

THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OF THE SECOND DAY.

The next day¹ I had an audience of his Majesty. Such audiences had constantly taken place previously, sometimes for the affairs of the State, and some other times for the love of wisdom and learning which was burning in the soul of his Majesty. He is a lovable man, and loves also learning when he finds it in other people, and on this account he directed against me the weight of his objections, whenever necessary.

After I had paid to him my usual respects as King of Kings, he began to address me and converse with me not in a harsh and haughty tone, since harshness and haughtiness are remote from his soul, but in a sweet and benevolent way.

And our King of Kings said to me : " O Catholicos, did you bring a Gospel with you, as I had asked you ?"—And I replied to his exalted Majesty : " I have brought one, O our victorious and God-loving King."—And our victorious Sovereign said to me : " Who gave you this Book ?"—And I replied to him : " It is the Word of God that gave us the Gospel, O our God-loving King."—And our King said : " Was it not written by four Apostles ?"² And I replied to him : " It was written by four Apostles, as our King has said, but not out of their own heads, but out of what they heard and learned from the Word-God. If then the Gospel was written by the Apostles, and if the Apostles simply wrote what they heard and learned from the Word-God, the Gospel has, therefore, been given in reality by the Word-God. Similarly, the Torah was written by Moses, but since Moses heard and learned it from an angel, and the angel heard and learned it from God, we assert that the Torah was given by God and not by Moses.

" In the same way also the Muslims say that they have received the *Ḳur'ān* from Muḥammad, but since Muḥammad received knowledge and writing from an angel, they, therefore, affirm that the Book that was divulged through him was not Muḥammad's or the angel's but God's. So also we Christians believe that although the Gospel was given to us by the Apostles, it was not given as from them but as from God, His Word and His Spirit. Further, the letters

¹ Or possibly : On another occasion.

² Here also the *Ḳur'ānic* Arabic word *ḥawāriyyūn*.

and official documents¹ of your Majesty are written by the hands of scribes and clerks, but they are not said to be those of scribes, but those of your Majesty, and of the Commander of the Faithful."

And our gracious and wise King said to me : " What do you say about Muḥammad ?"—And I replied to his Majesty : " Muḥammad is worthy of all praise, by all reasonable people, O my Sovereign. He walked in the path of the prophets, and trod in the track of the lovers of God. All the prophets taught the doctrine of one God, and since Muḥammad taught the doctrine of the unity of God, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets. Further, all the prophets drove men away from bad works, and brought them nearer to good works, and since Muḥammad drove his people away from bad works and brought them nearer to the good ones, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets. Again, all the prophets separated men from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to God and to His cult, and since Muḥammad separated his people from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to the cult and the knowledge of one God, beside whom there is no other God, it is obvious that he walked in the path of the prophets. Finally Muḥammad taught about God, His Word and His Spirit, and since all the prophets had prophesied about God, His Word and His Spirit, Muḥammad walked, therefore, in the path of all the prophets.

" Who will not praise, honour and exalt the one who not only fought for God in words, but showed also his zeal for Him in the sword ? As Moses did with the Children of Israel when he saw that they had fashioned a golden calf which they worshipped, and killed all of those who were worshipping it, so also Muḥammad evinced an ardent zeal towards God, and loved and honoured Him more than his own soul, his people and his relatives. He praised, honoured and exalted those who worshipped God with him, and promised them kingdom, praise and honour from God, both in this world and in the world to come in the Garden.² But those who worshipped idols and not God he fought and opposed, and showed to them the torments of hell and of the fire which is never quenched and in which all evildoers burn eternally.

" And what Abraham, that friend and beloved of God, did in

¹ Arab, *tūmār*.

