



Imam al-Rida's approach to dialogue with followers of other religions - an analytical study

منهج الإمام الرضا في الحوار مع أتباع الديانات الأخرى – دراسة تحليلية

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Abstract:

In light of the increasing religious and cultural interactions that the world is witnessing, sometimes accompanied by misunderstandings and conflicts, the need arises to understand the methods of effective dialogue and to draw inspiration from historical experiences, including the method of Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) in his dialogue with various religions. We face a dearth of in-depth analytical studies of his methodology and intellectual and ethical foundations, which defines the research problem as the need for a comprehensive, systematic understanding of his dialogues in order to extract principles that enrich contemporary dialogue efforts.

The importance of this research lies in presenting an authentic historical model of interfaith dialogue in Islamic civilization. This model can provide valuable insights for thinkers, researchers, and decision-makers concerned with promoting understanding and peaceful coexistence in our world today, and contribute to enriching the literature on interfaith dialogue from an Islamic perspective.

The research mainly aims to analyze the approach of Imam Ali bin Musa al-Rida (peace be upon him) in dialogue with followers of other religions., through identifying and documenting historical texts that include dialogues between Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and representatives of other religions., and revealing the intellectual and cognitive foundations upon which Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) relied in his dialogue, such as his view of religious differences and his methods of reasoning and persuasion.

The research will be based primarily on the analytical approach, as historical texts that include dialogues between Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and followers of other religions will be analyzed, and the characteristics and components of his approach to dialogue will be deduced.

The nature of the research required dividing it into an introduction and three chapters. The introduction dealt with the concept of dialogue, its elements and etiquette. The first chapter: Imam al-Rida's dialogue with the Jew. The second chapter: Imam al-Rida's dialogue with the Christian. The third chapter: Imam al-Rida's dialogue with other religions. Then there was a conclusion that included the most important results reached by the research.

Keywords: Methodology - Dialogue - Imam Reza - Other Religions - An Analytical Study



the introduction :

In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and prayers and peace be upon the most honorable of God's creation, Muhammad, and upon his pure and immaculate family. And now:

Dialogue is a discussion between two people or two groups about a specific topic, each with their own point of view. The goal is to reach the truth, or as much agreement as possible on the points of view, far from hostility or fanaticism, in a way that relies on science and reason, with both parties being prepared to accept the truth, even if it is revealed by the other party.

Dialogue must have a goal, that is, the intended purpose sought by the dialogue participants and towards which they move. In its absence, dialogue turns into an intellectual luxury or a pointless vulgarity. The goals of dialogue range from presenting visions with the aim of reaching common understandings, correcting an opinion, revealing ambiguity surrounding an issue, or bringing viewpoints closer together.

The religions embraced by members of human society, each according to its own doctrinal system, represent a clear manifestation of the prevailing differences. Therefore, interfaith dialogue acquires great importance, largely due to its reliance on mitigating the intensity of conflicts resulting from differences and achieving peace and harmony, based on the fact that dialogue is a civilized expression and an expression of the intellectual state in any society, with which thought deepens,



culture shines, and manifestations of disagreement and intersectionality in opinions and convictions disappear.

The era of Imam Reza (peace be upon him) was characterized by undirected intellectual openness, and a climate of intellectual cross-pollination prevailed, characterized by the prevalence of research circles and debate councils in which various personalities from different religions and sects attracted the dialogue parties. Imam Reza (peace be upon him) was not isolated from the intellectual and scientific movement taking place around him, as he entered into many dialogues and discussions with a spirit that overflowed with tolerance, humility, and knowledge. The personality of the Imam (peace be upon him) emerged as a skilled debater who gained the strongest presence in dialogue and debate forums and possessed unparalleled competence in terms of eloquence and establishing arguments. The reader of these texts senses the glow of the Imam's majesty shining in the folds of those dialogues, as the dialogue flowed from him (peace be upon him) calmly like a breeze, caressing the ears and touching the conscience, so that hearts yearned for him before ears. The personality of the Imam combined all the virtues and possessed all the perfections that qualified him to occupy the seat of dialogue, from great character, good manners, argumentation in the best way, and abundant knowledge that encompassed what his debaters had. He agreed to it and added to that his open-mindedness, patience, and gentleness in questioning and answering, based on a mentality that kept in mind the Almighty's saying: And argue with them in a way that is best..

He (peace be upon him) would discuss each party with his book, evidence and language. The Imam would proceed with rapid steps and begin to establish their



premises and establish their supplications after he had identified the problems arising from each religion or sect whose representative was present in that council. Then he would penetrate to the heart of those problems, present them in depth and address them objectively, free of any purpose other than establishing the truth and raising its word, establishing the opposite of those problems, correcting an opinion or correcting an idea in light of what he had decided on as the true method. With this persevering spirit and this level of harmonious communicative performance, the Imam (peace be upon him) was able to correct the erroneous concepts, ward off doubts and dispel many of the question marks that were on the minds of his interlocutors.

Introduction: The concept of dialogue, its elements and etiquette:

First, the dialoguelanguage :From the word “muhawara” and “muhawara” means: reviewing logic, speech and conversation. This is derived from “hawar” which means to return, and they debated and reviewed the speech among themselves.

And dialogueResponse: derived from the word “hawr” which means to return from something to something.).

Dialogue is a termIt is:) that two or more parties discuss a topic or issue by way of question and answer, provided that the topic or goal is unified. They exchange discussion about a specific matter, and they may reach a conclusion, or one of them may not convince the other, but the listener learns the lesson and takes a position for himself. It is a type of high etiquette and one of its styles.)

