

Introduction

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Jesus the son of Mary (‘a) has always been revered and held in high esteem among Christians and Muslims, but there are differences as well as common points.

Those who are familiar with the character of Christ, whether Muslim or Christian, will find many such points by reading this book. Prior to the publication of this collection, the valuable book of Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus, Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*, has introduced Jesus as understood mostly through narrations found in the collections of Sunni Muslims.

Today, the present book, *Jesus through Shi‘ite Narrations*, introduces Jesus from the perspective of the Imams of the Household of the Prophet, peace be with them.

According to Shi‘ite narrations, ‘Imran and Hannah were the parents of Mary; and Allah revealed to Imran: “I will grant you a boy, blessed, who will cure the blind and the leper and who will raise the dead by My permission.” When Mary was born Hannah said: “O my Lord! Verily I have delivered a female,” and when Mary grew up, the angels said to her,

O Mary! Verily Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds. (3:42)

Then the Sure Spirit (*al-Ruh al-Amin*) came down at noon on a Friday and said to her:

I am but a messenger come from your Lord, to give you a boy most pure. (19: 19)

Then he blew into her breast and she became pregnant with Jesus. When Jesus, the spirit of Allah and His word, was born, on the night of the twenty-fifth of the twelfth lunar month, Dhul Hijjah, Mary said:

Oh! Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten in oblivion (19:23)

Then Allah opened the tongue of Jesus and he said:

Verily, I am a servant of Allah. He has given me the Book, and has made me a prophet, and has

made me blessed wherever I may be. And He has enjoined on me prayer and charity (zakah) as long as I live. (19:30–31)

Allah made his speech as an exoneration of his mother.

That night Iblis (the devil) went to the East and West in search of him. Then he found him in a room of a convent, with the angels surrounding him. He tried to get close to him. The angels shouted, “Get away!” He said to them, “Who is his father?”

They answered, “His case is like that of Adam.” Iblis said, “Verily, I will mislead four fifths of the people by him.” Allah, the mighty and magnificent, only wanted to make his affair as a sign and mark for it to be known by this that He has power over all things.

Jesus stood as an authority (*hujjah*) when he was three years old. When he reached seven years he spoke as a prophet and messenger, while he received revelation from Allah, the Exalted. When Allah commissioned him, He bestowed upon him light, knowledge and wisdom, and the knowledge of all the prophets before him, and He added to this the Gospel.

He commissioned him to Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*) for the children of Israel to invite them to His book and wisdom and to faith in Allah and His prophet. According to Shi'ite belief, if one denies Jesus the son of Mary ('a), but confesses to all the other prophets, he is still not considered a believer.

Jesus was noble, a worshipper, an ascetic, an itinerant, possessor of splendor, was loving to all the believers and excellent in his conduct with others. His ring was engraved with two sayings he took from the Gospel, “Blessed is the servant because of whom Allah is remembered, and woe unto the servant because of whom Allah is forgotten.”

His *shariah* (law) included *tawhid* (divine unity), *ikhlas* (purity), the dismissal of peers [for Allah], and the liberal uprightness of human nature. He made lawful what is pure in it, and prohibited what is filthy, and He removes from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them.¹ His law included the prayer, alms, and also restricting marriage to one woman, for the sake of women's affairs.

Admonitions and parables were sent down to him in the *Injil*, but there was no law of retaliation (*qisas*) in it nor precepts of retribution (*ahkam al-hudud*), and no obligations for inheritance. What was sent down to him was a mitigation of what was sent down to Moses in the Torah. Jesus commanded those with him who were believers and followed him that they believe in the law of the Torah, the laws of all prophets and the *Injil*.”

The Christians differed among themselves about Jesus ('a). Some of them said, the Eternal, the Mighty and Magnificent, is united with Christ, His son. But the Eternal does not become non-eternal by this creature who is Jesus, and Jesus does not become eternal by the Eternal who is Allah.

His people split into three sects: a sect of believers, and they were the disciples, a sect of his enemies,

and they were the Jews, and a sect that exaggerated about him, and they left the faith. The apostles were twelve men and they were his followers and helpers. When Jesus ('a) asked, "Who are my helpers for Allah?" The disciples said, "We will be the helpers of Allah."² So, they were called *Nasara* because of their help to the religion of Allah.

Jesus lived for thirty-three years; he was not killed nor crucified, but it was made to appear so to the Christians. On the night of the twenty-first of Ramadan he was raised while there were nine thousand three hundred thirteen angels with him. He was raised from the earth alive and his soul was taken between heaven and earth, then he was raised to heaven and his soul was returned to him.

He will come down to the world before the Resurrection day with the twelfth Imam of the Household of the Prophet, and invite the people to Allah.