² The Paradise of the *Ḳur'ān*.

turning his face from idols and from his kinsmen, and looking only towards one God and becoming the preacher of one God to other peoples, this also Muḥammad did. He turned his face from idols and their worshippers, whether those idols were those of his own kinsmen or of strangers, and he honoured and worshipped only one God. Because of this God honoured him exceedingly and brought low¹ before his feet two powerful kingdoms which roared in the world like a lion and made the voice of their authority heard in all the earth that is below heaven like thunder, viz : the Kingdom of the Persians and that of the Romans. The former kingdom, that is to say the Kingdom of the Persians, worshipped the creatures instead of the Creator, and the latter, that is to say the Kingdom of the Romans, attributed suffering and death in the flesh to the one who cannot suffer and die in any way and through any process.² He further extended the power of his authority through the Commander of the Faithful and his children from east to west, and from north to south. Who will not praise, O our victorious King, the one whom God has praised, and will not weave a crown of glory and majesty to the one whom God has glorified and exalted ? These and similar things I and all God-lovers utter about Muḥammad, O my sovereign."

And our King said to me : "You should, therefore, accept the words of the Prophet."—And I replied to his gracious Majesty : "Which words of his our victorious King believes that I must accept ?"—And our King said to me : "That God is one and that there is no other one besides Him."—And I replied : "This belief in one God, O my Sovereign, I have learned from the Torah, from the Prophets and from the Gospel. I stand by it and shall die in it."—And our victorious King said to me : "You believe in one God, as you said, but one in three."—And I answered his sentence : "I do not deny that I believe in one God in three, and three in one, but not in three different Godheads, however, but in the persons of God's Word and His Spirit. I believe that these three constitute one God, not in their person but in their nature. I have shown how in my previous words."

And our King asked : "How is it that these three persons whom you mention do not constitute three Gods ?" And I answered his

¹ Put a *wāw* before the verb.

² Allusion to the Jacobites and Melchites.

Majesty : "Because the three of them constitute one God, O our victorious King, and the fact that He is only one God precludes the hypothesis that there are three Gods."—And our King retorted : "The fact that there are three precludes the statement that there is only one God. If there are three, how can they be one?"—And I replied : "We believe that they are three, O our Sovereign, not in Godhead, but in persons, and that they are one not in persons but in Godhead."—And our King retorted : "The fact that they are three precludes the statement that they are one, and the fact that they are one precludes the statement that they are three. This everybody will admit."—And I said to him : "The three in Him are the cause of one, and the one that of three, O our King. Those three have always been the cause of one, and that one of three."—And our King said to me : "How can one be the cause of three and three of one? What is this?"—And I answered his question : "One is the cause of three, O our King, because this number one is the cause of the number two, and the number two that of the number three. This is, how, one is the cause of three, as I said, O King. On the other hand the number three is also the cause of the number one because since the number three is caused by the number two and this number two by the number one, the number three is therefore the cause of number one."

And our King said to me : "In this process the number four would also be the cause of number five and so on, and the question of one Godhead would resolve itself into many Godheads, which, as you say, is the doctrine not of the Christians but of the Magians."—And I replied to our King : "In every comparison there is a time at which one must stop, because it does not resemble reality in everything. We should remember that all numbers are included in number three. Indeed the number three is both complete and perfect¹ and all numbers are included in a complete and perfect number. In this number three all other numbers are included, O our victorious King. Above three all other numbers are simply numbers added to themselves, by means of that complete and perfect number, as it is said. It follows from all this that one is the cause of three and three of one, as we suggested."—And our King said to me : "Neither three nor two can possibly be said of God."—And I replied to his Majesty : "Neither, therefore,

¹ Cf. the medieval Latin adage : *Omne trinum perfectum.*

one.”—And our King asked : “ How ? ”—And I answered : “ If the cause of three is two, the cause of two would be one, and in this case the cause of three would also be one. If then God cannot be said to be three, and the cause of three is two and that of two one, God cannot, therefore be called one either. Indeed this number one being the cause and the beginning of all numbers, and there being no number in God, we should not have applied it to Him. As, however, we do apply this number to God without any reference to the beginning of an arithmetical number, we apply to Him also the number three without any implication of multiplication or division of Gods, but with a particular reference to the Word and the Spirit of God, through which heaven and earth have been created, as we have demonstrated in our previous colloquy.¹ If the number three cannot be applied to God, since it is caused by the number one, the latter could not by inference be applied to God either, but if the number one can be applied to God, since this number one is the cause of the number three, the last number can therefore be applied also to God.”