It is ((speechThe exchange between two parties in a manner that does not necessarily mean hostility.)



Second: Dialogue elements:

Dialogue has a set of elements without which it cannot be validated, and they are:

1- Parties to the dialogue: that is, the people involved in the dialogue process as a communicative act. These people are at least two, and either one of them is the questioner or the one expressing the opinion and the other is the one responding or listening to that opinion or that idea, or they exchange these roles alternately or according to the progress of the dialogue process.

2- The topic of the dialogue: that is, the matter around which the dialogue revolves. The parties involved in the dialogue must diagnose the topic and agree on it before embarking on the discussion and commit to the unity of the topic and maintain it as much as possible within the framework of this unity. The parties concerned with the dialogue must be fully informed and aware of the topic and the idea from which they proceed to prove or deny it, because ignorance of it and its details makes the dialogue confused and disjointed, not based on clear joints, and does not proceed on a path with known landmarks, and perhaps becomes a stumbling block in unknowns that are not known until the mysterious discussion ends with it.

3- The subject of the dialogue: This refers to the information, assumptions, visions and ideas included under the subject of the dialogue, which constitute the alphabet of the dialogue.

4- The dialogue style: that is, the prevailing climate in the dialogue process and its characteristics of methodology, objectivity and neutrality, in addition to the pace at which the dialogue proceeds in terms of smoothness, flow, intensity, severity, looseness and discipline. There are two styles in dialogue, debate and discussion:



One of them is the scientific and ethical method, which aims to reveal proven facts and guide the other party, in order to protect them from falling into misguidance. This is what the Imams of truth and guidance from the pure family of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon them, sought.

The second: the dialectical approach, which relies on empty debate, sophistry, circumlocution, and argumentation aimed at gaining victory through falsehood. This approach is rejected by Islam, just as it was rejected by previous religions. God Almighty says, denouncing it: And when the son of Mary was cited as an example, at once your people turned away from him and said, "Are our gods better, or is he?" They do not compare him to you except to argue. Indeed, they are a quarrelsome people. ()

5- The goal of the dialogue: meaning the intended goal of the dialogue that the interlocutors seek and move towards. In its absence, the dialogue turns into an intellectual luxury or idle talk and futility that is pointless. The goals of the dialogue range between presenting visions with the aim of reaching common understandings or correcting an opinion, revealing ambiguity surrounding an issue, or bringing viewpoints closer together.)

Third: Dialogue etiquette:

Dialogue has etiquette and rules that the negotiating parties must adhere to, including:

1- Good faith and integrity of purpose: meaning detachment from seeking the truth and avoiding the intention of hypocrisy and reputation, overcoming the other party, excelling over others, and winning the admiration of the listeners.



2- The parties involved in the dialogue must be fair and just, not refuse to accept the truth regardless of its source, and not hold an idea accountable for the sin of its speaker, and allow each party the opportunity to raise objections and express opinions without confiscation or marginalization.

3- Patience and forbearance: The interlocutor must be forbearing and patient, not getting angry for the most trivial reason, not looking at the slightest matter, and not being provoked by the smallest word. He must respond to harsh words with gentleness and harshness with kindness.

4- Listening well to the other party and giving him his due attention to what he says.

Fourth: Imam al-Rida in his dialogue with religions

1- The personality of Imam al-Rida as an interlocutor:

Any reading, however superficial or casual, of the texts of the dialogues and debates conducted by Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) and transmitted in the books of biographies and histories is sufficient to highlight the personality of the Imam (peace be upon him) as a skilled debater who had the strongest presence in the forums of debate and discussion and possessed unparalleled competence in terms of eloquence and establishing arguments. The reader of these texts senses the glow of the Imam's majesty shining in the folds of those dialogues and he filled the hearts of his interlocutors. He took hold of his ears, and the dialogue flowed from him, peace be upon him, calmly like a breeze, caressing the ears and touching the conscience, so that hearts yearned for him before ears. The personality of the Imam combined all the virtues and possessed all the perfections that qualified him to occupy the seat of dialogue, from great character, beautiful manners,



argumentation in the best way, and abundant knowledge that encompassed what my debaters had. He agreed to it and added to that a broad-mindedness, patience, and gentleness in questioning and answering, based on a mentality that kept in mind the Almighty's saying: {And argue with them in a way that is best.}.

2- Imam al-Rida's (peace be upon him) approach in his dialogue with representatives of religions:

Anyone who follows the dialogues of Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) will notice a clear and distinguished style with a scientific methodology and an ethical method that relies on gentleness and love as a basis for dialogue and debate, out of the belief that dialogue is a means of reaching and revealing the truth. The dialogue under discussion was intended to take a specific path and lead to a result that was imagined or sought by those who prepared the atmosphere for such a dialogue. However, the Imam was able, with his great wisdom, sound mind, and ability to control the debate, in addition to his scientific superiority in everything his debaters were involved in, to transform the course of the debate into a calm and sober dialogue that sought to lead the other party to the truth, prove it to him, and attempt to convince him of it, far from obstinacy, stubbornness, and fanaticism. The Imam was moving with rapid steps towards that desired goal and began to establish its premises and establish its call after identifying the problems arising from each religion or sect whose representative was present in that council. Then he would penetrate to the heart of those problems, present them in depth and address them objectively, free from any purpose other than establishing the truth and raising its word, establishing the opposite of those problems, correcting an opinion or correcting an idea in light of what he had decided on as the true approach. With this



persevering spirit and this level of harmonious communicative performance, the Imam (peace be upon him) was able to correct concepts, ward off doubts and dispel many of the question marks that were on the minds of his interlocutors.

