

The Birth of Jesus Christ (AS)¹

Dr. Haj Nour Ali Tabandeh

In many societies, it is believed that one of these very days is occasioned by the birth of Christ (AS). The birth date of His Excellency is in an atmosphere of uncertainty. It is not obvious exactly when he was born; hence there is a lot of doubt and confusion about it.

Today's world has become the world of doubtfulness, hesitancy, meticulousity and fuss. It does not mean that it particularly belongs to the modern era and it did not exist in the ancient times, but these features has been boosted and reinforced increasingly in our time, for example, some have recently doubted over the writers of some books published in the past. For a couple of times I have happened to hear that one of Attar's (of Nishapur) books is not his work and belongs to a different writer. Another example is about the dates. The birth date of our Prophet is on Rabi' al-awwal 12, according to what is mentioned in Usūl al-Kāfī (Kitab al-Kafi)². The Sunnites also believe the same, but there are other versions saying it is on Rabi' al-awwal 17. Fortunately the deviation is not that much and it is only 5 days and has been celebrated in 5 consecutive days in the recent years, called "the week of unity" and it is a very good work. Although this does not have anything to do with being a Sunnite or a Shiite, it has been prevalent that if someone says that the birth date of the Prophet is on Rabi' al-awwal 12, he is believed to be a Sunnite, and if a Sunnite says that the Prophet's birth date is on Rabi' al-awwal 17, he is thought to be converted to Shi'ism.

There are also, at the moment, controversies over the birth date of Jesus Christ (AS). Now, I do not want to thoroughly go into details, but in Iran, for example, Armenians celebrate the birth of Christ on one certain day and Assyrians do it on another. But it is customary to celebrate it in these very days³ and almost a majority of the Christians celebrate it these days; it makes no difference in essence for us, as unfortunately we do not follow his (Christ's) and our Prophet's spiritual instructions. In effect, we; the Muslims, are also Christians, we are Christian Muslims; because we follow the one whose advent Jesus Christ (AS) had announced, but as a Muslim Christian, (unfortunately) the kindness and affection that Christ talked about are not there in our personalities, the forgiveness and mercy that he talked about are not there in us; he said that if your cloak has been taken away from you, give your cassock away too, if someone slaps you in the face, turn the other cheek⁴. We have such

¹ The speech made on January 5, 2006 to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ (AS). Translated from Irfan Iran, Collection of papers, No. 25 & 26. Collected by Dr. Seyed Mostafa Azmayesh, Haqiqat Publishing, PP. 5-20, Tehran, Iran (2006).

² Usūl al-Kāfī, translated by Haj Seyed Javad Mostafavi, P 323:

وُلِدَ النَّبِيُّ (ص) لِأَثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ لَيْلَةً مَضَتْ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَبِيعِ الْأَوَّلِ ...

³ Also about this date, an agreement has been reached now that, in fact, this day is occasioned by the birth of Mehr (Mithra); the god of ancient Iranians and after Constantine; the emperor of Roman empire who first was a follower of Mithraism, converted to Christianity, he designated this date in the 4th century AD as the birth date of Jesus Christ (AS).

⁴ Matthew 5: 39 & 40

order in Islam too, but we consider different levels; as such orders cannot be expected from all people. At first and at the beginning stage it is stipulated in the Quran for public: **“In the law of equality (qisas) there is (saving of) life to you, o ye men of understanding”**⁵, but in upper levels it states: **“and those who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men, for Allah loves those who do good”**⁶, that are four levels in total.

In any way, whether the birth of Christ (AS) were 2000 years ago, whether 1780 years ago or a few years ago, it would not make a difference for us at the moment since we pay more attention to the spiritual aspect of events than to the historical details. We consider this date as our criterion too, because the majority believes that the birth of Christ happened in these very days, in other words, consensus and agreement of many people, so to speak- that it happened on such a day- this consensus and agreement stress the importance of this very day. Allah states: **“and remind them of the days of Allah”**⁷. Every day belongs to God, they are **“days of Allah”**, but the days He has bestowed on us a godsend, we pay respect and tribute to them in the name of Allah’s days and we hope that the inner Messiah will be born inside us.

