

The Religion of Jesus

1. Al-Sadiq ('a) said about

...He has enjoined on me prayer and the poor-rate so long as I live (19:31)

that by the “poor-rate” what is meant is *zakah al-ru'us*,¹ because not all people have wealth, but the *fitrah* is [to be paid] by the poor and the rich, the little and the big.²

2. It is reported that there was retaliation in the revealed law of Moses and blood money was necessary in the revealed law of Jesus. So the true and tolerant religion [Islam] came down permitting both of them.³

3. It is reported in true narrations that getting married without limit [to the number of wives] was permitted in the revealed law of Moses for the sake of men's affairs; and in the revealed law of Jesus only one was permitted for the sake of women's affairs. So this revealed law [of Islam] came for the sake of both.⁴

4. It is reported that Abu al-Hasan Al-Ridha' ('a) said, “Every prophet who was in the time of Moses ('a) and after him had the revealed law of Moses and his rites and followed his Book until the time of Jesus ('a). And every prophet who was in the time of Jesus and after him had the rites of Jesus and his revealed law and followed his Book until the time of our Prophet Muhammad (S).

Then these five prophets who possessed resolution (*ulu al-'azm*) are the most noble prophets and apostles, peace be upon them. And the revealed law of Muhammad will not be abrogated until the Resurrection Day and there will be no prophet after him until the Resurrection Day.⁵

5. It is reported that Abu 'Abd-Allah narrated from his fathers, in order, until the Commander of the Faithful peace be upon all of them, that one day the people of five religions, the Jews, the Christians, the Naturalists (*dahriyah*), the Dualists and the 'Arab Idolaters gathered before the Apostle of Allah.

The Jews said, “We say, 'Ezra is the son of Allah.' O Muhammad! We came to you to see what you say. If you follow us, we were right prior to you and better than you, and if you oppose us, we will argue with

you.”

The Christians said, “We say, ‘Verily Jesus is the son of Allah who united with Him.’ We came to you to see what you say. If you follow us, we were right prior to you and better than you, and if you oppose us we will argue with you.” The Naturalists said, “We say, ‘There is no beginning of things and they are everlasting.’ We came to you to see what you say.

If you follow us, we were right prior to you and better than you, and if you oppose us we will argue with you.” The Dualists said, “We say, ‘Verily the light and the darkness are the administrators.’ We came to you to see what you say. If you follow us, we were right prior to you and better than you, and if you oppose us we will argue with you.”

The ‘Arab Idolaters said, “We say, ‘Verily our idols are gods.’ We came to you to see what you say. If you follow us, we were right prior to you and better than you, and if you oppose us we will argue with you.”

The Apostle of Allah (S) said, “I believe in God alone. There is no partner for Him, and I deny every god but Him.” Then he said to them, “Verily Allah the Exalted raised me for all of the people as a bearer of good news, a warner and as an authority for the inhabitants of the world, and Allah will turn the deceptions of those who deceive in His religion back on them.”...

Then he faced the Christians and said to them, “You said that the Eternal is united with Christ, His son. What do you mean by this saying? Do you want to say that the Eternal became non-eternal by this creature who is Jesus, or that the non-eternal, who is Jesus, became eternal by the Eternal who is Allah, or your saying, ‘He united with him’ means that ‘He distinguished him by nobility while He did not ennoble anyone but him.’

If you mean that the Eternal, the Exalted, became non-eternal, you are wrong. For it is impossible for the eternal to change and become non-eternal, and if you mean that the non-eternal became eternal you are wrong for it is impossible too for the non-eternal to change to the eternal, and if you mean that He united with him whereby He distinguished him and chose him among His other servants, you confess to the originality of Jesus and everything that is united with him for his own sake.

Because if Jesus is non-created and Allah is united with him and changed him to the best creature before Him, Jesus and Him would have been non-eternal, and this is opposite to what you said in the beginning.”

The Christians said, “O Muhammad! Allah the Exalted manifested some strange things by the hand of Jesus, so He took him as His son for the sake of nobility.” The Apostle of Allah said, “You heard what I said to the Jews about what you said.” Then he repeated all of that. They said nothing except one of them who said, “O Muhammad! Do not you say, ‘Abraham is *khalil Allah* (the friend of Allah)?’ So when you say this why do you reject our saying, ‘Jesus is the son of Allah.’”

The Apostle of Allah said, "These are not alike for *khalil Allah* is taken from *khallah* or *khullah* and the meaning of *khallah* is poverty and neediness. He was a friend of his Lord and needy of Him, chastely, abstemiously and independently separated from all but Him.

Because when they wanted to throw him into the fire and to cast him with a catapult, Allah, the Exalted, raised Gabriel and said to him, 'Catch My servant!' Gabriel came to him, met him in the air, and said, 'Commission me for what happened to you, for Allah the Exalted raised me to help you.' He said, 'But Allah is sufficient for me and He is the best Trustee (*wakil*). I ask no one but Him and there is no need for me unless of Him.'

Then He named him His friend (*khalil*), that means His poor and needy, and who is separated from all but Him. When the meaning of *khalil* is taken from need (*khullah*) and he is needy (*takhalal*) of Him and knows His secrets that no one else knows, it means that he knows Him and His affairs. And it does not cause the likeness of Allah to him.

Do not you see that if he did not separate from all but Him, he would not have been His friend, and if he did not know His secrets he would not have been His friend. One's father is he of whom one is born, even if his father slanders him and sends him far away, for the meaning of being born of him remains. Then if it is necessary for you to compare Jesus with Abraham and say Jesus is His son for He said, 'Abraham is My friend,' it is necessary for you to say, 'Moses is His son,' For his miracles were no less than the miracles of Jesus. So you should say 'Moses is His son too.'

And it is permitted for you to say, 'He is his shaykh, master, uncle, chief and commander,' in the meaning that I said it to the Jews." Then some of the Christians said, "According to the revealed books Jesus said, 'I go to my father.'" The Apostle of Allah said, "If you do according to that book, you should say, 'All of the people that He addressed were His sons as Jesus was his son.' For according to that book, Jesus said, 'I go to Him who is my father and yours.'

Then something that is in that book makes invalid what you think, that only Jesus is His son because he was so distinguished. For you said, 'Jesus is His son because He, the Exalted, distinguished him by that which He did not distinguish the others.' But you know that Jesus was chosen for something that this group was not chosen for, and Jesus said to this group, 'I go to Him who is my father and yours.'