The first topic

Imam Reza's dialogue with the Jew

Imam al-Rida had a dialogue with the leader of the Jewish community, Ra's al-Jalut. The discussion covered many topics, the most important of which were:

First: Proof of the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers:

The Jew asked Imam al-Rida about proving the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family) and asked him to prove it to him from the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, or from what is in the scrolls of Abraham and Moses. The Imam agreed to that and said to him, "Do not accept an argument from me except what the Torah said on the tongue of Moses, the Gospel on the tongue of Jesus, son of Mary, and the Psalms on the tongue of David." The head of the diaspora said, "From where do you prove the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family)?")

Then the Imam (peace be upon him) said to him: "Do you know, O Jew, that Moses advised the Children of Israel, saying to them: 'A prophet will come to you from among your brothers in him, so believe him, and listen to him.' Do you know that the Children of Israel have brothers other than the son of Ishmael? If you know the kinship of Israel to Ishmael and the reason between them from Abraham (peace be upon him)?" The head of the Diaspora said: "This is what Moses said, so we will not reject it." Then al-Rida (peace be upon him) said to him: "Has a prophet come to you



from among the brothers of the Children of Israel other than Muhammad (peace be upon him)?” He said: “No.”)

Similar to what the Imam said was mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy, in the words of Moses, peace be upon him: “He said: The Lord said to me: They have spoken well. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I command him.)

These phrases indicate, firstly, that the promised prophet would not be from the Children of Israel, but rather from their brothers. Secondly, that he would not be of a lower rank than Moses, peace be upon him. Thirdly, that he would be the bearer of a new law like Moses, peace be upon him. These signs and attributes were not true of any of the prophets who came after him.

Moses (peace be upon him), other than Muhammad ibn Abdullah (may Allah’s prayers and peace be upon him and his family), because they (peace be upon them) were all from the children of Israel until Jesus (peace be upon him), and their status was not like that of Moses (peace be upon him), as it is stated in the Torah: “And there did not arise after that a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” This phrase, “And there did not arise after that...” negates the possibility that what is meant by the brothers in the previous phrase is the children of Israel themselves, because there would be a contradiction between them, as is clear.)

In addition to that, there is a very important point in the above dialogue, which is that the head of the Diaspora acknowledged that no prophet from the brothers of



the Children of Israel had come to them, and that this was a matter that had been confirmed by them. Thus, he undoubtedly negates the Jews' recognition of the prophethood of Jesus. So, think about it!!

Hence, it becomes clear that the awaited prophet, according to this prophecy, will be from the cousins of the Israelites, i.e. the sons of Esau or the sons of Ishmael, and he is the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and his family and grant them peace, who is similar to Moses, peace be upon him.

After the head of the diaspora admitted that no prophet had come to them from among the brothers of the Children of Israel, he asked the Imam to correct it from the Torah. Al-Rida (peace be upon him) said to him: Do you deny that the Torah says to you: ((The light came from before Mount Sinai and shone for us from Mount Seir and appeared to us from Mount Paran?)))

The Imam aims with this statement at what Moses mentioned in his last commandments in the Book of Deuteronomy: (And he said: The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and came with ten thousand holy ones; and at His right hand was a fiery law for them.)

The head of the Diaspora replied that he knew these words but did not know their interpretation. The Imam (peace be upon him) then began to reveal their meanings, saying: His coming from Sinai meant giving the Torah to Moses (peace be upon him), his rising from Seir meant giving the Gospel to Christ (peace be upon him), and his revelation from Mount Paran meant sending down the Qur'an to Muhammad (may God bless him and his family and grant them peace).



Hagar is a Hebrew word that was Arabized, and it is one of the names of Mecca mentioned in the Torah, which mentioned in its books that Hagar was a maid of Sarah, then she became a wife to Abraham to bear offspring for him, and Sarah thought that Hagar's mission was to bear offspring while remaining a maid whom she could exploit as she wished, and Hagar gave birth to a son for Abraham, and this son was the joy of her eyes and the delight of her heart, but her mistress tried to humiliate her, so she sought refuge with her husband Abraham, but he left her to her mistress, saying to her: "Behold, your maid." She was greatly hurt and harmed until she fled, hoping to escape from what had befallen her, and the angel of the Lord met her on the road and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Hold him tight, for I will make him a great nation." And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she filled the skin and gave the boy drink, and God was with the boy, and he grew and lived in the wilderness of Paran, and he became an archer, and his mother chose a wife for him from the land of Egypt.)

Then the Imam mentions the saying of Isaiah, "And the Prophet Isaiah, peace be upon him, said, 'In what you and your companions say in the Torah, I saw two riders for whom the earth was illuminated, one of them on a donkey, and the other on a camel. So who is riding the donkey and who is riding the camel? ... Either the one riding the donkey is Jesus, peace be upon him, or the one riding the camel is Muhammad, may God bless him and his family and grant them peace. Do you deny this from the Torah?'")

The text is mentioned in the Book of Isaiah: ((He saidThe lord said to me, "Go, appoint a watchman, so that he may report what he sees." And he saw a group of riders, a group of horsemen, a group of donkeys, a group of camels. So he listened



attentively, and cried out like a lion, “Lord, I am always on watch by day, and I am on watch by night. And behold, a group of men, a group of horsemen.” Then he answered and said, “Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen, and all the carved images of her gods he has broken to the ground.)) ().

