

Imam Muhammad at-Taqi al-Jawad (AS), Confirmer of the Missions of John and Jesus

By: Seyyed Ali Shahbaz

"O John! [We said] 'Hold on with power to the Book!' And We gave him judgement while still a child." (Holy Qur'an 19:12)

This is how God informs us, while entrusting the divine mission to the still beardless boy, Yahya ibn Zakariyya (John the Baptist).

Later in the same Surah (Maryam), to the further bewilderment of the stupefied sceptics, secularists, agnostics and all those devoid of faith and facts, we learn that Jesus (AS) was granted Prophethood and given the Scripture while still an infant in the cradle.

"Thereat she (the Virgin Mary) pointed to him. They (the ever-doubting Israelites) said, 'How can we speak to one who is yet a baby in the cradle?'

"He (the infant Jesus) said, 'Indeed I am a servant of Allah! He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet.'" (19:29,30)

Perhaps, those who are fickle of faith might say that John and Jesus are too remote in history, and even if the Divine Testimony about them is to be believed, no 'authentic' contemporary account is available today, in the limelight of history recorded by 'fallible' humans, on how these "Infallibles" behaved and how they discharged their God-given duties.

Perhaps, the mentally retarded self-styled scientific minds of our day might argue that the various Christian gospels – irrespective of the period in which these were actually compiled – are mute on the childhood account of the life of the Messiah, and mainly deal with the closing years of his mission.

In response, as their explanations of the John-Jesus phenomena, the apologists among the Muslims and even the Christians are quick in pointing at the astounding child prodigals that often crop up in various cultures and societies of the world.

But this argumentation falls short of providing concrete rational proofs in view of the fact that these 'wonder children', because of a variety of factors, often turn out to be totally blind to the realities of their own creation despite their amazing scientific discoveries and computer like brains that solve the most complicated mathematical problems. Actually there are many instances of these 'child prodigals' actually destroying the fundamentals of humanity, such as faith, morals, and the overall prosperity of mankind, by misuse of their exceptional brains.

Glory to the All-Wise Creator, Who so precisely fashioned the universe and all that it contains! He is aware of even thoughts that flash across the minds of His creatures, and anticipates all events to come!

It is here that the dynamism of Islam comes to mankind's rescue. By the dynamism of Islam I don't mean the self-contradictory compilations of sunnah and seerah written on hearsay – similar to the Christian Gospels – by those who had neither seen or heard Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) nor had any access to firsthand accounts from those intimately linked by faith and characteristics to the person of God's Last and Greatest Messenger to mankind. Thus, it is not without reason that we the followers of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt regard the auspicious 10th of Rajab to be a day of added importance.

Today, while celebrating the birth anniversary of the Prophet's namesake and 9th Infallible Heir, Imam Muhammad at-Taqi al-Jawad (AS), we realize the fact that if Divine Providence had not decreed him to be the Imam of the Age at such a tender age, and that too in the full limelight of history with vivid accounts of his rational debates and wisdom beyond years recorded by contemporaries – both friends and foes – the ayahs of the holy Qur'an pertaining to John and Jesus would have lacked practical paradigms.

Born in 195 AH (811 CE) in Medina, he was a mere boy of 8 years when God entrusted to him the spiritual leadership of mankind following the martyrdom of his father, Imam Reza (AS) in distant Khorasan. As a matter of fact, two years before that in 201 AH, at the age of six years, his wisdom had been exposed to public view for the people of Medina by his father, who entrusted him the affairs of the area, while departing for the long journey.

It will be repetitive to cite the triumphant debates he held as a beardless boy with grey-bearded ideologues. It is also out of context to mention that his own son and successor, Imam Ali an-Naqi al-Hadi (AS), was also a boy of 8 years at his martyrdom in the full bloom of youth at the age of 25 years.

To end the column here is an account from Muhammad al-Mahmoori narrated from his father, who said: "Once, I was standing near Imam Reza (AS) in Tous when one of his

companions asked him, 'If something happens (to you), to whom shall we refer?' He asked about the next imam after him so that they would know to whom they should obey and submit."

"**Imam Reza (AS) replied:** 'To my son Abu Ja'far' (who was still a child).

The man said, 'I think he is very small as of yet.'

Imam Reza (AS) replied: 'Allah sent Jesus the son of Mary (as a Prophet) though he was even younger than Abu Ja'far will be when he shall become the imam.'"

The learned ar-Rayyan bin as-Salt had said in this regard: "If it is decreed by Allah the Almighty, then a two-day-old child can be like a hundred-year-old man, but if it is not decreed by Allah, then even if one lives for five thousand years, he will not be able to do what the masters can do or even a part of it. This is worth pondering upon."