So it is wrong that only Jesus is chosen. For this is proven for you [that Jesus is not distinguished as His son] by the saying of Jesus to those who were not so distinguished. You narrated the words of Jesus but you interpreted it wrongly. For when he said, 'my father and yours' he wanted to say something you do not say and impute. What do you know?

Perhaps it was in his mind, 'I go to Adam and Noah. Allah raises me to them and gathers me with them. Adam is my father and your father, and Noah is likewise.' But he did not mean anything but this meaning." The Christians became silent; then they said, "We did not see a disputant or an opponent like what we saw today, and we will think about our affairs...."6

6. Imam al-‘Askari reported that about the verse,

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward the East and the West, but righteousness is this, that one should believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the prophets, give away wealth out of love for him to the near of kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, beggars and for the emancipation of captives, keep up the prayers and pay the poor-rate...” (2:177)

‘Ali Ibn al-Husayn (‘a) said, “The Apostle of Allah favored ‘Ali (‘a) and informed [his people] about his majesty before his Lord, the Mighty and Magnificent, and revealed the favor for his followers and the helpers of his calling and rebuked the Jews and Christians for their disbelief and their concealing the mention of Muhammad, ‘Ali and their descendents, peace be with them, about their being favored and good deeds.

Then the Jews and Christians became proud [thinking themselves better]. The Jews said, “We prayed to this our *qiblah* many prayers. There are some people among us who stay awake nights with praying to this *qiblah* which is the *qiblah* of Moses; and Allah commanded us about it.”

The Christians said, “We prayed to this our *qiblah* many prayers. There are some people among us who stay awake nights with praying to this *qiblah* which is the *qiblah* of Jesus; and Allah commanded us about it.” Each of these two sects said, “Do you think that our Lord makes invalid our numerous works and our prayers to our *qiblah*, because we do not follow the desire of Muhammad for himself and his brother?”

Then Allah the Exalted, sent, “O Muhammad! Say, ‘Righteousness is not the obedience by which you reach heaven and merit forgiveness and sanctity. In your prayers you turn your faces to the East, O Christians! And to the West, O Jews! But you oppose the command of Allah and you are angry with the friend (*wali*) of Allah.

But righteous is he who believes in Allah, in His being one, alone and unique, impermeable (*Samad*); Who makes whom He wants great, makes honor for whom He wants, makes despicable and humble whom He wants—no one can refute His order and none can reprove His judgement. Also righteous is he who believes in the Last Day, the Resurrection Day.”⁷

7. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) said, “Verily, Allah, the blessed and exalted, gave to Muhammad the laws of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus: *tawhid* (divine unity), *ikhlas* (purity), the dismissal of peers [for Allah], the liberal uprightness of human nature, there is no monasticism and no mendicancy, what is pure is made lawful and what is filthy is prohibited, and He removes from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them.⁸

So, He made known his excellence with this. Then He made obligatory for him the prayer, alms, fasting, the pilgrimage, enjoining the good, prohibiting evil, the allowable (*halal*) and the forbidden (*haram*), the laws of inheritance, the penal laws, the obligations, jihad in the way of Allah, and He added the minor

ablution, He made him excellent by the opening of the Book,⁹ the closing part of *surah Baqarah*, and the detailed *suwar*,¹⁰.

He made lawful for him the spoils of war and booty, He aided him with fear [in the hearts of his enemies], He made the earth for prostration and made it purifying, He sent him universally, to the white and the black, the jinn and the humans, and He gave him the *jizyah* (poll tax for non-Muslims), and taking the pagans as captives and releasing them. Then He made it his duty what was not the duty of any of the other prophets, He sent him a sword from heaven without a scabbard, and it was said to him,

Fight in the way of Allah, and you are not obliged for anyone but yourself.” (4:84)¹¹

8. It is reported that Sama‘ah ibn Mahran said that he asked Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) about the saying of Allah, the mighty and magnificent,

‘So, bear with patience as did those who had resolution (Ulu al-‘azm)’ (46:35).

He said, “Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (S).” I said, “How did they become those who had resolution?”

He said, “Because Noah was raised as a prophet with a book and a divine law, and all who came after Noah held to his book, law and his way until Abraham (‘a) came with a scripture and resolution, and he was obliged to leave the book of Noah without disbelieving in it.

Then each of the prophets who came after Abraham held to the law of Abraham and his way and his scripture, until Moses came with the Torah and his law and way and resolution and he was obliged to leave the [previous] scripture. Then each of the prophets who came after Moses (‘a) held to the Torah and his law and way, until the Messiah came with the Gospel and resolution, and he had to leave the law of Moses and his way.

Then each of the prophets who came after the Messiah held to his law and way, until Muhammad (S) came and brought the Qur’an and his law and way, and his permissions (*halal*) are permitted until the Resurrection Day and his prohibitions (*haram*) are prohibited until the Resurrection Day. So, it is they who are those who had resolution.”¹²

9. It is reported that Abu ‘Abd Allah said that when Christians of Najran came to the Apostle of Allah, they arrived at the time of their prayer, so they started to sing with a bell and prayed. Their chiefs were al-Ahtam, al-‘Aqib and al-Sayyid. The companions of the Apostle of Allah said, “O Apostle of Allah! This? In your mosque!?”

He said, “Leave them alone.” When they finished they approached the Apostle of Allah and said, “To what do you invite us?” He said, “To bear witness that there is no god except Allah and that I am the Apostle of Allah and that Jesus is a created servant. He eats drinks and defecates.” They said, “So who is his father?”

Then a revelation descended to the Apostle of Allah, and it said, "Ask them what they say about Adam. Was he a created servant who ate, drank, spoke and married." Then the Prophet asked them this. They answered, "Yes." He asked, "Then who is his father?" They were silent. Then Allah sent down,

Truly the likeness of Jesus in the sight of Allah is as Adam's likeness; He created him of dust, then He said to him, 'Be,' and he was. The Truth is from Your Lord, so do not be of the doubters. And whoever disputes with you after the knowledge that has come to you, say: 'Come now. Let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, our selves and your selves; then let us humbly pray and place the curse of Allah upon the liars. (3:59-61)

Then the Prophet said, "So let us curse one another. If I am truthful the curse will be sent down upon you and if I am lying the curse will be sent down upon me." They said, "You are fair."

Then they agreed upon the mutual cursing. When they returned to their homes, their chiefs, al-Sayyid, al-'Aqib and al-Ahtam, said, "If he would curse us with his people, then we will curse him, for he is not a prophet; but if he would curse us specifically with his household, then we will not curse him, for surely he would not stand up against his household unless he were sincere."