This mentality of doubtfulness and fuss that I mentioned in the beginning has been developed so greatly that some say the existence of Jesus Christ is just an imagination, a myth, there was not any Christ at all. We definitely reject such statement. This is not the question of the birth date as it makes no difference for us what date it was; we reject it because aside from all the historical records, there is a more convincing evidence and that is the Creator of Jesus who has directly said: **“to Allah, the example of Jesus is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "be". And he was there.”**⁸ So let the historians say whatever they think. We say there really was some Jesus- as there was some Adam too- and words have been left as inheritance from Christ (AS) which have mostly been recited in the Gospels. Therefore, we are rest assured up to this point that there was some Christ who is respected by us, Muslims, too, because his name is cited in the Quran which is of the greatest validity to us. Moreover, some teachings attributed to His Excellency have been passed on to us.

In Islam, the Quran is the afflatus; the very words and sentences of which Allah has spoken. There are also some traditions (*hadiths*) that are the conversation or direct relation between Allah and the Prophet; which Allah speaks to the Prophet, but the Prophet was not allowed to announce them as some part of the Quran. Such traditions (*hadiths*) are called the “Hadith-e-Qodsi”. Aside from these, there are other narrations and hadiths attributed to the Prophet as well. Whereas, there is no such categorization in both the Old and the New Testament- in other words, Jesus Christ’s words, the stories, teachings and the divine words have all come together and they are not distinguishable. Anyhow, it is a sacred book and reading it is useful for us.

The four Gospels existing at the moment are as narratives. Four accounts of Christ’s (AS) life, which of course in all of them, Christ’s words have not been brought cohesively, mostly in story-telling style, though. The Quran has stories too, every word of which is a

⁵ The Quran, Al-Baqara (The cow), 179: وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

⁶ The Quran, Al-e-Imran (The family of Imran), 134: وَالكَاطِبِينَ الْعَظِيمِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

⁷ The Quran, Ibrahim (Abraham), 5: وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللَّهِ

⁸ The Quran, Al-e-Imran (The family of Imran), 59: إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

lesson and a reminder. For example, in the story of Joseph (AS), it states: “**We tell you stories in a highly desirable fashion**”⁹. What does “**a highly desirable fashion**” of storytelling mean? Does it mean “**We**” are story tellers? No, it does not. “Highly desirable fashion” here means that “**We**” tell you stories every word of which can be a lesson for you. Here, the word “story” does not own the literal meaning. In other places, the Quran states that there were many other prophets whose stories “**We**” never read to you, meaning it was not necessary.

Christ (AS) has a particular place from the historical point of view, too. The Jews also had been awaiting the Messiah. The Messiah; as they say Mashiah¹⁰, which is the term for their belief of The Promised. God had promised them that a Jewish king would come and gain mastery over the world. Due to their ethnicity, breed and genetic heritage, the Sons-of-Israel tribe interprets everything based on its materialistic and worldly meaning, they thought that this king or sultan would be the same as David (AS) or Solomon (AS) who would also have the worldly kingdom and would rise via invasion and force, as they sometimes abuse this idea politically. In effect, the word Sultan had to be interpreted as the divine one, meaning someone who has a divine kingship. Just like when we name the Holy Imams such as Imam Reza: Al-Sultan Ali, son of Musa (father of) Reza.

Of course, if they (the Jews) had rallied to the Christ’s flag all together, they would have achieved that kingdom and superiority, in effect, the followers of Jesus Christ have been promised to have dominance over the others. By followers, we Muslims also are certainly included, because we are following the one whose emergence had been annunciated by Jesus (AS) and His Excellency also had ordered us to follow him. Due to this, in general, the spiritual power worldwide belongs to the Muslims and Christians, even though the materialistic and worldly powers are in the Jews’ hands. Yet they still need help from the Muslims and Christians. Apparently, such annunciation is almost similar to the annunciation told about Mahdi’s reign (AFTS) and we are awaiting his emergence.

By the time, Prophet John who was Jesus’s cousin emerged with all his special miraculous acts and grandeur and some people thought that John might be the Messiah. They asked John and he answered: “I am his annunciator, I have come to annunciate his emergence and the Messiah will come soon.” After that Jesus Christ raised.

At the same time, the Jews had conglomerated in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Perhaps, because they were awaiting a prophet to emerge, they had gathered together there. Just like after the time of our Prophet, the Jews were still awaiting a prophet, they had speculated about emerging a prophet, and this way they were awaiting the emergence of a prophet in that area by the time. That was why they had come to that place. Why did they come to Mecca and Medina; an arid desert area with little population, while they had basically had that materialistic point of view? If it were not for the above-mentioned reason, even no single person would come there.