RidersThe donkey: a reference to the prophecy of Jesus, peace be upon him, as stated in Matthew ((SayTo the daughter of Zion: Behold, your King comes to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. *So the disciples went and did as Jesus had commanded them.* They brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their garments on them, and he sat on them.))((()And in John: ((And he foundJesus took a donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, Daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.”)

As for the passengerThe camel: He is the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and his family and grant them peace. He is the one riding the “Al-Qaswa” camel, at the hands of whose blessed nation all the idols of Iraq (Babylon) were destroyed, and no other nation before it had been able to remove or destroy them... So the good news is for the Prophet of Islam and cannot be attributed to another prophet.)

In this way, the Christian Negus, King of Abyssinia, interpreted this text and cited it as evidence when the Messenger, may God bless him and his family and grant them peace, sent him a letter inviting him to Islam. He said: “I bear witness to God that he is the prophet whom the People of the Book are waiting for, and the good news of Moses about the one riding a donkey is like the good news of Jesus about the one riding a camel, and what is seen is not more eloquent than what is heard.”)

Second: The prophecy of Moses (peace be upon him):



The Jews believed in the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and his law (the Torah). As for the prophets who came after him, God did not send them with a specific law, but rather they were sent for matters specific to the people of their time. They were teachers, instructors, and guides, guiding to goodness, and they were not legislators.)

Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) discussed with the Jew the prophethood of Moses and their belief in his prophethood alone without any other prophets. He (peace be upon him) said, "O head of the Diaspora, I ask you about your prophet Moses, son of Imran (peace be upon him)." He said, "Ask." He said, "What is the proof that Moses' prophethood was proven?" The Jew said, "He came with something that no prophet before him came with." The Imam said to him, "Like what?" He said, "Like splitting the sea, turning the staff into a slithering snake, striking the rock and springs gushed forth from it, and bringing out his hand white for the onlookers, and his signs are the likes of which creation cannot be compared." Al-Rida (peace be upon him) said to him, "You have spoken the truth in that his proof of his prophethood was that he came with something the likes of which creation cannot be compared. Is it not obligatory for you to believe everyone who claims to be a prophet, then comes with something the likes of which creation cannot be compared? He said, "No, because Moses had no equal, due to his position with his Lord and his closeness to Him. We are not obligated to acknowledge the prophethood of someone who claims it until he comes with information like what he came with." Al-Rida said to him, "What..." What prevents you from acknowledging Jesus, son of Mary, while he used to bring the dead back to life, heal the blind and the lepers, and create from clay the likeness of a bird, then breathe



into it and it becomes a bird by Allah's permission? The head of the Exile said, "It is said that he did that, but we did not witness it." The Imam (peace be upon him) said, "Have you seen the miracles that Moses brought? Didn't the reports come from the trustworthy companions of Moses that he did that?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Likewise, the reports that have been transmitted to you also about what Jesus (peace be upon him) did, so how can you believe in Moses and not believe in Jesus? And so is the case with the Prophet Muhammad and every prophet sent by Allah.")

The biblical text indicated the content of the Jews' view of the prophecy of Moses: "There has not yet arisen a prophet among the children of Israel like Moses, whom the Lord spoke to face to face and appointed to perform all the signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh and all his servants.").

They see that the prophethood of Moses, peace be upon him, is different from the prophethood of the prophets who came before him and those who followed him, citing what is stated in the Book of Exodus. The Lord said to Moses, "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty. But I did not reveal my name, Jehovah, to them.").

The Imam (peace be upon him) argued with him that both matters were proven by hearing from trustworthy people, and neither of them was proven by hearing from the other party by observation, so that one of them would be preferred over the other. So what prompted him to believe in one of them and not the other? And on what did he base his acceptance of the miracles of Moses with submission, even though he did not witness any of them, and his rejection of the miracles of others, even though they were proven through the same evidence that proved the miracles of Moses, which is the reports of trustworthy people! So he proved the prophethood



of Moses and his performance of miracles, while he denied the prophethood of others and their performance of miracles!

The second topic

Imam Reza's dialogue with the Christian

Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) discussed with the Catholicos, who was a Christian scholar, the most important of which were:

First: The divinity of Jesus (peace be upon him):

One of the most sensitive doctrinal issues is the divinity of Christ. Christianity believes that Christ is an incarnate God and not a messenger from God, and they see this as a sign of perfect faith in Him and love for Him.

Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) discussed with the Catholicos and said to him: "O Christian, by God, we believe in Jesus, in whom Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) believed, and we do not blame your Jesus for anything except his weakness and the paucity of his fasting and prayer." The Catholicos said: "By God, you have corrupted your knowledge and weakened your command. I only thought that you were the most knowledgeable of the people of Islam." Al-Rida (peace be upon him) said: "How is that?" The Catholicos said: "From your saying that Jesus was weak, fasted little, and prayed little. Jesus never broke his fast, nor did he sleep at night, and he continued to fast throughout his life and stand in prayer at night." Al-Rida (peace be upon him) said: "For whom did he fast and pray?" He said: "So the Catholicos was silent and stopped.")