And our victorious King said : “ The number three denotes plurality, and since there cannot be plurality in Godhead, this number three has no room at all in Godhead.”—And I replied to his Majesty : “ The number one is also the cause and the beginning of all number, O our King, and number is the cause of plurality. Since there cannot be any kind of plurality in God, even the number one would have no room in Him.”—And our King said : “ the number one as applied to God is attested in the Book.”—And I said : “ So also is the case, O our King, with a number implying plurality. We find often such a number in the Torah, in the Prophets and in the Gospel, and as I hear, in your Book also, not, however, in connection with Godhead but in relation to humanity.”

“ So far as the Torah is concerned it is written in it, ‘ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ; ’² and ‘ The man is become as

¹ The Christian apologist Kindi (*Risālah*, p. 35) develops this same idea of number one and number three to his adversary ‘ Abdallah b. Ismā’il al-Hāshimi and concludes as follows : “ In number (also God is one because) He embraces all sorts of numbers, and number in itself is not numbered. Number, however, is divided into an even number and an odd number, and both even and odd numbers are finally included in the number three.” *Risālah*, p. 36.

² Gen. i. 26.

one of us ;'¹ and, ' Let us go down, and there confound their language.'² As to the Prophets, it is witten in them, ' Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts ;'³ and ' The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me ;'⁴ and ' By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all His hosts by the Spirit of His mouth.'⁵ As to the Gospel, it is written in it, ' Go ye and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'⁶ As to your Book, it is written in it, ' And we sent to her our Spirit,'⁷ and ' We breathed into her from our Spirit,'⁸ and ' We fashioned,' ' We said,' ' We did,' and all such expressions which are said of God in a plural form. If the Holy Books refer these words to God in a plural form, what the Books say concerning God we have to say and admit. Since we had to preserve without change the number one as applied to God, we had also by inference to preserve without modification the number three, that is to say plurality, as applied to Him. The number one refers to nature and Godhead, and the number three to God, His Word and His Spirit, because God has never been, is not, and will never be, without Word and Spirit."⁹

And our wise Sovereign said : " The plural form in connection with God, in the expressions ' We sent,' ' We breathed,' ' We said,' etc., has been used in the Books not as a sign of persons or of Trinity, but as a mark of Divine majesty and power. It is even the habit of the kings and governors of the earth to use such a mode of speech." —And I replied to the wealth of his intelligence : " What your glorious Majesty has said is true. To you God gave knowledge and understanding along with power and greatness, more than to all other countries and kings. The community of all mankind, whether composed of freemen or of subjected races is personified in the kings, and the

¹ Gen. iii. 22

² Gen. xi. 7. The very same argument taken from the plural of majesty to prove the Trinity is used by Kindi in his *Apology for Christianity (Risālah*, pp. 40-44), where the same Biblical verses are quoted to the same effect.

³ Is. vi. 3.

⁴ Is. xlvi. 16.

⁵ Ps. ~~xxxiii~~^{xxxiii} 6 (Peshitta).

⁶ Matt. xxviii. 19.

⁷ Kur'an, xix. 17 (read *luāthāh* in fem.).

⁸ Kur'an, xxi. 91 (read *bāh* in fem.).

⁹ The idea that there was no time in which God could have been devoid of mind and life or otherwise of word and spirit is developed also by Kindi in his *Apology for Christianity, Risālah*, p. 39.

community of mankind being composed of innumerable persons, the kings rightly make use of the plural form in expressions such as, 'We ordered,' 'We said,' 'We did,' etc. Indeed the kings represent collectively all the community of mankind individually. If all men are one with the king, and the king orders, says and does, all men order, say and do in the king, and he says and does in the name of all.