When morning came, they came to the Apostle of Allah, and with him was the Commander of the Faithful, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn, peace be with them. The Christians said, "Who are they?" It was said to them, "That is his uncle's son, and his trustee, his son-in-law, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and that is his daughter, Fatimah, and those are his grandsons, Hasan and Husayn." Then they parted, and they said to the Apostle of Allah (S) "We are satisfied with you, so pardon us from the mutual cursing." Then the Apostle of Allah compromised with them for the *jizyah* and they left.¹³

10. It is reported that when a delegation from Najran came, the Prophet (S) invited their chiefs, al-'Aqib and al-Tayyib, to Islam. They said, "We became Muslims before you." He said, "You lie. Love of the cross and drinking wine prevent you from it." Then he called them to curse one another. They promised him that they would come tomorrow morning.

The Prophet (S) came the next morning while he took the hand of 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and Fatima. They said, "He came with his immediate family. They trust in their religion." So they refrained from cursing each other. The Prophet (S) said, "If they had done it, fire would have been showered on them in the desert."¹⁴

11. It is reported that Abu 'Abd Allah ('a) said, "Between David and Jesus the son of Mary there were four hundred years. The religion of Jesus was *tawhid* (divine unity), *ikhlas* (purity) and what Noah, Abraham and Moses, peace be with them, had bidden. The *Injil* (gospel) was sent down to him.

The pledge that was taken from the other prophets was also taken from Jesus, and it was made law for him in the book to establish prayer with religion, enjoining the good and prohibiting evil, forbidding what was forbidden, and allowing what was allowed. Admonitions and parables were sent down to him in the

Injil, but there was no law of retribution in it nor precepts of retribution (*ahkam al-hudud*), and no obligations for inheritance.

What was sent down to him was an alleviation of what was sent down to Moses in the Torah. This is in the saying of Allah in which Jesus the son of Mary said to the Children of Israel,

[and to make lawful to you certain things that before were forbidden to you] (3:50).

Jesus commanded those with him who were believers and followed him that they believe in the law of the Torah and *Injil*.”¹⁵

12. It is reported that Abu Ja‘far (‘a) said, “...then Allah commissioned Jesus to witness that there is no god but Allah and to recite what was brought to him from Allah, and He made for him a law and a method.

Then the Saturday, which they previously had been commanded to strictly observe, was abrogated, and generally the path and customs that had been practiced that were brought by Moses. Then, one who does not follow the path of Jesus, Allah will cast him into the fire, although what all the prophets brought is not to associate anything with Allah.”¹⁶

13. Ibn ‘Abbas said, “A group of the scholars of Jews came to ‘Umar when he was Caliph of the Muslims... Then ‘Ali said to [the chief of them], ‘Ask.’ He said, ‘Inform me about a group from early times who died and after three hundred–nine years Allah revived them.

What was their story?’ ‘Ali (‘a) started and wanted to read *Sura al-Kahf*. The scholar said, ‘How much we have heard of your Qur’an! If you know them, inform us about their story, names, number, the name of their dog, cave, king and the name of their city.’

‘Ali (‘a) said, ‘There is no power and no strength save in Allah, the High, the Great. O Jewish brother! Muhammad reported to me that there was a city, named Aqsus, on the territory of Rum and it had a pure king. Their king died. So they differed in their words [among each other].

A king, from the kings of Persia, named Daqyanus, heard of their differences and turned with one hundred thousand persons and entered the city of Aqsus. Then he took it as a part of the realm of his country and made a palace in it, one parasang by one parasang. In the palace there was a hall that was a thousand cubits in length by a thousand in width in polished marble.

In that hall there were four thousand golden columns, one thousand golden chandeliers, for each of which was a chain of silver, and lit with scented oil. There were eighty windows in the Eastern wall, and in the Western wall it was the same. When the sun rose, it lit the hall, and there was sunlight in the hall wherever the sun went. In the hall was a golden throne that was forty by eighty cubits whose legs were silver studded with jewels, and on it were small cushions.

On the right of the throne there were eighty chairs of gold decorated with green chrysolite. There the Batariqah sat. At the left there were eighty silver chairs decorated with red rubies, on which sat the Haraqilah. Then the king ascended the throne and placed the throne on his head.'

The Jew started and said, 'What was his crown made of?' Imam 'Ali ('a) said, 'Golden mesh with seven pillars on each of which was a white pearl that shone like a light shining in a dark night. There were fifty youths of the Haraqilah with shirts of red brocade and skirts of green brocade. They wore crowns, bangles and anklets.

They had golden scepters and stood at the head of the king. He took six young man as ministers and stood three of them at his right and three of them at his left.' The Jew said, 'What were their names?'

'Ali ('a) said, 'The names of those who were at his right were Tamlikha, Maksalmina and Mishilina, and the names of those who were at his left were Mirnus, Dirnus and Shadharrius. He consulted them about all his affairs. Every day he held court in the yard of his house with the Batariqah at his right and the Haraqilah at his left. Three boys were at the hand of one of them serving a golden goblet with powdered musk, and at the hand of another was a silver goblet full of rose water.

On the hand of another was a white bird with a red beak. Whenever the king looked at the bird, he would call it, and it would fly until it fell into the goblet of rose water, in which it drenched itself. Then it would fall into the goblet of musk, which would stick to its feathers and wings. Then the king would call it again, and it would fly onto the crown of the king, and what was on its feathers and wings would fall onto the head of the king.

When the king saw this, he would exult and pride himself. Then he would claim Lordship for himself to the exclusion of Allah and call his people to it. So he gave, granted and clothed everyone who obeyed him in this. He killed everyone who did not swear allegiance to him.

So all of them answered him. He held a celebration for them every year. One day, at a feast, the people of Batariqah were at his right and the people of Haraqilah were at his left. Suddenly, a Bitriq came to him and informed him that an army from Persia had overcome him. So he became sad for it as his crown fell from his head.

One of those three who were at his right was called Tamlikha and was a young man. He said to himself, 'If Daqyanus is God, as he thinks, he should not become sad, should not fear, urinate, defecate or sleep.

These deeds are not the deeds of God. Those six young people were in the house of one of them every day and that day were in the house of Tamlikha. He prepared pure food for them. Then he said to them, 'O brothers! There is something in my heart that has kept me from eating, drinking and sleeping.'

They said, 'What is that? O Tamlikha!' He said, 'I thought about this sky for a long time and said to myself, "Who raised its ceiling without any support and without any bond above it? Who placed the sun

and the moon in it as two luminous signs? Who adorned it with stars?” Then I thought about the earth for a long time and I said, “Who spread it over the back of the brimming sea? Who has kept down the earth with mountains so that it does not move all over?”