The Imam (peace be upon him) wanted to prove to the Catholicos that Jesus was nothing but a servant of God, but he (peace be upon him) realized that if he said that explicitly, the Catholicos would have thought it too much of him and would have been stubborn and obstinate. However, the Imam came to him from where he did not expect and extracted from him the definitive argument that Jesus was a servant of God. It is self-evident that servitude cannot be achieved except by two parties, a servant and a worshipped one, and it is impossible for both parties to come together in one person. The Imam drew the Catholicos' attention with the utmost skill and tact to the requirements of servitude, which is represented by performing the right of the worshipped one in worship and submission, which the Catholicos acknowledged that Jesus was absorbed in to the furthest limits and rose up against the Imam's doubt for the sake of argument. Consequently, the Imam proved Christ's servitude to God by proving its requirements, because in proving the necessary there is proof of the necessary, and this argument itself is sufficient to invalidate Jesus's divinity, because whoever is a servant cannot be a lord. Servitude is pure poverty, and divinity is absolute wealth. The worship of Jesus (peace be upon him) and his prayer are something that Christians do not deny, as they are It is mentioned in their books and in many places. It was narrated that: ((He fell into distress, so he exerted himself in prayer, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground)))If he was a god, why all this stress in humiliation and slavery? And to whom did he pray, kneel and submit? Was he worshipping himself? Or was he calling others to worship him? It is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew that he, peace be upon him, was teaching his disciples and saying: (But you, when you pray, go into your room and close the door and pray to your Father whom no



eye sees; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.))The text is clear that prayer is for the One Whom no eye can see, for God, Lord of the Worlds.

Then the Imam (peace be upon him) asked him about the evidence that the Catholicos used to prove the divinity of Christ (peace be upon him). He (peace be upon him) said to him: O Christian, I ask you about a matter. He said: If I had knowledge of it, I would answer you. Al-Rida (peace be upon him) said: What do you deny that Jesus (peace be upon him) raised the dead with the permission of God (the Almighty and Majestic)? The Catholicos said: I denied that because the one who raises the dead and heals the blind and the leper is a lord who deserves to be worshipped.

Christians imagine that the miracles performed by Jesus were performed independently, and that the One who performs miracles beyond the capacity and capabilities of humans is a God who deserves to be worshipped. This is a flawed notion because everything that happened at the hands of Jesus (peace be upon him) or any other prophet was due to divine command. Therefore, when most of them (peace be upon them) were asked to perform miracles, they responded by saying that miracles are with God, as the Quran states.

1- Al-Ridha (peace be upon him) said: "Elisha did the same as Jesus (peace be upon him) did. He walked on water, brought the dead back to life, and healed the blind and the lepers. His nation did not take him as a god, and no one worshipped him other than God Almighty."

The biblical text indicated that the Prophet Elisha raised the dead: "...And Elisha entered the house, and behold, the child was dead, and lying on his bed. So he went



in and shut the door over both of them, and prayed to the Lord. Then he went up and lay over the child, and put his mouth to his mouth, and his eyes to his eyes, and his hands to his hands, and stretched himself out on him; and the child's flesh was warm. Then he went again and walked about in the house." Here and there, and he went up and stretched himself out on him, and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. *So he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." And he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son." *So she came and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground. Then she took up her son and went out.)

2- The Prophet Ezekiel, peace be upon him, did the same as Jesus did, as he revived thirty-five thousand men after they had died sixty years ago.

It is stated in the Book of Ezekiel: "The hand of the Lord is upon me. And he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones. * And he made me pass them all around, and behold, there were very many of them on the face of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. * And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I said, "O Lord God, you know." * And he said to me: "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: 'You dry bones, hear the word of the Lord: "This is what the Lord God says to these bones: 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live. I will put sinews on you, and cover you with flesh; I will cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you will live, and you will know that I am the Lord.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded. While I was prophesying, there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews and flesh



covered them, and skin was spread over them, but there was no breath in them. *
...)) ().

3- The miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family) is the revival of the dead:

Al-Rida (peace be upon him) said: "The Quraysh gathered around the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his family) and asked him to revive their dead. He sent Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him) with them and said to him: Go to the cemetery and call out the names of these people who are being asked about them at the top of your voice: O so-and-so and so-and-so, Muhammad, the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his family) says to you: Rise with the permission of God Almighty. So they stood up and shook the dust off their heads. The Quraysh approached and asked them about their affairs. Then they told them that Muhammad had been sent as a prophet. They said: We wish we had met him so we could believe in him. He healed the blind, the lepers, and the insane, and he spoke to the animals, the birds, the jinn, and the devils. We did not take him as a lord other than God Almighty, and we did not deny the merit of any of these. So when did you take Jesus as a lord, is it permissible for you to take Elisha and Ezekiel as lords? Because they did the same as Jesus, son of Mary (peace be upon them), of reviving the dead and other things.").

4- ((And a people from the Children of Israel left their country because of the plague, and they were thousands, fearing death, so God caused them to die in one hour. So the people of that village surrounded them with a pen, and they remained there until their bones rotted and they became dust. Then a prophet from the prophets of the Children of Israel passed by them and was amazed by them and by



the large number of rotten bones. So God Almighty revealed to him: Do you like that I bring them back to life for you so that you may warn them? He said: Yes, my Lord. So God Almighty revealed to him: Call out to them and say: O rotten bones, arise by the permission of God Almighty. So they all rose alive, shaking the dust off their heads.))

5- ((Then, on the authority of Abraham, the friend of the Most Merciful, peace be upon him, when he took the birds and cut them into pieces, then he placed a part of them on each mountain, then he called to them and they came running towards him))

6- ((Then Moses, son of Imran, peace be upon him, and his seventy companions whom he had chosen went with him to the mountain, and they said to him: You have seen God, the Exalted, so show Him clearly. Then the thunderbolt struck them, and they were all burned, and Moses remained alone. He said: O Lord, I chose seventy men from the Children of Israel and brought them and I am returning alone. How will my people believe what I have told them? If You had willed, You could have destroyed them and me before. Will You destroy us for what the fools among us have done? Then God, the Almighty, the Majestic, revived them after their death.))