"Further, the kings are human beings, and human beings are composed of body and soul, and the body is in its turn composed of the power of the four elements. Because a human being is composed of many elements, the kings make use not unjustly of the plural form of speech, such as 'We did,' 'We ordered,' etc.¹ As to God who is simple in His nature and one in His essence and remote from all division and bodily composition, what greatness and honour can possibly come to Him when He, who is one and undivided against Himself, says in the plural form, 'We ordered,' and, 'We did?' The greatest honour that can be offered to God is that He should be believed in by all as He is. In His essence He is one, but He is three because of His Word and His Spirit. This Word and this Spirit are living beings and are of His nature, as the word and the spirit of our victorious King are of his nature, and he is one King with his word and spirit, which are constantly with him without cessation, without division and without displacement.

"When, therefore, expressions such as, '*We* spoke,' '*We* said,' '*We* did,' and '*Our* image and likeness,' are said to refer to God, His Word and His Spirit, they are referred in the way just described, O King of Kings. Who is more closely united to God than His Word through which He created all, governs all and directs all? Or who is nearer to Him than His Spirit through which He vivifies, sanctifies and renews all? David spoke thus: 'By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all His hosts by the Spirit of His mouth;' ² and, 'He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction;' ³ and 'Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit and they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the earth.'⁴

"If one asserts that the expressions, '*Our* image' and '*Our* like-

¹ Put a *wāw* before *d-akk*. This idea is developed by Kindi in his Apology (*Risālah* p. 42) on the same lines.

² Ps. xxxiii. 6 (Peshitta).

³ Ps. cvii. 20.

⁴ Ps. civ. 30.

ness' used by Moses and the expressions, 'We made,' and 'We breathed,' used by Muḥammad,¹ do not refer to God but to the angels, how disgraceful it would be to believe that the image and the likeness of God and those of the angels, that is of the creator and the created, are one ! How dishonourable it would be to affirm that God says, orders and does with the angels and His creatures ! God orders and does like the Lord and the creator, and orders and does in a way that transcends that of all others ; but the angels being creatures and servants, do not order with God, but are under the order of God ; they do not create with God, but are very much created by God. The angels are what David said about them, 'Who maketh His angels spirits and His ministers a flaming fire.'² In this he shows that they are made and created.

"As to the Word and Spirit of God the prophet David says that they are not created and made, but creators and makers :³ 'By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made,' and not His Word alone ; and 'the heavenly hosts were created by His Spirit' and not His Spirit alone ; and, 'Because He said and they were made, and He commanded and they were created.'⁴ It is obvious that one who 'says,' 'says' and 'commands' by word, and that the word precedes the action, and the thought precedes the deed. Since God is one without any other before Him, with Him and after Him, and since all the above expressions which denote plurality cannot be ascribed to angels, and since the nature of God is absolutely free from all compositions—to whom could we ascribe then all such expressions ? I believe, O our victorious King, that they refer to the Word and the Spirit of God. If it is right that the expression 'One God' is true, it is also right that the expression 'We ordered,' 'We said,' and 'We breathed from our Spirit' are without doubt true and not false. It is also possible that the three letters placed before some Sūrahs in the Qur'ān, as I have learned, such as A.L.R. and Ṭ.S.M. and Y.S.M. and others,

¹ This Qur'ānic use of the plural *we* in connection with God is also taken as an argument in favour of the Trinity by the Christian apologist Kindi. *Risālah*, p. 42.

² Ps. civ. 4.

³ It would perhaps be better to put the verbs and pronouns of this sentence in plural.

⁴ Ps. cxlviii. 5.

which are three in number, refer also in your Book to God, His Word and His Spirit.¹

And our victorious King said: "And what did impede the Prophet from saying that this was so, that is that these letters clearly referred to God, His Word and His Spirit?"—And I replied to his Majesty: "The obstacle might have come from the weakness of those people who would be listening to such a thing. People whose ears were accustomed to the multiplicity of idols and false gods could not have listened to the doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or to that of one God, His Word, and His Spirit. They would have believed that this also was polytheism. This is the reason why your Prophet proclaimed openly the doctrine of one God, but that of the Trinity he only showed it in a somewhat veiled and mysterious way, that is to say through his mention of God, and of His Spirit and through the expressions 'We sent our Spirit' and 'We fashioned a complete man.'² He did not teach it openly in order that his hearers may not be scandalised by it and think of polytheism, and he did not hide it completely in order that he may not deviate from the path followed by Moses, Isaiah, and other prophets, but he showed it symbolically by means of the three letters that precede the Sūrahs.