Then I thought about myself for a long time: “Who brought me out as a foetus from the belly of my mother? Who fed me and who raised me? Verily, there is a creator and a director other than the king Daqyus. He is not anyone but the King of kings and the Almighty of the heavens.”

Then that group fell at his feet, kissed them and said, ‘Allah guided us from going astray by your guidance, so show us the way.’ Tamlikha jumped, sold some dates from his garden for three thousand dirhams and put them in his bag. They rode their horses and went out of the city. When they went three miles, Tamlikha said to them, ‘O brothers! The dwelling of the other world came and the kingdom of this world went. Go down from your horses and walk by foot. Allah may put relief and escape for you.’

They went down from their horses and walked for seven farsangs that day, until their feet bled. A shepherd met them. They said, “O shepherd! Do you have any milk or water?” The shepherd said, “I have whatever you want, but I see that your faces are those of princes. I suspect that you have fled from King Daqyus.” They said, “O shepherd! It is not permitted for us to lie. If we tell you the truth, will we be safe from you?”

Then they told him their story. The shepherd fell at their feet and kissed them, and he said, “O people! In my heart I realized what you realized in your hearts. Give me time to return these beasts to their owners and join you. They waited for him. He returned the beasts and hurried back. The dog followed.’ The Jew stood and said, ‘O ‘Ali! What was the name of the dog, and what was its color?’

‘Ali (‘a) said, ‘There is no power and no strength save in Allah, the High, the Great. The color of the dog was between white and black, more toward black. The name of the dog was Qitmir. When the youths looked at the dog, some of them said, “We are afraid that the barking will reveal us.” So they threw stones at it. Allah, the Exalted, magnificent is His remembrance, made the dog speak: ‘Let me be, so I can protect you from your enemies.’

The shepherd constantly guided them until he brought them up a mountain. Then he brought them down to a cave called al-Wasid. At the entrance to the cave there were springs and fruit trees. They ate the fruit and drank the water, and the night covered them. They took refuge in the cave, and the dog lied down to sleep at the entrance of the cave, and stretched out its paws.

Then Allah, the Exalted, revealed to the angel of death to take their spirits, and for each of the men Allah appointed two angels to turn them from right to left and from left to right. The Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, revealed to the keepers of the sun so it inclined from their cave toward the right and passed them by on the left.¹⁷

When Daqyus, the king, came back from his celebration, he asked about them. He was informed that

they had left the city out of fear. He mounted a horse with eighty thousand others, and they constantly searched for any trace of them, until they ascended and arrived at their cave. When they looked at them, they saw that they were asleep.

The king said, 'If I had wanted to chastise them, I would not have chastised them more than they have chastised themselves. Bring the builders.' They dammed the entrance of the cave with lime and stone. The king said to his companions, 'Tell them to ask their God Who is in heaven to save them and to get them out of here.'

'Ali ('a) continued, "O Jewish brothers! They stayed there for three hundred nine years. When Allah wanted to revive them, he commanded the angel Israfil to breathe the spirit into them. He breathed. Then they stood up from their sleep.

When the sun rose, some of them said, we neglected our worship the God of heaven during the night. They stood and the water of the spring had sunken, and the trees had withered. Some of them said, 'How strange is our affair! Like this sunken spring that had been full, and these trees that have withered in a single night.' They were hungry. They said,

Now send one of you with this coin of yours to the city. Then let him see which of them has purest food; so let him bring you provision from it, and let him behave with gentleness, and by no means make your case known to anyone. (18:19)

Tamlikha said, 'No one but I will go for your needs. O shepherd! Give me your clothes.' So the shepherd gave his clothes to him and he set out for the city. He saw places that he did not know and roads with which he was unfamiliar, until he reached the gate of the city, where there was a green flag on which was written, "There is no god but Allah, and Jesus is the Apostle of Allah."

He looked at the flag and rubbed his eyes and said, "Am I dreaming?" Then he entered the city until he came to the market. He came to a baker and said, "O baker! What is the name of this city of yours?" He said, "Aqsus." He said, "And what is the name of your king?" He said, "Abd al-Rahman."

He said, "Give me food for this money." The baker started in surprise at the weight and size of the dirham.' The Jew stood up and said, 'O 'Ali ('a)! What was the weight of a dirham.' He ('a) said, 'The weight of every dirham was that of ten and two thirds dirhams.' 'Ali ('a) continued, "Then the baker said, 'O you! Have you found a treasure?' Tamlikha said, 'This is the money I made selling dates three days ago, and then I left this city to escape worshipping King Daqyus.'

The baker took his hand and brought him to the king. The king said, 'What is the story of this youth?' The baker said, 'He is a man who found a treasure.' The king said, 'O youth! Do not be afraid, for our prophet, Jesus ('a), commanded us only to take a fifth of what is found of treasure. So, give us a fifth of it and go in peace.' Tamlikha said, 'O king! Look at my affair. I did not find a treasure. I am a man of this city.' The king said, 'You are of its people?'

He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Does anyone here know you?' He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'What is your name?' He said, 'My name is Tamlikha.' He said, 'There is no such name among the names of our times.' The king said, 'Do you have a house in this city?' He said, 'Yes. O king! Mount and come with me.' The king mounted and so did his people with him. Tamlikha brought them to the highest building in the city. He said, 'This is my house.'

He knocked on the door. An elderly man came out, whose eyebrows covered his eyes because of his age, and said, 'What do you want?' The king said, "This young man brought us something strange. He thinks that this is his house." The old man said to him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am Tamlikha son of Qustikin." The old man fell at his feet and kissed them, and said, "He is my grandfather, by the Lord of the Ka'bah. O king! These six are those who escaped out of fear of King Daqyus."

The king came down from his horse and carried Tamlikha on his shoulders, and the people started kissing his hands and feet. He said, "O Tamlikha! What have your companions done?" He informed him of the cave. In those days there was in the city a *muslim* king and a Jewish king. Both mounted with their companions.

When they got close to the cave, Tamlikha said, "I am afraid that my companions will hear the sound of the hooves of the horses and suspect that King Daqyus is coming after them. Give me time to go ahead and inform them." The people waited and Tamlikha went ahead until he entered the cave. When they looked at him and gathered around him and said, "Praise Allah Who delivered you from Daqyus." Tamlikha said, "Leave off this talk of Daqyus."

