178240 - Is it permissible to call Maryam, the mother of the Messiah (peace be upon him) a “saint”?

the question

Last night I was reading Qur’an and my mother said to me: “They are going to show a film about the ‘saint’ Maryam.” I said: “She is not a saint,” meaning that we should not call her by this name. Is it correct to call her a saint?

Detailed answer

The word saint (qiddees) comes from a root meaning holy or pure [this is applicable to both the English and Arabic words]. Al-Quddoos (the Most Holy) is one of the names of Allah, and refers to the One Who is pure and free of all faults and defects, as it says in Lisaan al-‘Arab, 6/168-169. However, Maryam (may Allah be pleased with her) is not described as a qiddeesah or saint, either in the Book of Allah or in the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Rather this title is given to her by the Christians, by way of exaggerated veneration, to the extent that they elevated her to the status of “the mother of God” – exalted be Allah far above what they say.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): ‘O ‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?’ He will say: ‘Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right (to say)’”

[al-Maa’idah 5:116].

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

… The Oriental Orthodox Christians wrote a document in which they affirmed their beliefs, in which they said: ‘Verily the saint (or holy) Virgin Mary gave birth to a god, our Lord Jesus Christ,

who is like his Father in nature and like people in humanity.' They affirmed that he had two natures and one entity, and is one person of the godhead, and they cursed the Nestorians.

End quote from al-Jawaab as-Saheeh li man baddala Deen al-Maseeh, 4/248

See also Hidaayat al-Hayaara by Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 178-179; al-Bidaayah wa'n-Nihaayah by Ibn Katheer, 2/121

Rather Maryam (may Allah be pleased with her) is described in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger as a siddeeqah and virgin.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"The Messiah ('Eesa (Jesus)), son of Maryam (Mary), was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother (Maryam (Mary)) was a Siddeeqah (i.e. she believed in the words of Allah and His Books). They both used to eat food (as any other human being, while Allah does not eat). Look how We make the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) clear to them, yet look how they are deluded away (from the truth)"

[al-Maa'idah 5:75].

Ahmad (1742) narrated that the Negus sent for Ja'far ibn Abi Taalib and his companions (may Allah be pleased with them), who had migrated to Abyssinia, to ask them about the Messiah (peace be upon him) and what they said about him.

Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The people met together and said to one another: What will you say about 'Eesa when he asks you about him? They said: By Allah, we will say about him what Allah said and what our Prophet brought, no matter what the consequences. When they entered upon him, he [the Negus] said: What do you say about 'Eesa ibn Maryam? Ja'far ibn Abi Taalib said to him: We say about him what our Prophet taught: he is the slave of Allah and His Messenger, a Spirit created by Him and His word that He bestowed upon Maryam the Virgin. The Negus struck his hand on the ground and picked up a stick, then he said: Eesa ibn Maryam is no different than what you said, not even as much as this stick.

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh as-Seerah

What we must do is say about ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) and his mother (may Allah be pleased with her) what Allah, may He be exalted, and His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said about him, and we should not go beyond that and adopt what the people of the Book say or believe, whether that is the exaggeration of the Christians about them or the disrespect of the Jews towards them.

Hence Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah ‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, (‘Be!’ - and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a spirit (Rooh) created by Him; so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not: ‘Three (trinity)!’ Cease! (it is) better for you. For Allah is (the only) One Ilaah (God), Glory be to Him (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is All-Sufficient as a Disposer of affairs”

[an-Nisa’ 4:171].

See also the answers to questions no. 10836 and 7181.

And Allah knows best.