Also, by the time of Jesus, the Jews were awaiting the emergence of the Messiah. Those days, there were two powerful empires: Iranian and Roman. The Roman Empire had dominance over that area and had assigned a governor. In spite of that governor, the rabbis

⁹ The Quran, Joseph, 3: نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ

¹⁰ The word Mashiah (the Anointed one) literally means someone who is anointed by the sacred oil.

exerted the public will. Jewish religious men’s attention was drawn to worldly affairs just like any other Jews. The mentality of Jesus (AS) was right against such things; that is, it was suitable for the good of those days. All of the prophets emerged for the good of their own times, except our Prophet who is suitable for all times and places. Moses’s (AS) general mission was to save the Sons of Israel and because of that, he also handled the worldly affairs. Jesus (AS) totally ignored the worldly world. It was like someone put an ice cube in a cup of hot tea, so hot that it burnt the hands. When the ice is completely melted, the tea will be less hot, so the temperature extremes of these two (the ice and the hot tea) will become moderate. As though, God wanted to put ice in the Jews’ heat. The attitude of Jesus was in direct contrast to that of the Jews. As an obvious example, it is said that some people were going to give a coin to the Caesar as jizyah (poll tax), they asked Jesus about it: What do we do with it? He said to them: Give back to Caesar what is his and to God what is God’s. Give the coin whose inscription is in the name of Caesar back to Caesar, and give back the heart which is God’s to God¹¹. He paid no attention to financial affairs. Succeeding Christians also developed this attitude so that it ended in monasticism. The Quran states: **“the monasticism which they invented on their own, We (Allah) did not prescribe for them but the seeking for the pleasure of Allah”**.¹² As you can see, God somehow verifies this monasticism.

When the world and the prevailing mankind’s way of thinking became conducive to introducing the Islam, the Islam adjusted this condition. The Islam is between these two (religions), and it is the balance, between and betwixt. In the Islam, we have two mottos, so to speak. One says: To whom there is no sustenance; there is no attention to the Last Judgment either.¹³ As the proverb says, the hungry mouth cannot maintain its faith.¹⁴ There must be attention to worldly pursuits in order to protect the hereafter. Does it mean we have to provide just a living? No, it does not. Because, on the other hand, The Quran states: **“if humankind finds themselves super independent, they will run riot”**¹⁵ Being independent can be in any kind, but the most important of all is the independence in worldly and financial affairs. Therefore, the Islam presses both dishes of the balance to even them up.

The Prophet of Islam brought the life and the afterlife together and according to God’s order, he said: **“Our Lord! Give us good in this life and good in the afterlife, and defend us from the torment of the fire”**.¹⁶ My deduction from the surah of Tin’s first verses which say: **(I swear) to the fig, to the olive, to the Mount Sinai and to this secure land**,¹⁷ is that the fig and the olive symbolize Jesus (AS), then He (Allah) swears to the Mount Sinai which represents Moses’s place and then He swears to this clean and safe land, the land where there is our Prophet. In this order, the Quran brings together these three standings.

Anyhow, Jesus (AS) had played a fundamental role in adjusting this balance that later on

¹¹ Matthew 22, P 19-21.

¹² The Quran, Al-Hadid (The Iron), 27: رَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ:

¹³ من لا معاش له، لا معاد له

¹⁴ Kitab al-Kafi, Muhammad Ya’qūb Kulaynī, corrected by Ali Akbar Qaffari, 4th edition, vol. 2, P 307, Dar-al-Kotob Islami Publishing-Morteza Ahmad Akhoondi, Qom, 1986: كَادَ الْفَقْرُ أَنْ يَكُونَ كُفْرًا:

¹⁵ The Quran, Al-Alaq (The Clot), 6 & 7: كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظِرٌ أَلَمْ يَرَأْهُ اسْتَخْفَىٰ أَن يَرَاهُ اسْتَغْنَىٰ:

¹⁶ The Quran, Al-Baqara (The Cow), 201: رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ:

¹⁷ The Quran, At-Tin (The Fig), 1, 2 & 3: وَالتِّينِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ وَطُورِ سِينِينَ وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ

appeared in Islam. Jesus's faithful followers' dedications, too, finally caused Constantine; the great Roman emperor who deliberately harassed and tormented the Christians, converted to Christianity in the 4th century AD, and after that the Christianity flourished and found worldly power. Here, God Almighty displayed His power that a sworn enemy of Christianity became a supporter of it. But instead, the Christians' faith started to dwindle. Christianity might have suffered losses to some extent but Christians benefited from it because they achieved security. The basis of Christianity was the very teachings of Jesus (AS), which of course became permanent. All of Jesus's teachings elaborated this sentence by Imam Sadiq (AS): **Is religion anything but love?**¹⁸ The whole basis of religion is affection (love). This is the truth that was brought more precisely in this saying that Islam has been founded on five bases: prayers, zakat (that which purifies), fasting, hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and wilayat (guardianship) and the first four are of lesser importance to wilayat.¹⁹ God grants tolerance and indulgence for the first four but for wilayat He does not. In case of wilayat, God's verdict is definitely clear. Wilayat is love, the love of God. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq has generally spoken in the above saying in order to make us understand that wilayat is of higher position. Jesus's words are mostly around the love of God, affection and passion for all the creatures of God. As Jesus (AS), in response to a Jewish jurisprudent who asked him which command in religion is of the greatest importance, said: that is showing love to your Lord, to your God, with all your heart, soul and thought, and secondly, which is the same, that is to treat your neighbor kindly as if you are treating yourself.²⁰

Any time prophets spread any new religion, they were assigned to preach that religion, it means they had to announce the directives and commandments of their religion to make people understand and be submitted. But wilayat (guardianship) has no propagation because if any person tends toward wilayat, wilayat will absorb him; such as when you want to separate iron bits from dust, you cannot separate the conglomerate dust bit by bit because the iron bits are so small that they cannot be seen. Instead, you move a powerful magnet in the dust and then you can see that all the iron bits have been attached to the magnet. Wilayat acts the same as this magnet. Anyone with the same material as the magnet will be stuck to it and the magnet will find it. That is why wilayat has no propagation.

Jesus (AS) had both the prophetic and wilayat aspects. From the prophetic aspect He said: I have not come to terminate my brother's (Moses AS) religion but to improve it. Because he said "my brother's religion", it means "I am in the same rank as Moses was". Before he said that, people had been saying that Jesus was only a preacher like other Jewish preachers. But Jesus clarified that "I am in the same rank as Moses was". Our Prophet, too, said the same words and he put them into practice. In effect, the basis of all divine religions includes three: monotheism, prophecy and the afterlife. All of them say there is only one God to whom we will return: **"Surely we are Allah's and to him we shall surely return"**.²¹ And all the religions are believed to have sent prophets by God to guide the mankind. Based on these three bases, addressing the People of the Book, the Quran says: **"Say: O' People of the Book! Let us come to a word in common between us and you, that we shall worship**

¹⁸ هل الدين إلا الحب؟

¹⁹ Kitab al-Kafi, vol. 3, P 33: بَيِّ الأَسْلَامُ عَلَيَّ خَمْسٍ: الصَّلَاةُ وَ الرُّكَاةُ وَ الصَّوْمُ وَ الْحَجُّ وَ الوِلَايَةُ، وَ لَمْ يُنَادِ بِشَيْءٍ كَمَا نُودِي بِالْوِلَايَةِ.

²⁰ Matthew, 22, P 35-40.

²¹ The Quran, Al-Baqara (The Cow), 156: إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

none except Allah, that we shall associate none with Him".²² It is because of maintaining principles of monotheism and prophecy that the Shi'ism believes in the two principles of justice and imamate, but the common ground of all religions are these three (monotheism, prophecy and the afterlife). Later on, when the Prophet was ordered to announce wilayat, God said: **"This day I have perfected your religion for you, have completed my favor on you and have chosen Islam for you as a religion"**.²³ Had their religion been imperfect beforehand? In fact, "I have perfected" means that it is improved more as wilayat had never been talked about clearly and that is to start showing attention and consideration towards it.

Jesus Christ (AS) was the prophet of mercy, in other words, he resolved all issues by his mercy. Our Prophet, too, was the manifestation of mercy and also the divine retribution, at the same time he was both. In the Quran, God says: **"Allah is mighty; the lord of retribution"**.²⁴ But in another part He says: **"Surely Allah forgives the sins altogether"**.²⁵ Or: **"My kindness exceeds my anger"**.²⁶ Our Prophet had both aspects; hence, he was perfect.

One of the stories told about Jesus Christ's kindness and mercy is: one day, Jesus Christ (AS) was with his apostles somewhere, people caught a sinful woman sentenced by the Jewish jurisprudents to stoning and brought her to Jesus in order to ask for his opinion. Jesus asked what had happened. They answered: This woman is sentenced to stoning and we are going to do it. His Excellency paused for a moment and said: the first stone should be thrown at her by anyone among you who has never committed a sin. They admitted they were not like that and they went away one by one.²⁷ This woman is said to be Mary Magdalene who later on was canonized as a saint and just as we (Sufis) think of Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya, Christians think of Mary Magdalene as well. This story is an example of Jesus's mercy.