He said,

How long have you tarried? They said, We have tarried for a day or a part of a day. (18: 19)

Tamlikha said, "You have tarried three hundred nine years, and Daqyus has died, and centuries have passed. Allah raised a prophet called the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary ('a). Allah made him ascend. The king came to our side and the people with him." They said, "O Tamlikha! Do you want to make a trial by us for the people?" Tamlikha said, "So, what do you want?" They said, "Pray to Allah, Whose remembrance is glorious, and we will pray with you that our souls will be taken."

They raised their hands. Then Allah commanded that their souls be taken. Then Allah covered the door of the cave from the people. The two kings came and circled about the door of the cave for seven days without finding it. The *muslim* King said, "They died with our religion. I will build a mosque over the door of the cave."

The Jew said, "No! Rather they died with my religion. I will build a synagogue over the door of the cave." Then they fought. The *muslim* won, and built a mosque over it.' O Jew! Does this agree with what is in your Torah?" The Jew said, "You have not added or subtracted a letter, and I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and His apostle." 18

14. It is reported that Safwan the son of Yahya, the companion of al-Sabiri said: “Abu Qurrah, the companion of al-Jathiliq, asked me to bring him to Al-Ridha’ (‘a). Then I asked him for permission. He said, ‘Bring him to me.’ Then, when he came to him, Abu Qarah kissed the carpet and said, ‘This is our duty, according to our religion, that we must do for the nobles of our time.’

Then Abu Qarah said to him, ‘May Allah help you. What would you say about a sect that claimed something, and another sect bore witness that it was right?’ He answered, ‘The claim is in their favor.’ He said, ‘[What about] another sect that claims something but finds no witnesses for it but themselves?’ He answered, ‘There is nothing in their favor.’ He said, ‘So we, ourselves, claim that Jesus is the spirit of Allah and His word, and the Muslims agree with us about this.

But the Muslims claim that Muhammad is the prophet, while we do not follow them in this. That on which we agree is better than that about which we differ.’ Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said to him, ‘What is your name?’ He answered, ‘Yuhanna.’ He said, ‘O Yuhanna! We believe in Jesus, the spirit of Allah and His word, who believed in Muhammad and gave tidings of him and acknowledged that he was His servant and subject.

So, if Jesus, the spirit of Allah and His word, as you hold, is not one who believed in Muhammad, and gave tidings of him, and who acknowledged that he is the servant of Allah and that He is the Lord, then we are acquitted of him. So, on what do we agree?’ Then he stood up and said to Safwan the son of Yahya, ‘Stand up! We did not get anything out of this meeting.’”¹⁹

15. Ishaq ibn ‘Ammar said: “I asked Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) about what Allah, the blessed and exalted, said,

and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them (the Prophet) that which they did not recognize, they disbelieved in him, (2:89)

He answered, ‘There was a group between Muhammad (S) and Jesus (‘a) that used to threaten disbelievers with a prophet and they used to say, “Verily a prophet will appear and will break your idols and will do with you this and that,” but when the Prophet of Allah appeared, they disbelieved him.’”²⁰

16. Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Nufali said, “When ‘Ali ibn Musa Al-Ridha’ (‘a) came before Ma’mun the later commanded Fadl ibn Sahl to gather the scholars (*ashab al-maqalat*) such as the Catholicos (*Jathaliq*), the Exilarch (*Ra’s al-Jalut*), the chiefs of the Sabeans, Hirbidh al-Akbar, the Zoroastrians, Nastas al-Rumi and the theologians so as to hear his words and their words. Fadl ibn Sahl gathered them and informed Ma’mun of their gathering.

Ma’mun said, ‘Bring them before me.’ He did it. Ma’mun welcomed them; then he said to them, ‘I gathered you here for the good, and I would like you to debate with my cousin from Madinah who has come before me. Come here early tomorrow morning, and let not one of you be remiss.’ They said, ‘We hear and we obey, O Commander of the Faithful! We will be here early tomorrow morning, God willing.’...

The next morning, Fadl ibn Sahl came and said to Al-Ridha' (a), 'May I be your sacrifice. Your cousin is waiting for you. The people have gathered. What is your view about coming before him?' Al-Ridha' (a) said to him, 'You precede me, and I will come to you, God willing.' Then he made ablutions (*wudu*) as though for prayer, and he drank some barley water (*sharbah sawiq*) and we also drank some.

Then he left, and we left with him, until we entered before Ma'mun. All at once it was crowded, and Muhammad ibn Ja'far was among the Talibiyin, the Hashimiyyin and the Quwwad. When Al-Ridha' (a) entered, Ma'mun stood up, and Muhammad ibn Ja'far and all the Hashimiyyin. They waited until Al-Ridha' (a) sat with Ma'mun and ordered them to sit. Then they sat, and Ma'mun faced him and spoke with him for an hour.

Then Ma'mun turned toward the Catholicos and said, 'O Catholicos! This is my cousin, 'Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far, who is a descendent of Fatimah the daughter of our Prophet and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may they both be blessed. So, I would like you to speak with him and debate fairly.'

The Catholicos said, 'O Commander of the Faithful! How can I debate with someone who relies upon a book that I deny and a prophet in whom I have no faith?' Al-Ridha' (a) said to him, 'O Christian! If I debate against you by your Gospel, will you concede?'

The Catholicos said, 'Can I reject what is spoken in the Gospel? Yes, by God, I will concede even if I do not like it.' Al-Ridha' (a) said to him, 'Ask whatever comes to your mind, and understand the answer.' The Catholicos said, 'What do you say about the prophethood of Jesus and his book? Do you deny them?'

Al-Ridha' (a) said, 'I confess the prophethood of Jesus and his book, and the glad tidings to his community to which the Apostles also confessed. And I disbelieve in the prophethood of any Jesus who did not confess the prophethood of Muhammad (S) and in his book and who did not give glad tidings of him to his community.'

The Catholicos said, 'Is it not the case that you consider the judgment of *two* just witnesses decisive?' He said, 'Yes.' The Catholicos said, 'Then bring two witnesses for the prophethood of Muhammad from a nation other than yours who are not denied by the Christians, and ask us for the like from other than our nation.' Al-Ridha' (a) said, 'Now you are being fair, O Christian! Do you not accept from me the earlier just ones who were with the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary?'

The Catholicos said, 'Who is that just one? Tell me his name?' He said, 'What do you say about John Daylami?' He said, 'Very well! You have mentioned the most beloved person to the Messiah.' He (a) said, 'I swear to you, does the Gospel not say that John said, "The Messiah informed me of the religion of Muhammad the Arab, and he gave me glad tidings of him, that he would come after him; then I gave glad tidings of him to the Apostles, so believe in him."?'