In the resurrection will come a man in a group and the angels will be around him with wings outspread and the light will be in front of them. Then the people of the Garden will crane their necks toward him and say, 'Who is this who is thus allowed by Allah?' The angels will say, 'This is the spirit of Allah and His word! This is Jesus the son of Mary!'

Jesus once said about himself, "I sleep while I have nothing and I rise while I have nothing, and yet there is no one on earth more wealthy than I," and he said another time, "I began the morning with my Lord, the Blessed and Supreme, above me and the fire (of hell) before me and death in pursuit of me. I have not obtained that for which I wished and I cannot keep away the things I hate. So who of the poor is poorer than I?"

Jesus ('a) passed by a man who was blind, leprous and paralytic, and Jesus heard him giving thanks and saying, "Praise be to Allah Who has protected me from the trials with which He afflicts the majority of men."

Jesus ('a) said, "What trial remains which has not been visited upon you?" He said, "He protected me from a trial which is the greatest of trials, and that is disbelief." Then Jesus ('a) touched him, and Allah cured him from his illnesses and beautified his face. Then he became a companion of Jesus ('a) and worshipped with him.

These two stories about him suffice to show his humility. He served a meal to the Apostles, and when they had eaten it, he himself washed them, and another time he stood up and washed their feet. They said, "It would have been more proper for us to have done this, O Spirit of Allah."

He said, "Verily, it is more fitting for one with knowledge to serve the people. Indeed, I humbled myself only so that you may humble yourselves among the people after me even as I have humbled myself among you."

The conversations of Jesus ('a) with the Disciples are very interesting. They asked him, "O spirit of

Allah, so with whom should we keep company?” He said, “He the sight of whom reminds you of Allah, his speech increases your knowledge and his action makes you desirous of the other world.”

And a man asked Jesus the son of Mary (‘a), “Which people is the best?” He took two handfuls of earth and said, “Which of these is the best? The people are created from earth, so the most honourable of them is the most God-wary.”

God also introduced Himself to Jesus, He described His endless mercy to him, and He gave him necessary instructions.

Once He said to him, “O Jesus! I do not forget those who forget Me, so how could I forget those who remember Me! I am not stingy with those who disobey Me, so how could I be stingy with those who obey Me.” And he said another time, “Be to the people like the earth below in meekness, like the flowing water in generosity, and like the sun and the moon in mercy, which shine on the good and sinner alike.”

The advice attributed to Jesus in Shi‘ite narrations is full of wisdom, guidance and direction. Among the advice he gives in order to improve relations among people is: “That which is not loved by you for someone to do to you, do not do that to others, and if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him your left cheek also.”

The Shi‘ah believe that the Bible as it exists today has been distorted, but that despite this, much of what it contains is consistent with the spirit of the teachings of Jesus (‘a), and this is confirmed by many of the narrations attributed to the Imams, peace be with them. An example of this is that Jesus (‘a) said:

“In truth I say to you, whoever looks at a snake that intends to strike his brother and does not warn him until it kills him, he will not be secure from partnership in his murder. Likewise, whoever looks at his brother doing something wrong, and does not warn him of its consequences until it encompasses him, he will not be secure from partnership in his sin.”

The narrations presented here have been selected from more than one hundred twenty books of Shi‘ite narrations. It has been arranged into nine parts. In the first part, about the life of Jesus (‘a), we find a few narrations that conflict with each other. Some of the chains of narration through which the narrations are reported are weak.

At the end of the eighth part there are four narrations reported to be from the Gospel, but we do not know from which Gospel they have been reported. The last narration in this book is about the respect given to Jesus by the Christians of one thousand three hundred sixty-four years ago. This narration has several ambiguities. On the other hand, the contents of parts two through eight are considered firm and are beautiful.

Mostly, the Muslim and Christian beliefs are consistent with each other here. We do not believe in the divinity of Jesus (‘a), but we do believe that he was inseparable from God. They have an attraction in

such a way that they have an effect on the hearts of those ready to receive them, and increase love for Jesus (‘a).

We would like to thank our readers and solicit their assistance if they find any errors in the text or its translation. 314

Mahdi Muntazir Qa’im

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1. See (7: 157).

2. See (61: 14).

3. The work of collecting, sorting, editing and translating these narrations into English, began ten years ago. It has been completed with the help of some of my teachers and friends. Prof. Muhammad Hadi Yusufi Gharavi reviewed the Arabic text of the narrations. Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen was the main translator of the narrations into English. Sayyid Muhammad Nasihatkon helped with the Arabic vocalization marks. Muhammad Javad Najafi and ‘Abd al-Karim Ansari also have a share in helping with this project. Likewise, my wife also showed much patience with this work. I thank all of them. I would especially like to thank the Center for Shi’ite Studies, in whose library a portion of this work was carried out. I hope it may be accepted by Allah, and I offer the blessings for it to those who have a right over us, especially my parents and brothers. Wa salam.

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