Noah (AS) was angry with unbelievers and said to God: **"My Lord! Leave not upon the land anyone from among the unbelievers"**.²⁸ Although some say this verse means that God might lead all people to believing in Him, until no unbeliever would remain, apparently it is a curse, as God did what everyone knows about. Abraham (AS) fought in many all-out wars and then he asked God to guide the family (and fellow men) of Lot (AS) but he could not save all of them except only a few. Moses (AS) slaughtered many of Israelis (sons of Israel) many times. But in case of Jesus (AS), it is different. When some people said that Jesus and his Mother were God, according to the Quran, God asked Jesus- surely God knew the answer because He caused it Himself- but He asked: **"Did you tell people to worship you and your mother other than God? Jesus answered: Hallelujah, I never say anything unless I have the right to say it. I said what you ordered me to. While I lived among them, I said your (God's) words and called their attention to monotheism, and also after my ascension,**

²² The Quran, Al-e-Imran (The family of Imran), 64: قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا

²³ The Quran, Al-Maeda (The Table), 3: الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

²⁴ The Quran, Al-E-Imran (The family of Imran), 4: وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

²⁵ The Quran, Az-Zumar (The troops), 53: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا

²⁶ سبقت رحمتي غضبي

²⁷ John 8: 3-9.

²⁸ The Quran, Noah, 26: وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا

you know about and take care of everything, and you are aware of everything. All these are your servants and I intercede for them, you have the authority whether to punish them, you are the merciful if you forgive them”.²⁹

Jesus Christ (AS) has interceded for the entire human race to the time of Resurrection, and God never said to him not to do so, but He said to Abraham (AS) not to mediate and intercede for his father who was a polytheist- since Abraham had promised his father to ask God to forgive him. And Abraham actually did it, hoping that God would accept it but in the end, He detested his father.³⁰ In a nutshell, the fundamental basis of Jesus Christ’s teachings was kindness and affection. Not only did Jesus have mercy for men but also for Satan. It is in the New Testament that after Jesus finished a 40-day austerity in the mountains on John’s order, as his master, he was tested for three times. Satan intended to deceive Jesus for three times but every time he failed,³¹ just like when he wanted to seduce Abraham (AS). In his mind, Satan thought that he had grabbed flavorful bites to eat but when he found out that he cannot gulp down such bites, he left them. However, Jesus asked God to forgive this Satan who wanted to upset him, and if God did, we would be in comfort forever.

Let us go back to the emergence of Jesus Christ (AS). As it was mentioned earlier, the governors from the Roman Empire who ruled Jerusalem knew that the Jews as they said were awaiting a king and in the Jewish narratives, it had been told that this king would dominate the whole world. Roman governors thought that if that king came, he would overthrow them, therefore, they were worried lest this Messiah would emerge. For this reason, they cooperated with the rabbis. Jesus (AS) mostly spoke on top of the hills in the countryside like a preacher and everyone listened. God has awarded all prophets miracles because they have to invite people. When you want to invite guests to your party, you should set a table for them, even a small one. Jesus (AS), too, had to invite people. God had granted him to perform such miracles that worked above all by the time. For unknown reasons, maladies such as vitiligo and leprosy had been widely pandemic and anyway, his miracles cured these illnesses, he touched the sick and they were cured. On the other hand, God had allowed Jesus Christ (AS) to perform those miracles in his own name. Certainly, every prophet did miracles. Our Prophet’s miracles were also the splitting of the moon³², the ascension (al Mi’raj) and the most important; the Quran. Jesus Christ (AS) also had such a power and God had allowed him to announce it like that. In Christianity, of course, Jesus Christ (AS); himself, was the great miracle to be born to a virgin mother, just like in Islam where the Quran which is the main miracle was brought by an illiterate prophet.

²⁹ The Quran, Al-Maeda (The table), 116-118:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ أَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبحَانَكَ 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 مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبْدُكَ وَإِنْ تَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

³⁰ The Quran, Al-Tawba (repentance), 113 & 114:

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَاللَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولِي قُرْبَى مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنِ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ

³¹ Matthew 4: 1-11.