The Catholicos said, 'John mentioned this from the Messiah and he gave glad tidings about the

prophethood of a man and about his folk and his trustee. But he did not specify when this would be, and he did not name these people for us so that we could recognize them.'

Al-Ridha' ('a) said, 'If we bring someone who reads the Gospel and he recites for you the mention of Muhammad and his folk and his community, will you believe in him?' He said, 'Surely.' Al-Ridha' ('a) said to Nastas al-Rumi, 'How is your memory of the third scripture of the Gospel?' He said, 'I do not remember it.'

Then he turned to the chief of al-Jalut and said, 'Do you not read the Gospel?' He said, 'Yes, by my soul.' He said, 'Start the third scripture for me. If the mention of Muhammad and his folk and his community is in it, bear witness to it for me, and if it is not there, then do not bear witness for me.' Then he recited the scripture until when he arrived at the mention of the Prophet (S) he stopped.

Then he said, 'O Christian! I ask you by the right of the Messiah and his mother, did you know that I know the Gospel?' He said, 'Yes.' Then he recited for us the mention of Muhammad, his folk and his community.

Then he said, 'What do you say, O Christian? This is the speech of Jesus the son of Mary. If you believe what is said in the Gospel then you believe Moses and Jesus, peace be with them, and when you deny this mention, it is obligatory for you to be killed, because you would be a disbeliever in your Lord, your prophet and your book.'

The Catholicos said, 'I will not deny what is clear for me in the Gospel. I will confess to it.' Al-Ridha' ('a) said, 'Bear witness to what he has confessed.' Then he said, 'O Catholicos! Ask whatever comes to your mind.'

The Catholicos said, 'Inform me about the Apostles of Jesus the son of Mary. How many were they? And how many were the scholars of the Gospel?' Al-Ridha' ('a) said, 'You have come to one who is well informed. As for the Apostles, they were twelve men, and the most noble and knowledgeable of them was Luke.

As for the Christian scholars, they were three men: John the Great of Ajj,²¹ John of Qirqisa and John Daylami of Zjar, and it is he who mentions the Prophet (S), and mentions his folk and his community, and it is he who brought the glad tidings of him to the community of Jesus and to the Children of Israel.'

Then he said to him, 'O Christian! Verily, we do indeed, by Allah, believe in Jesus who believed in Muhammad (S) and we do not resent anything about your Jesus except his weakness and the small amount that he fasted and prayed.' The Catholicos said, 'By Allah! You spoiled your knowledge and weakened your affair.

I imagined nothing less than that you were the most knowledgeable of the folk of Islam.' Al-Ridha' ('a) said, 'How is that?' The Catholicos said, 'Because of what you said about Jesus being weak and having

little fasting and prayer, while Jesus never broke his fast and slept through not a single night; he was constantly fasting and holding vigils.’ Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, ‘So, for whom did he fast and pray?’

Then the Catholicos was dumbfounded and stopped speaking. Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, ‘O Christian! I want to ask you about a problem.’ He said, ‘Ask. If I know anything about it, I will answer you.’ Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, ‘Why did you deny that Jesus raised the dead by the permission of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent?’ The Catholicos said, ‘I denied it because whoever raises the dead and cures the blind and the leper is the lord deserving to be worshipped.’

Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, ‘Elisha also did things like Jesus did: walked on the water, raised the dead and cured the blind and the leper, but his community did not take him to be the Lord, and not one of them worshipped him instead of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent. And the prophet Ezekiel also did things like what Jesus the son of Mary did, for he raised thirty-five thousand men after they had been dead for sixty years.’

Then he turned to the Exilarch and said to him, ‘O Exilarch! Do you find in the Torah what there is about the youths of the Children of Israel who were exiled by Nebuchadnezzar when they revolted in Jerusalem and then he sent them to Babylon? Then Allah, the Exalted, sent one to them and Allah revived them. This is in the Torah. None of you deny this unless he is a disbeliever.’

The Exilarch said, ‘We heard this and know about it.’ He said, ‘You spoke the truth.’ Then he said, ‘O Jew! Consider the scripture of the Torah.’ Then he (‘a) recited some verses of the Torah. The Jew started at his recitation and was surprised. Then he faced the Christian and said, ‘O Christian! Did this take place before Jesus or was Jesus before that?’ He said, ‘No. They were before him.’

Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, ‘Once the Quraysh gathered before the Apostle of Allah (S) and asked him to raise their dead for them. He had ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a) accompany them, then he said to him, ‘Go to al-Jubbanah and call that clan by their names, those about whom they had asked, with your loudest voice: O so-and-so! O so-and-so! And O so-and-so! Muhammad the Apostle of Allah says to you, “Rise, by the permission of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent.”’ Then they rose and wiped the dust from their heads.

The Quraysh received them and asked how they were. Then they told them that Muhammad (S) had been raised as a prophet. They said, ‘We would love to see him and to believe in him.’ He cured the blind, the leper and the insane. The beasts, birds, genies and devils spoke to him, but we did not take him as a Lord instead of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent. We do not deny the virtues of any of them.

So, when you take Jesus as Lord, it becomes allowable to take Elijah and Ezekiel as Lords, because both of them did things like what Jesus did, such as raising the dead, etc... Verily, there was a tribe of the Children of Israel who fled their town because of plague and fear of death, and they were thousands, but in a single hour Allah made them die.²²

The people from that town set up an enclosure for them, and they [the dead] were always in it, until their bones rotted and decayed. Then one of the prophets of the Children of Israel passed them, and wondered about them and the great quantity of their rotted bones.

So, Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, revealed to him, 'Would you like Me to revive them for you and warn them?' He said, 'Yes, O my Lord!' Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, revealed to him that he should call them. He said, 'O you rotted bones! Rise, by the permission of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent!' Then they rose living, all of them. They wiped the dust from their heads.

Then, Abraham, the friend of the Merciful, when he took the birds and cut them up, then put a portion of them on each mountain, then called them and they went toward him with effort.²³ Then there was Moses of 'Imran and seventy of his chosen companions who went with him toward a mountain, and said to him, 'You have seen Allah, glory be to Him, so show Him to us as you saw Him.'²⁴

He said to them, 'Verily, I did not see Him.' They said, 'We will not believe in you until we see Allah openly. Then they were struck by lightning. They burned, to the last of them, and Moses remained alone. He said, 'O my Lord! Verily, I chose seventy men of the Children of Israel. I brought them here, but return alone.

So, how is my people to affirm what I report to them? If you wanted, you could have destroyed them before and me. Would You destroy us because of what the fools among us did?' Then Allah revived them after their death. Everything I have mentioned to you, you cannot deny, for the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, the Qur'an have spoken of it.

