sayings do not play any essential role in the book as a whole, it does not justify the author’s attitude of treating the task of authenticating ḥadīth with an element of indifference.

Apart from these minor shortcomings, the book has to its credit many points that are unparallelled in most of the modern writings on Sufism.

1. The book is a useful introduction to Sufism as the title suggests and gives a comprehensive and lucid account of what Sufism is.
2. The language is clear, simple and forceful and eminently succeeds in articulating the dynamics of Ṭaʿwūf and its vitality in human life.
3. The book shows Sufism to be an integral part of Islam, a part which, in fact, is the very heart of Islam and gives it its dynamism and vitality.
4. The presentation of the subject is well grounded in the basic sources of Islam, the Qurʾān and the Sunnah, apart from being well rooted in the authentic writings of the Sūfis.
5. The author has taken pains to analyse the key concepts and Qurʾānic terms in accordance with the Sūfī tradition.
6. Finally, the strength of the book lies in its depiction of Ṭaʿwūf as a living force which has not only inspired and shaped the lives of people in the days bygone but does so with equal vigour even today.

In my considered view, here is a book to be read by all seekers of the truth and I am sure it will occupy a prominent position in the modern literature on Sufism. The book is an immense source of knowledge and inspiration for all those who are eager to be acquainted with the path of Islam’s intellectual and spiritual life. In view of the author’s deep insight into the subject and his ability to forcefully articulate his thoughts, one only wishes that the author would continue to produce similar works of excellence and merit.


At a moment in history when relations between Christianity and Islam are strained in many parts of the world, notes Tarif Khalidi in the introduction to his book on Jesus, it is important to remember other times when these two
traditions were more open to each other, and better able to benefit and learn from the each other’s witness. It is the great merit of *The Muslim Jesus* to have opened up a window of commonality that provides a refreshing alternative to theological argumentation and political divisiveness.

Professor Khalidi offers a number of translations from a corpus of Islamic texts that he refers to as the “Muslim gospel”. The collection is formed from references to, and stories about, the Prophet Jesus as found in popular devotional literature, mystical and historical writings. In these excerpts the Christian reader will recognize a figure who is neither the replication of the Jesus of the New Testament nor the repetition of the Qur’anic figure of Jesus, but who draws from and reflects the nature and the teachings of both. To be sure, he is an Islamic Jesus, a beloved prophet who recites Qur’an, prays in an Islamic way and goes on pilgrimage to Makkah. But he is also a figure whose development is clearly influenced by Christian scriptural and pietistic tradition, a teacher of asceticism and devotion and a prophet of healing, miracle-working, and ministry. Above all, he was the source of exemplary ethical teachings. As Khalidi expresses it, this is a Jesus who is clearly a Muslim creation and yet is able to maintain a certain distance from the orthodoxy of the very folks who created him.

The sayings and stories are presented in 303 segments. Each segment contains a translation and a short commentary. Khalidi clarifies at the beginning of his excellent and very helpful introduction that he is not the first scholar to have presented this material. The collections of his predecessors David Margoliouth and Miguel Asiny Palacios, however, were less complete and did not take into full account either the literary aspects of the material or its changing role and definition in the general evolution of Islamic piety. The sayings and stories contained in this collection are translated into fluid and easily digestible English, and are both instructive and moving. Some are even humorous, and present an image of a Jesus who is at home with his people and who does not hesitate to help them to learn and understand. Khalidi stresses that Jesus of the Muslim Gospel undergoes a transition over time from asceticism to lordship over nature to healer and miracle worker to social and ethical model. It is clear from reading the texts and stories that the Jesus of the “Muslim gospel” is, above all, a moral exemplar whose struggles with the demonic forces that lead the human soul astray are much in keeping with the New Testament portrayal of Jesus having successfully resisted the temptations of Satan in the wilderness.

Was this healer/teacher whose portrayal developed through the centuries the “real” Jesus? Khalidi readily acknowledges that the image(s) of Jesus
expressed in the “Muslim gospel” reflect growth, change and development as the Muslim community itself changed and absorbed new currents and influences over the years. The narratives of the gospel increasingly adopt a story form as Jesus is portrayed in relationship with, and giving advice to, the members of his community. Indeed it is through stories about Jesus and his interaction with those around him, nor through his teachings as a Christian might expect on the model of The New Testament, that moral lessons are transmitted. The Christian reader is well advised to anticipate that the Jesus of the Muslim Gospel will look both familiar and different, and as such that his portrayal, so to speak, is the product of a genuine interplay of religions at the same time that it remains essentially true to both.

Khalidi thoughtfully develops the relationship of the constantly emerging figure of Jesus to the rise and growth of Islamic Sufism, underscoring the well-documented importance of Jesus as a favourite figure of the many branches of mysticism. In Sufi representations there is often little difference between the Muslim Jesus and the Jesus of the New Testament. Another important element in the composition, as it were, of the Jesus of the “Muslim gospel” is the influence of Shi’ite thinking, with parallels drawn between the wisdom of the child Jesus and the infant Imam, and between the Jesus who ascended to God (in the Qur’ān) and the Hiddem Imam.

This is a delightful book and one that should be commended to scholar and seeker alike. The text is handsomely produced, its pages well designed and spacious as if to allow the reader a place to roam in his or her thoughts and responses. Khalidi’s introduction provides a gentle treatment of a topic that might have the potential to raise objections in both the Muslim and the Christian communities, especially as he describes the process of the emergence of the Muslim Gospel not as a birth but an emination, a “seepage of one religious tradition into another....” In fact he is giving voice to a process of mutual appreciation and learning that must, if we are to understand the way religions develop and piety is shared, transcend the potential discontents of the overly-cautious, and celebrate the possibilities for a genuine inter-faith sharing of resources for learning and for worship.

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