³² (Arabic: انشقاق القمر)

"My writer (Muhammad) who went to no school and did no writing
Glance throwing, lesson teacher of hundreds of teachers, he became"³³

It is said that Jesus is the mystic of prophets or the prophet of mystics. It neither means that the other prophets were not mystics nor does it mean that only mystics embrace him and the rest of the people do not. But it means Jesus was the epitome of that mentality of mysticism which exists in Islam in a very high level, just like Ali (AS) who was the example of this mentality of mysticism inside the Islam. In order to prevent this mentality from causing confusion, no one asked Ali (AS) for miracles, since miracles are peculiar to the prophets. But many awe-inspiring acts have been told about him. Ali (AS) kept saying all the time: I am the caliph of Allah, a caliph who God has designated, but the two caliphs (Abu Bakr and Umar) and Othman said: we are the Prophet's caliphs, the Prophet's successors. This caused Umar to make a mistake and said: Ali is strongly craving for the caliphate. He thought that this Ali's saying comes from his enthusiasm for the caliphate, whereas Ali said to Ibn-Abbas: This caliphate of yours (generally speaking), to me, is not worth as much as these shabby shoes of mine. But Ali who knew himself as the caliph of God, had a sword (Dhu al-Fiqar/Zulfiqar) granted to him by God, chanting: **There is no righteous man like Ali, there is no sword like Zulfiqar**,³⁴ had physical strength, and also knowledge, stayed at home and cooperated with them. The two caliphs and Othman even consulted with him. Because wilayat (guardianship) can neither be advertised nor challenged. Ali (AS) did not want the reign either. Even when Othman was killed, Ali was said to: You are the caliph now. But Ali did not accept. After Othman was killed, the world of Islam had no caliph for three or eight days. Ali stated: Should I be the caliph and the head of your government, everyone is expected to do *bayat* (initiation) with me. The reason is if I am expected to be the head of your government, all the people must be satisfied. Anyhow, Ali (AS) had been the Allah's caliph and no one could take away this position from him whether or not he became the governmental caliph. Our Imams (AS) were like that, too.

In any case, Jesus (AS) did not pay attention to governmental affairs at all whose attitude defines Ali's words and manner for us. Gradually after a while, people realized that he is the Messiah, the Messiah they had been awaiting. Jesus (AS) did not belong to the class of Jewish scholars and from the very beginning; he opposed them, ignored them, disagreed with them and raised serious discussions, relying on his spiritual strength. For this reason, the rabbis became desperately worried and began looking for an excuse to execute Jesus. The Jews have a rule not to work on Saturdays. We; Muslims, too, have such a rule not to work on Friday mornings, but we are not very strict about it. But the Jews' law of working on Saturdays is so tough that sometimes if it is violated, death penalty will be applied in some cases. The Jewish scholars who were looking for an excuse once saw Jesus (AS) healing a man on a Saturday. They used it as an excuse and arrested him to put him on trial in order to sentence him to death on charge of working on Saturday. Here, the Islamic version is different from the Christian one. The Christians say: Jesus (AS) was crucified and then passed. But he had said: After my burial, I will be resuscitated and risen. They put the dead body in a big tomb and rolled a heavy stone over it which could not be moved by a hundred people so as to keep Jesus in. They did not bother thinking that Jesus; who revives the dead and also his own dead body can be revived, can flatten the whole world. He had no trouble

³³ Khwāja Shamsu d-Dīn Muhammad Hāfez-e Shīrāzī, known by his pen name Hāfez, was a Persian poet:

نگار من که مکتب نرفت و خط ننوشت به غمزه مسأله آموز صد مدرس شد

³⁴ لا فتى الا على لا سيف الا ذوالفقار

with removing a stone. They also posted guards outside the tomb in order to keep people out. They came back after three days and saw the stone had been aside and Jesus was not there, although there were plenty of guards and that huge stone.³⁵

After all, I say “Merry Christmas” to the entire people of the world, especially to my own fellow citizens, as he was granted by God the title of “Spirit of Allah”. Celebrating birthdays of each of these great men is much better than mourning for their departure from life. I hope that God help us follow him and, in our time, we may have the chance that Imam of the age (AFTS) emerge while Jesus accompanies him and we may meet the two of these great men, In Shaa Allah (hopefully).

³⁵ Many years ago, it was possible for us to go to Jerusalem and in a trip along side with His Excellency Salih Ali Shah, we went there and saw that stone and the tomb in which Jesus was buried according to what Christians say, and we showed great respect. In effect, concerning what the Quran states, An-Nisa (the women), 157: **“They neither killed nor crucified Jesus”**, it can be concluded that Jesus had never been there but because that place was in loving memory of His Excellency, we made a pilgrimage.