Then the Imam (peace be upon him) said: “And everything I have mentioned to you about this, you will not be able to reject, because the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, and the Criterion have spoken about it. If everyone who revives the dead, heals the blind, the lepers, and the insane takes a lord other than God, then take all of these as lords. What do you say, O Jew? The Catholicos said: Your word is your word, and there is no god but God.”)



The Imam refuted this claim and his dialogue, peace be upon him, was met with acceptance and submission from the other party. It is rare for a dialogue on such matters, which are extremely sensitive and sacred to those who believe in them, to lead to this result, given the ability to control the pace of the dialogue so that it does not go beyond the bounds of decency and etiquette and does not lead to what would upset people and inflame hatred.

Second: The sonship of Christ:

Christians believe that Christ is the Son of God, and this sonship is eternal because Christ, in terms of his divinity, has existed with the Father since eternity, and there has never been a time in which the Son was not with the Father without a conjunction.)The Imam pointed to that and said, peace be upon him, to the Catholicos: "By the right of the Son and his mother, do you know that Matthew said that Christ is the son of David, the son of Abraham, the son of Isaac, the son of Jacob, the son of Judah, the son of Khadrun? And Marqabus said about the lineage of Jesus, son of Mary, peace be upon him, that he is the Word of God that He dwelt in the body of a human being, so it became a human being. And Luke said: Jesus, son of Mary, peace be upon him, and his mother were two human beings of flesh and blood, so the Holy Spirit entered into them.")

The Imam (peace be upon him) wants to point out their difference in the nature of Christ (peace be upon him), which implicitly leads to the difference in the Gospel. This difference is evidence that the existing Gospels are not the first Gospel. The first statement mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew indicates that the lineage of Christ goes back to David (peace be upon him). They say that Matthew wanted with this lineage to confirm that he is from the lineage of Abraham, the father of all



believers, who received the promises that through his lineage all the nations of the earth would be blessed. It is as if he came as a blessing for all nations, presenting a superior fatherhood that does not stop at the relationship of flesh and blood, as the Jews limited it to their relationship with Abraham. Rather, he presented heavenly fatherhood to every believer from every nation.)

As for the second statement: that Christ is the Word of God, the Imam (peace be upon him) cited it as evidence, because Christians believe that God is eternal and the Word is eternal with Him, meaning that God did not precede Christ in existence. It is stated in the Gospel of John: ((In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *He was in the beginning with God *... and the Word became flesh and dwelt between them.)

The question is: Who was the Word? If He was God Almighty? Is God the Word? Did the Word transform into flesh, namely Christ, and dwell among people?

The Qur'an used the word "word" in reference to Jesus, peace be upon him, as in His saying: {Indeed, God gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary.} () And his saying: {The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God and His Word which He directed to Mary. } ().

But not in the sense that the scholars and interpreters of the Bible have tended towards. The interpreters of the Holy Qur'an have directed the use of this word for Jesus with many directions, perhaps the closest to mind is the extraordinary evidence of Christ.)

The word, according to what the Qur'an calls it, is: ((The word attributed to God Almighty, which is what reveals what God Almighty wanted of a matter, such as the



word of creation, which is His Almighty's saying to something He wanted, "Be," or the word of revelation and inspiration, and the like.))()

As for the third statement, which the Imam (peace be upon him) cited as evidence: that Jesus, son of Mary (peace be upon him), and his mother were two human beings of flesh and blood, and the Holy Spirit entered into them, he wanted to point out their difference in the nature of Christ, whether he had one nature or two natures, divine and human, except that he is the son of God and the son of man together, as the Orthodox Church believed in one human nature of Jesus united with divine attributes, while the Roman Catholic Church believed that Christ had two natures and two wills.

Third: The prophecy of the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers:

It is established and certain among Muslims that previous religions had prophesied the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and that he is mentioned in their books by name sometimes and by description at other times. Among the places that Muslims believe included a reference to the Prophet Muhammad and the good news of Jesus' coming are four passages in the Gospel of John, in all of which the word (Paraclete) or (Paraclete) is mentioned, which means the praised and thanked one. The Imam touched upon this issue in the course of his dialogue with the Christian, saying:

((O Christian, do you know in the Gospel the saying of Jesus, peace be upon him: "I am going to your Lord and my Lord, and the Paraclete has come. He is the one who bears witness to me as I bore witness to him. He is the one who interprets everything for you, and he is the one who breaks the pillar of unbelief." The



Catholicos said: “I have not mentioned anything from the Gospel except that we acknowledge it.” He said: “Do you find this proven in the Gospel, O Catholicos?” He said: “Yes.”)))

The Bible referred to this by saying: (If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter to be with you forever.)

This admission by the Christian and his affirmative answer indicate that this word is present in the Bible, but the dispute arose over its distortion in the Greek text or its transmission from it and over its meaning.

We will present in the research a group of statements of both parties on this issue, and what the Christians adhere to is that

The Comforter is a translation of the word Paraclete in Greek, and it means the Holy Spirit who represents Christ after his ascension to heaven in counsel, guidance, and help in distress.)

the first :Some Christians say: The Comforter that Christ spoke about to his disciples was not a prophet who would come after him, but rather it was the Holy Spirit, as the Almighty made clear with his blessed mouth, saying: (And as for The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.) ()

Discussion of opinion: If the comforter or helper is the Holy or Divine Spirit, then the Holy or Divine Spirit is the Holy or Divine Prophet. We, as Muslims, acknowledge and believe that any Prophet sent by God Almighty is a Holy Prophet and without any sin.



