how a pious man named Zakariyya was given the responsibility to take care of her. This section of the Quran paved the way for questions like whether Mary was given any special powers by God and was equal to other prophets. On the basis of these questions, the article compares Razi's and Al-Jubbal's beliefs on the special status of Maryam. Razi did not believe that Maryam would perform any miracle but was not in denial of her special status given by God. On the other hand, Al-Jubbal was of the opinion that Maryam's miracles and provisions were due to Zakariyya. The author thus concludes this issue by stating that miracles were performed by the prophets, and Maryam was someone honoured by God and was made honourable to the whole world.

The general image of a prophet

The article further talks about M. Waldman's general image of the prophetic role based on seven features of the Quranic prophets. Maryam's character matches most of these features, which are the primal creative power of the prophetic mandate. The author, through many instances, maintains that the features which the Quranic prophets possess not only fit Isa (Jesus) but also are applicable to the character of Maryam. This gives the impression that both Isa and his mother, Maryam, create a single repeated symbolism.

Christians, Jews, and Muslims

The second aspect talks about the contrasting perceptions of Christians, Jews, and Muslims on the issue. Quran serves the purpose of differentiating its message from that of its competitors, who are also monotheistic. The tool used for this purpose is dhikr, which refers to the act of retelling a story from the Bible for its reinterpretation and differentiation. Where Christians and Jews both maintain their stance on the illegitimacy of the instance, the Quran rejects the beliefs and understandings of both these groups. Instead, it asserts the omnipotence and the inscrutability of God. In this way, the Quran differentiates itself and its messages and instructions from the other monotheistic claims.

The concept of dhikr (remembrance)

The article then states that the exhibition of certain stereotypes in relation to other biblical figures in the Quran comes under the notion of dhikr. The author then explains different definitions and contexts of dhikr. The dhikr of Maryam in Surah Al-Imran clearly points toward the fact that ahl-ul-Kitab (Jews and Christians) have such misperceptions and false thoughts regarding Maryam and her baby, and in this Surah, God forbids them to think wrong of the one whom He has bestowed His blessings upon as she's the honoured one and her baby is His Prophet.

Another point where the Quran differentiates itself from the Christians's beliefs is evident from the verse, "Say: 'O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah.' And if they turn away, then say: 'Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).'" These verses forbid the Christians to perform Shirk, associating partners with God. This was because the Christians had their belief in the concept of the Trinity, which linked Maryam and her son Isa to God as His partners.

Quran-the moderator

“The likeness of Jesus with Allah is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust; then He said unto him: Be! And he is.” In this verse, Allah makes clear that the status of Isa is just like the status of Adam, contrasting with what Christians thought and believed. Hence, the message of the Quran is positioned amid the Christians’ claims of holy son-ship and Jews’ denial of Maryam and Isa. The school of thought or the sects differ in their claims and beliefs. Therefore, the Quran comes in between the two opposing paths and the reality of the events that took place.

The author asserts the fact that refuting the possibility of divine paternity in Maryam’s pregnancy is one of the primary ways the Quran selects in order to differentiate its message from claims by the Christians. The solution to the issue is simply answered by the author in the form of a question: is there anyone who can argue with omnipotence?

The article then highlights the associations intrinsic in the selection of Maryam as an entity that obviously comprises the connection of gender to social authority in religious imagination. The author questions himself whether this action of God upon the woman has any relation to understanding prophetic claims in the Quran and answers himself that it does have implications. The notable ones are the yoking of the birth experience, primitive creative influence, and apocalyptic power to the instituting of a Quranic prophet and his statement.

Maryam playing the central role

Maryam plays the role of the main character, linking two sets of extraordinary figures; one set being Maryam herself, Yahya and Isa, and the other being Maryam herself, her mother, who was the wife of Imran and Zakariyya. The story of Maryam is linked to the stories of all these characters. The first link of Maryam-Yahya-Isa refers to dedicated and exceptional childhoods. The characterization of Yahya and Isa is almost similar in many ways. The likeness of Maryam with Yahya and Isa lies in the fact that even Maryam’s mother’s pregnancy is barely discussed when the wife of Imran states, “that which is in my belly.” The narration has been expanded by the Muslim commentators from the biblical traditions regarding the character of Hannah, who was recognized as the sister of Yahya’s mother. It was believed that she was unable to become pregnant or would die while giving birth. God blessed her with the miraculous birth of Maryam. Hence, all three figures came into being by God’s miraculous divine action.

The second chain of figures, Maryam, her mother, and Zakariyya, exposes diverse aspects of the gynocentric metaphor of becoming a prophet. Hannah and Zakariyya both yearned and prayed to God for their child to come into this world, and God blessed them both with Maryam and Yahya, respectively. Hence, both these instances depict the emergence of the prophets as a result of prayer and human desire.

Maryam, Zakariyya and Jibrail

The role of an angelic figure is considered significant in both the cases of Zakariyya and Maryam. Michael Sells, in his essay “Sound, Spirit and Gender in Surat al-Qadr”, reveals various suggestive intertextual commonalities between the Night of Power and the instances of Quranic annunciations. According to him, hu appearing in inna’ anzalnahu refers to the Quran or rush, meaning the Holy Spirit. This divine figure is recognized by commentators as Jibrail. Thus, it is believed that Jibrail appeared to Maryam and Zakariyya, giving them the good news of Isa and Yahya, respectively.

Maryam’s pregnancy and the Muslims’ perceptions

The author informs about the struggling perceptions and understandings of the Muslim commentators regarding the pregnancy of Maryam. “Al-Qurtubi goes into greater detail: he actually posits a unique biological apparatus within Maryam’s body that combines male and female sexual capacities. This apparatus conceives almost hermaphroditically when the shock of the spirit’s appearance jolts it into operation.” (p.265)

Conclusion

Thus, the author provides an in-depth analysis of the character of Maryam, her status in all the monotheistic religions, the significance of her story and how it relates to other figures discussed in the Bible and Quran, and how the Quran establishes the differentiation between Christianity and Judaism in relation to Maryam’s story, the deep connection of Maryam and Muhammad; everything has been highlighted in an informative and thought-provoking way.

End Notes

Lybarger, Loren D. “Gender and prophetic authority in the Qur’ānic Story of Maryam: A literary approach.” *The Journal of Religion* 80, no. 2 (2000): 240-270.