If everyone who raises the dead, cures the blind, the leper and the insane is to be taken as a Lord, instead of Allah, then take all of these as Lords. What do say, O Christian?' The Catholicos said, 'It is as you say, and there is no god but Allah.'

Then he ('a) turned to the Exilarch and said, "O Jew! Listen to me, for I want to ask you about ten verses which descended to Moses ibn 'Imran. Do you find this written in the Torah about Muhammad and his community: 'When the last community comes following the rider of the camel, and they glorify the Lord very earnestly with a new glorification in new synagogues.

Then let the Children of Israel seek refuge with them and their king so that their hearts may be assured. Verily, there are swords in their hands by which they obtain revenge against the disbelieving communities in the regions of the earth.'?" Do you find anything like this written in the Torah?"

The Exilarch said, "Yes. We find the like of this." Then he said to the Catholicos, "O Christian! How is your knowledge of the book Sha'ya?" He said, "I know it word for word." Then he said to him, "Are you familiar with these words from it: 'O people! Verily I saw a figure riding a donkey clothed in a garb of light, and I saw the rider of a camel whose radiance is like the radiance of the moon.'?" They both said, "Certainly Sha'ya said this."

Al-Ridha' ('a) said, "O Christian! Do you know the saying of Jesus in the Gospel: 'Verily, I am going to your Lord and my Lord, and the paraclete (*barqalita*) is coming, he who will testify for me truly, even as I testify for him. And he will interpret all things for you, and he is the one who will reveal the sins of the nations, and he will break the pillar of disbelief.'?" The Catholicos said, "You have not mentioned anything from the Gospel that we do not confess."

He said, "Do you find this set in the Gospel, O Catholicos?" He said, "Yes." Al-Ridha' ('a) said, "O Catholicos! Will you not inform me about the first Gospel, when it was lost, with whom was it found? And who compiled this Gospel for you?" He said, "We did not lose it, except for one day, and when we found it, it was like new, and it was brought out by John and Matthew."

Then Al-Ridha' ('a) said to him, "How little is your knowledge of the mystery²⁵ of the Gospel and its scholars! If it is as you imagine, then why are there differences about the Gospel? And verily, there are differences about the Gospel that is in your hands today. If it were the original testament, you would not differ about it. But I will offer you knowledge about it.

Know that when the original Gospel was lost, the Christians gathered around their scholars and said to them, 'Jesus the son of Mary was killed, the Gospel has been lost, and you are scholars, so what is in your possession?' Luke and Mark said to them, 'Verily, the Gospel is within our breasts, and we will bring it out scripture by scripture for everyone, so do not worry about it. Do not empty the synagogues.

So, we will soon recite for every one of you scripture by scripture until it is all collected.' Luke, Mark, John and Matthew sat down and compiled this Gospel for you after you had lost the original Gospel. These four persons were students of the first students. Did you know this?"

The Catholicos said, "I did not know this, but now I know it. The extent of your knowledge of the Gospel has become clear to me. I heard something to the truth of which my heart testifies, so I want to increase my understanding."

Al-Ridha' ('a) said to him, "What do you think about that to which they all testify?" He said, "It is allowed; they are the scholars of the Gospel. Everything to which they testify is true." Al-Ridha' ('a) said to Ma'mun and to his folk and others with him present, "Bear witness to this." They said, "We bear witness."

Then he said to the Catholicos, "By the truth of the son and his mother, do you know that Matthew says, 'Verily the Messiah is the son of David son of Abraham son of Isaac son of Jacob son of Yahuda son of Hadrun,' and that Mark, regarding the lineage of Jesus the son of Mary says, 'Verily, he is the word of Allah, He made it incarnate in the body of a man; so it became man,' and that Luke says, 'Verily, Jesus the son of Mary and his mother were two persons of flesh and blood, and the holy spirit entered into them,' and then you say that Jesus testifies about himself, 'In truth I say to you, O company of disciples, verily, no one ascends to heaven unless he descends from it, except the rider of the camel, the seal of the prophets. Verily, he ascends to heaven and then descends from it.'? What do you say about this

saying?”

The Catholicos said, “That is the saying of Jesus; we do not deny it.” Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “So, what do you say about the testimony of Luke, Mark and Matthew about Jesus and what they have attributed to him?” The Catholicos said, “They lied about Jesus.” Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “O people! Did he not just say that they were pure and testify that they were scholars of the Gospel, and that their word is the truth?”

The Catholicos said, “O scholar of the Muslims! I would like you to pardon me for this about them.” Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “We have done it. Ask, O Christian, whatever comes to your mind!”

The Catholicos said, “Let someone other than me ask you. Nay! By the truth of the Messiah! I never imagined that a scholar like you was among the Muslims.” Then Al-Ridha’ (‘a) turned to the Exilarch and said to him, “Will you question me or shall I question you?”

He said, “I would question you, and I will not accept any argument from you unless it is from the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms of David or from what is in the scriptures of Abraham and Moses.”

Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “Do not accept any argument from me unless it is spoken of in the Torah by the tongue of Moses ibn ‘Imran, the Gospel by the tongue of Jesus the son of Mary or the Psalms by the tongue of David.”

The Exilarch said, “How do you prove that Muhammad was a prophet?” Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “Moses ibn ‘Imran, Jesus the son of Mary and David the Steward of Allah, the mighty and magnificent, on earth bore witness to it.” So he said to him, “Prove the saying of Moses ibn ‘Imran.”

Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “Do you know, O Jew, that Moses ibn ‘Imran left a will for the Children of Israel in which he said to them, ‘Verily, there will soon come to you a prophet from among your brethren, so affirm him and listen to him.’ Do you know any brethren of the Children of Israel other than the offspring of Isma‘il, if you know of the kinship of Israel and Isma‘il, and the relation between them from Abraham?”

The Exilarch said, “That is the saying of Moses; we do not deny it.” Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said to him, “Has there come to you from the brethren of the Children of Israel any prophet other than Muhammad?” He said, “No.” Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “Is this not correct according to you?”

He said, “Yes, but I would like you to show the correctness of this matter from the Torah.” Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said to him, “Do you deny that the Torah says to you, ‘Light came from Mount Sinai, and that it radiates to us from Mount Sa‘ir, and it has appeared to us from Mount Faran.’?” The Exilarch said, “I know these words, but I do not know the interpretation of them.”