John, to whom the Gospel is attributed and who wrote three epistles that are parts of the Christian Gospel, used the expression "the divine spirit" to indicate divine prophecy.)

If the Paraclete means the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is one, then what is the meaning of Christ's saying: (And He will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter.)If He is one, then who is the first? So that the promised one is the last?)

And if He was the Holy Spirit, belief in Him would not need repeated affirmations (And I said It is for you now before it comes to pass, so that when it comes to pass you may believe.)Nor does faith in Christ require believing in Him and bearing witness to Him (MatthewThe Comforter has come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father. He will testify about me.)They were believers in him before they knew the Holy Spirit. Rather, they knew the Spirit as he (peace be upon him) knew it.)

The Paraclete does not mean comforter or advocate, and this word is not classical and not well-known, because the Greek spelling of the word is "paraklytos" is used in church writings to mean "one called to help, a lawyer, a mediator", but it is obvious that the Greek word that corresponds to the meaning of comforter is not "paraklytos" but rather "parakalon", and this word is what gives the meaning of mediator or lawyer.)

The evidence for this is that the Church believes that Jesus' death on the cross saved believers from the curse of original sin and that his constant presence in the Eucharist will remain with believers forever. This belief left people without the need for consolation or the coming of a comforter. Conversely, if they needed a



comforter, then all claims about Christ's sacrifice to save believers would become meaningless and unnecessary.)

Second: One of the Christians believes that the descriptions of the Paraclete indicate his divinity, because the Paraclete will remain with the disciples forever, and this is beyond the ability of any creature.

Discussion of opinion: If the disciples could remain forever so that the Paraclete could remain with them forever, did they also become gods so that the Paraclete could remain god with them forever?

Certainly not, for there is no true eternity, neither for the Paraclete nor for the disciples, since the eternity intended for the two creatures is shared between them, that it is the eternity of the spiritual personality, not the eternity of the person. The two eternal stations are an indication of the eternity of the Muhammadan law that remains throughout the life of the human world since its coming, just as the disciples are meant to follow the messages.)

The coming of the Comforter has conditions, including that Christ made the coming of the Paraclete conditional upon his departure, and Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, was like that because he came after the departure of Jesus, peace be upon him, because the existence of two messengers with two independent laws at one time is not permissible.

Unlike whether the other is obedient to the law of the first, or whether both messengers are obedient to one law.)

All this evidence prevents us from saying that the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit himself, but rather that he is an independent person. The text must be as follows:



(And I will go to the Father, and he will send you another messenger - or the last messenger - whose name will be the Paraclete, and he will remain with you forever). In this way, the humility of Christ, which was known for him, returns, and the meaning of “the Paraclete” is clearly defined.)

The third topic

Imam Reza's Dialogue with Other Religions

First - Zoroastrianism:

Zoroastrianism is one of the religions of the Persians and the Magians. It was named Zoroastrianism after Zoroaster, son of Yurshab, who appeared in the time of King Kashtasp, son of Sohrasp, who was born in the sixth century BC. They have a book called (Avest), which means the foundation, the softness, and the text. It was written in the Avestan language, which was prevalent in ancient Iran.).

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) discussed with the authority and representative of this religion and said to him: Tell me about Zoroaster, whom you claim is a prophet. What is your proof of his prophethood? Al-Har bath said: He came with what no one before him came with, and we did not witness it, but the news from our ancestors came to us that he made lawful for us what no one else made lawful, so we followed him. Al-Reza (peace be upon him) said: Didn't the news come to you and you followed it? He said: Yes, and the Imam (peace be upon him) began to establish the proof against him, saying: Likewise, all previous nations came to them with news of what the prophets came with and what Moses, Jesus (peace be upon them), and Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) came with. So what is your excuse for not acknowledging them? Since you only acknowledged Zoroaster before the



news that came, he came with what no one else came with. Then Al-Har bath stopped speaking.().

The Imam (peace be upon him) discusses with the Zoroastrian about the prophethood of Zoroaster, saying to him, "Tell me about Zoroaster, whom you claim is a prophet. What is your proof of his prophethood?" The Zoroastrian answers him by saying that we have received his news and what proves that he is a prophet is the theory of good and evil that he brought, questions about the beginning and the end, and the destiny of man. This news can only be from a prophet.

These are just sayings without evidence. The prophecy of Zoroaster is disputed among scholars. He is not mentioned as a prophet in the holy books of the Jews and Christians, especially the Torah and the Bible, nor is it mentioned in the Holy Quran that he is among the prophets. The Avesta has not reached us through continuous chains of transmission, nor through sound or weak individual chains of transmission. Even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that Zoroaster was a prophet, the Avesta itself testifies that the one who spoke it was not God Almighty, but rather a human being, the writer of the Avesta, who narrated his events, debates, and dialogues that he narrated about Zoroaster, which are visions close to Indian philosophical thought.

What indicates that Zoroaster was not a prophet is that we do not find in the Avesta, from near or far, any indications or news about the prophets, their calls, and their peoples who came before Zoroaster. This is not correct, reasonable, or acceptable, as it does not exist in the religion of the prophets, but rather it must be mentioned in it.



Second: The Mandaean religion:

Imam al-Rida (peace be upon him) had a dialogue with Imran al-Sabi, one of the scholars of the Mandaean religion, and most of his discussion was about monotheism.

