

Anonymous Latin Report

Anonymous Report, translated from Latin. (medspains.stanford.edu)

ON JULY 20, 1263, in the presence of the lord king of Aragon and many other barons, prelates, clerics, and knights, in the palace of the lord king at Barcelona, Moses the Jew, called "rabbi," was summoned from Gerona by the lord king, at the request of the Dominicans, and was present there, along with many other Jews who seemed and were reputed among other Jews more learned. Deliberation was undertaken with the lord king and with certain Dominicans and Franciscans who were present, not that the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ -- which because of its certitude cannot be placed in dispute ?? be put in the center of attention with the Jews as uncertain, but that the truth of that faith be made manifest in order to destroy the Jews' errors and to shake the confidence of many Jews. Since they could not defend their errors, these Jews indicated that the said rabbi could sufficiently reply to each and every question which would be placed before them.

Friar Paul proposed to the said rabbi, that, with the aid of God, he would prove from writings shared and accepted by the Jews the following contentions, in order: that the messiah, who is called Christ, whom the Jews anticipate, has surely come already; also that the messiah, as prophesied, should be divine and human; also that he suffered and was killed for the salvation of mankind; also that the laws and ceremonials ceased and should have ceased after the advent of the said messiah. When the said Moses was asked whether he wished to respond to these contentions which have been indicated, he said and affirmed that he would and that, if necessary, he would remain at Barcelona for that purpose not only for a day or a week or a month, but even for a year. When it was proved to him that he should not be called "rabbi," because no Jew should be designated by that title from the time of the Passion of Christ, he conceded at least that this was true for the previous eight hundred years.

Then it was indicated to him, that when Friar Paul had come to Gerona for the purpose of conferring with him on these matters, which pertain to salvation, and had expostulated carefully concerning the Holy Trinity, both about the unity of the divine essence and about the trinity of beings, the beliefs which Christians hold, he had conceded that, if Christians believed in the manner explained to him, he would believe indeed that so it should be held. When this was repeated before the king, he did not contradict. Rather he was silent, and thus by remaining silent he conceded.

Then in the palace of the lord king, the said Jew was asked whether the messiah, who is called Christ has come. He responded with the assertion that he has not come. He added that the messiah and Christ are the same and that, if it could be proved to him that the messiah had come, it could be believed to refer to none other than him, namely Jesus Christ, in whom the Christians believe, since no one else has come who has dared to usurp for himself this title nor has there been anyone else who had been believed to be Christ. It was then proved to him clearly, both through authoritative texts of the law and the prophets as well as through the Talmud, that Christ has truly come, as Christians believe and preach. Since he was unable to respond, vanquished by proper proofs and authoritative texts, he conceded that Christ or the messiah had been born in Bethlehem a thousand years ago and had subsequently appeared in Rome to some. When he was asked where that messiah who he said was born and appeared at Rome might be, he replied that he did not know. Subsequently he said that the messiah lives in a terrestrial paradise with Elijah. He also said

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that, although the messiah has been born, he has still not come, since the messiah may be said to have come when he achieves dominion over the Jews and liberates them and when the Jews follow him. Against this response was adduced the authority of the Talmud, which clearly says that the messiah

would come to them daily, if they would hear his voice and not harden their heart, as is said in Psalms: "Today if you will listen to his voice."

It was added that the messiah was born among men, that he came among men, and that he could not otherwise be or be understood. To this he was unable to respond. Also among the proofs presented concerning the advent of the messiah was that from Genesis: "The scepter shall not pass from Judah, nor the staff from his descendants." Since therefore he must acknowledge that there is neither scepter nor staff, he acknowledges that the messiah who was to be sent has come. To this he responded that the scepter has not been removed. It is merely temporarily absent, as happened during the time of the Babylonian captivity. It was proved to him that in Babylonia the Jews had exilarchs with jurisdiction, while after the death of Christ they had neither a staff nor a prince nor exilarchs according to the prophecy of Daniel nor a prophet nor any jurisdiction, as is manifestly obvious every day. It is thus certain that the messiah has come. He then said that he would prove that the Jews had the aforesaid exilarchs after Jesus, but he was able to show nothing in these matters. On the contrary he confessed that they have not had the aforesaid exilarchs for the past 850 years. Therefore it is clear that the messiah has come, since an authoritative text cannot lie.

The said Moses claimed that Jesus Christ should not be called the messiah, since the messiah, he said, should not die, as is said in Psalms: "He asked of thee life and thou didst give it him, length of days for ever and ever." Rather he should live eternally, both he and those whom he would liberate. It was therefore asked of him whether chapter 53 of Isaiah -- "Who could have believed what we have heard" -- which according to the Jews begins at the end of chapter 52, where it is said: "Behold my servant shall prosper," speaks of the messiah. Although he consistently claimed that this passage in no way speaks of the messiah, it was proved to him through many authoritative texts in the Talmud which speak of the passion and death of Christ, which they prove through the said chapter, that the aforesaid chapter of Isaiah must be understood as related to Christ, in which the death, passion, burial and resurrection of Christ is obviously contained. Indeed forced by authoritative texts, he confessed that this section must be understood and explained as relating to Christ. From this it is clear that the messiah was to suffer.

Since he did not wish to confess the truth unless forced by authoritative texts, when he was unable to explain these authoritative texts, he said publicly that he did not believe these authoritative texts which were adduced against him -- although found in ancient and authentic books of the Jews -- because they were, he claimed, sermons in which their teachers often lied for the purpose of exhorting the people. As a result he reproved both the teachers and the scriptures of the Jews. Moreover, all these issues, or almost all, which he confessed or which were proved to him, he first negated; then confuted by authoritative texts and confused, he was forced to assent. Moreover, since he was unable to respond and was often publicly confused and since both Jews and Christians insulted him, he persistently claimed before all that he would in no way respond, since the Jews prohibited him and Christians, namely Friar P. de Janua and certain upstanding men of the city, had sent him messages advising that he in no way respond. Concerning this he was publicly refuted by the said Friar P. and by these upstanding men. Whence it is clear that he tried to escape the disputation by lies. Moreover, although he promised before the king and many others that before a few he would answer concerning his faith and his law, when the said lord was outside the city, he secretly fled and departed. Whence it is clear that he did not dare nor was he able to defend his erroneous belief.

We James, by the grace of God, King of Aragon, Majorca and Valencia, count of Barcelona and Urgell, and lord of Montpellier, confirm and acknowledge that each and every statement and action took place in our presence and in the presence of many others, as contained above in the present letter. In testimony of this we have caused our seal to be appended as a perpetual memorial.