Al-Ridha’ (‘a) said, “I will inform you of it. As for its saying, ‘Light came from Mount Sinai,’ that is the revelation of Allah, the blessed and exalted, which He sent down to Moses at Mount Sinai; as for His saying, ‘and that it radiates to us from Mount Sa‘ir,’ it is the mountain at which Allah, the mighty and magnificent, sent revelation to Jesus the son of Mary when he was on it; and as for His saying, ‘and it

has appeared to us from Mount Faran,⁷ this is one of the mountains of Mecca which is one day's journey from Mecca.

The prophet Sha'ya says in the Torah, what you and your companions also say, 'I saw two riders for whom the earth became illuminated, one of them on a donkey and the other on a camel.' Who is the rider on the donkey and who is the rider of the camel?" The Exilarch said, "I do not know those two, so inform me of them." He ('a) said, "The rider of the donkey is Jesus, and the rider of the camel is Muhammad. Do you deny that this is from the Torah?" He said, "No, I do not deny it."

Then Al-Ridha' ('a) said, "Do you know the prophet Habakkuk?" He said, "Yes. I know of him." He ('a) said, "He said, and this is narrated in your book, 'Allah brought down speech on Mount Faran, and the heavens were filled with the glorification of Muhammad and his community. His horse carries him over water as it carries him over land."

He will bring a new book to us after the ruin of the holy house [the temple in Jerusalem].⁷ What is meant by this book is the Qur'an. Do you know this and believe in it?" The Exilarch said, "Habakkuk the prophet has said this and we do not deny what he said." Al-Ridha' ('a) said, "In his Psalms, David said, and you recite it, 'O God! Send one to revive the tradition after it has languished.'⁷ Do you know a prophet other than Muhammad who has revived the tradition after it languished?"

The Exilarch said, "This is the saying of David. We know it and do not deny it, however, what is meant by this is Jesus, and his day was the period of languishing." Al-Ridha' ('a) said to him, "You are ignorant. Verily, Jesus did not oppose the tradition, but he was in agreement with the tradition of the Torah, until Allah raised him to Himself."

It is written in the Gospel, 'Verily, the son of the good woman will leave, and the paraclete will come after him, and he will lighten the burden, and he will interpret everything for you, and he will bear witness for me as I bear witness for him. I have brought parables for you, and he will bring for you exegesis.'⁷ Do you believe in this from the Gospel?" He said, "Yes. I do not deny it."

Al-Ridha' ('a) said to him, "O Exilarch (*Ra's al-Jalut*)! I ask you about your prophet Moses ibn 'Imran." He said, "Ask!" He ('a) said, "What proof do you have that Moses was a prophet?" The Jew said, "Verily, he brought that which had not been brought by any prophet before him."

He said to him, "Like what?" He said, "Like the splitting of the sea, changing his staff into [a serpent] running, hitting the rock so that fountains sprung from the cleft, bringing out his hand white for the observers, and signs for the like of which people have no power."

Al-Ridha' ('a) said to him, "You spoke truly that the proof of his being a prophet was that he brought that for the like of which people have no power. Is it not the case that it becomes obligatory for you to affirm whoever claims to be a prophet then brings the like of that for which people have no power?" He said, "No. Because there was no one like Moses in station before his Lord, and nearness to Him; and it is not

obligatory for us to admit the prophethood of one who claims it unless he bring signs like what he brought.”

Al-Ridha' (‘a) said, “So, how do you admit that there were prophets prior to Moses, while they did not split the sea, and did not cleft the rock so that twelve fountains sprung from it, and they did not bring out their hands as Moses brought his hand out white, and they did not change staves into running serpents.” The Jew said to him, “I will indeed inform you that when one brings a sign the like of which people have no power to bring, even if they are not what Moses brought or are other than what he brought, it becomes obligatory to affirm him.”

Al-Ridha' (‘a) said, “O Exilarch (*Ra's al-Jalut*)! So, what prevents you from admitting [to the prophethood of] Jesus the son of Mary, while he revived the dead, cured the blind and the leper, and created of clay what had the form of birds, then blew into them and they became birds by the permission of Allah?” The Exilarch said, “It is said that he did this, but we did not witness it.”

Al-Ridha' (‘a) said, “Tell me, did you witness the signs that Moses brought? Is it not the case that narrations from the trusted companions of Moses conveyed that he did these things?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “Then likewise, successively confirmed reports (*akhbar mutawattir*) have come to you about what Jesus the son of Mary did. So how is it that you affirm Moses but you do not affirm Jesus?” He gave no answer.

Al-Ridha' (‘a) said, “And likewise the affair of Muhammad (S) and what he brought, and the affair of every prophet commissioned by Allah. Among the signs Muhammad (S) had was that he was an orphan, poor, a shepherd and a wage laborer who did not study any book and who was not taught by any teacher, yet brought the Qur'an in which there are the stories of the prophets and reports of them letter by letter, and reports of those who have gone before, and the peoples who will remain until the day of resurrection.

He reported about their secrets and what they had done in their houses, and he brought unaccountably many signs.” The Exilarch said, “According to us, neither the reports about Jesus nor the reports about Muhammad are correct, and it is not permitted for us to affirm these two by what is incorrect.”

Al-Ridha' (‘a) said, “So, the witnesses who testified for Jesus and Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be with them both, are not valid?” He gave no answer.²⁶

1. There are two kinds of zakah or poor-rate. One is based upon a person's wealth, and is not imposed upon the poor. The other is given at the end of Ramadan by believers who are not so poor that they are eligible to receive alms, regardless of wealth.

2. Tafsir Al-Qummi, 2, 50

3. 'Awali al-La'ali, 1, 387

4. 'Awali al-La'ali, 1, 446

5. 'Ilal al-Shara'i, 1, 122
6. Tafsir al-Imam al-'Askari, 530–535, 323
7. Tafsir al-Imam al-'Askari, 589
8. See (7: 157).
9. That is, the opening surah of the Qur'an.
10. The detailed suras, mufadhhal, are considered by some to be those from surah Muhammad to the end, but there are other opinions among scholars as to which suras are to be included under this heading.
11. Bihar, 16, 330, 26
12. Kafi, 2, 17, 2
13. Bihar, 21, 340, 5
14. Bihar, 21, 341, 6
15. Bihar, 14, 234, 4
16. Kafi, 2, 29
17. See Qur'an 18: 17
18. Bihar, 14, 411– 419, 1
19. Bihar, 10, 30,341
20. Kafi, 8, 310, 482
21. Some say that what is meant here is Akh in Basra.
22. See Qur'an, (2:243).
23. See Qur'an (2:260).
24. See Qur'an, (7: 155).
25. In another text, instead of mystery (sirr) there is traditions (sunan).
26. Bihar, 10, 299–310, 1

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