Imam Al-Ridha (peace be upon him) said: O people, if there is someone among you who opposes Islam and wants to ask a question, let him ask without modesty. Imran the Sabian, who was one of the theologians, stood up and said: O most knowledgeable person! If it were not for you calling me to ask you, I would not have come to you with questions. I have entered Kufa, Basra, Syria and Al-Jazira, and I met the theologians, but I did not find anyone who could prove to me a single being who is the only one who exists in the Oneness of God. Do you give me permission to ask you? The Imam (peace be upon him) said: Ask, Imran, and be fair. Beware of error and injustice! He said: By God, my master, I only want you to prove to me something that I can cling to, so that I do not permit it! He (peace be upon him) said: Ask whatever you want. So the people increased them and gathered some of them together. He said: Tell me about the First Being and about what He created. He (peace be upon him) said: You have asked, so understand the answer! As for the One, He has always been a single being, with nothing with Him, without limits or accidents, and He will always be like that. Then He created an innovative creation, different, with different accidents and limits, not in anything He established, nor anything He defined, nor on anything He followed or resembled. Then He made creation after that the elite and other than the elite of God, and with difference and harmony and colors and taste and desire, and there was no need from Him for that nor for a superior status that He did not reach except through it. I do not see for



Himself in what He creates any increase or decrease. Do you understand this, O Imran? He said: Yes, by God, my master. He (peace be upon him) said: And know, O Imran! That if He had created, He would not have created for a need. He did not create except those who would seek His help in his need, and it would have been necessary for Him to create multiples of what He created, because the more helpers there are, the stronger their companion is. Then the question and answer between Al-Ridha (peace be upon him) and Imran the Sabian became long, and he (peace be upon him) held him accountable in most of his questions... He (peace be upon him) said: ... Do you understand, O Imran? He said: Yes, my master, I understand, and I bear witness to your description and your unity, and that Muhammad is His servant sent with guidance and the religion of truth. Then he fell down in prostration towards the Qiblah and submitted. Al-Hasan bin Muhammad Al-Nawfali said: When the theologians looked at the words of Imran Al-Sabi'i, and he was a debater who was never interrupted by anyone's argument, no one approached Al-Ridha (peace be upon him) and they did not ask him about anything... ().

All of the Sabeans' questions focused on the issue of monotheism, multiplicity, and helpers. The Imam (peace be upon him) clarified all of his questions. The first question was about the first being. The Imam said to him: "As for the One, He has always been one being with nothing else. Then He created a different, innovative creation. That is, no one represented an example for Him so that He would have been made in imitation of that example, as is the case with created beings in their creation. Because if everything that was created were in need, then, as has been said, it would need, in order to preserve it, nurture it, provide for it, and ward off evils, multiples of its creation would need it. What is meant by the being is the



maker. The gist of the question is whether He is known by Himself through an image that exists in His essence. The gist of the answer is that the image that exists only exists for something that shares with something else in one of the essentials and differs from it in another. Thus, it needs the image that exists for its specificity and distinction from what it shares. As for the absolute simple, it is distinct from itself and does not share with other essentials. Therefore, it does not need to know itself through the presence of an image, but rather it is present in itself from its essence.”.(.)

It appears to the researcher that Imran al-Sabi was more of a Harranian Sabian than a Mandaean, and this is evident from what he said, as mentioned in the debate: “O scholar of mankind, if you had not called me to your question, I would not have approached you with questions. I have entered Kufa, Basra, Syria, and the Jazira, and I met the theologians, but I did not find anyone who could prove to me that there is only One who is established in His Oneness. So, may I ask you?” The Harranians believe in the existence of God and believe in the existence of the planets and their influence. All of his questions focused on this and did not go beyond it. If he had been a Mandaean, he would not have asked about the One who is the only One and who is established in His Oneness, since the Mandaeans point to this in an explicit and proven manner, and numerous texts in their holy book mention this. Moreover, most of what was mentioned in Imam al-Rida’s answers, we find that it agrees with it in the belief of the Mandaean Sabians and the texts mentioned in their holy book. This is a topic that we may present in explaining the convergence between Imam al-Rida’s answers and what is found in the Mandaean belief according to what is mentioned in the book of the Kenza Rabba.



Search results:

At the end of the research, I reached the following results:

1 - The difference between the individuals of human society and its ideological, intellectual and cultural blocs, which are rich in elements of disparity and distinction that constitute its self-identity, is a universal law that is in line with the requirements of divine wisdom, and a reality that is evident in its full existence on the ground to the point that the conception of a human society that lacks this essential characteristic, which is rooted in the core of its being, has become a conception steeped in idealism. In order to transform this difference from a focus of tension that disturbs the serenity of coexistence and harmony into a broad space for convergence, diversity and intellectual enrichment, it has become necessary to resort to a mechanism that seeks commonalities and overcomes intersections between the various components and seeks to reduce differences and bring viewpoints closer together.

2 - The dialogue came in response to the call emanating from the heart of this need, as a method that requires the presence of the other and allows him the freedom to express his thoughts and visions, far from oppression and domination.

3 - Talking about the efforts of the Imam (peace be upon him) in his dialogue with the people of religions establishes for us a method that we may be in dire need of today, when the mixing and intellectual exchange between religions has become an unavoidable reality. Therefore, those who engage in dialogue or call for this dialogue should review the foundations and mechanisms that were established by the infallible Imams (peace be upon them all).



4 - As we live today in an atmosphere of calm dialogue with an objective tone, we are in dire need to establish this type of culture that seeks commonalities, overcomes intersections, and relies on what is compatible rather than what is different, and that seeks the friendship of bridges of communication between different religions and beliefs to melt them in the crucible of harmony and peaceful coexistence that rises above partial points of divergence and prepares the ground for the establishment of a human society that enjoys the peace that all religions have come to call for and urge.

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