"The ancient prophets had also spoken of the unity of the nature of God and used words referring to this unity in an open and clear way, but the words which referred to His three persons they used them in a somewhat veiled and symbolical way. They did so not for any other reason than that of the weakness of men whose mind was bound up in idolatry and polytheism. When, however, Christ appeared to us in the flesh, He proclaimed openly and clearly what the prophets had said in a veiled and symbolical way, 'Go ye,' said

¹ The Patriarch refers here to the mysterious letters placed at the beginning of some Sūrahs of the Kur'ān. It is highly interesting to learn that the Christians at the very beginning of the 'Abbasid dynasty understood them to refer to the Holy Trinity. In the Kur'ān of our day the letters A.L.R. are found before Sūrahs 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15, and the letters T.S.M. before Sūrahs xxvi. and xxviii., but the three letters Y.S.M. are not found before any Sūrah at all, but Sūrah xxxvi has only the two letters Y.S. Why this last change in our modern Kur'ān? There is no question of a copyist's error in the Syriac text, because the letters are named in words and not written in figures only.

² Kur'ānic expressions.

He to His Disciples, 'and baptise all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'¹ Moses also uttered the same thing in a way that means both one and three, 'Hear, O Israel,' said he, 'The Lord your God is one Lord.'² In saying He 'is one,' he refers to the one nature of Godhead, and in saying the three words, 'Lord, God, and Lord' he refers to the three persons of that Godhead, as if one was saying that God, His Word and His Spirit were one eternal God. Job also said, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken; blessed be the name of the Lord.'³ In blessing the single name of the Lord, Job used it three times, in reference to one in three."

And our King said to me: "If He is one, He is not three; and if He is three, He is not one; what is this contradiction?"—And I answered: "The sun is also one, O our victorious King, in its spheric globe, its light and its heat, and the very same sun is also three, one sun in three powers. In the same way the soul has the powers of reason and intelligence, and the very same soul is one in one thing and three in another thing. In the same way also a piece of three gold denarii, is called one and three, one in its gold that is to say in its nature, and three in its persons that is to say in the number of denarii. The fact that the above objects are one does not contradict and annul the other fact—that they are also three, and the fact that they are three does not contradict and annul the fact that they are also one.

"In the very same way the fact that God is one does not annul the other fact that He is in three persons, and the fact that He is in three persons does not annul the other fact that He is one God. Man is a being which is living, rational and mortal, and he is one and three, one in being one man and three in being living, rational and mortal, and this idea gives rise to three notions not contradictory but rather confirmatory to one another. By the fact that man is one, he is by necessity living, rational and mortal, and by the fact that he is living, rational and mortal, he is by necessity one man. This applies also to God in whom the fact of His being three does not annul the other fact that He is one and *vice versa*, but these two facts confirm and corroborate each other. If He is one God, He is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and if He is the Father, the Son, and the Holy

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

² Deut. vi. 4.

³ Job. i. 21.

Spirit, He is one God, because the eternal nature of God consists in Fatherhood, Filiation, and Procession, and in the three of them He is one God, and in being one God He is the three of them."

And our King said to me : " Do you say that the nature of God is composed of the above three, as the human nature is composed of its being living, rational, and mortal, and as the sun is composed of light, heat, and sphericity, and as the soul is composed of reason and intelligence, and as gold is composed of height, depth, and width ?"—And I denied this and said : " No, this is not so."—And our King said to me : " Why then do you wish to demonstrate with bodily demonstrations One who has no body and is not composed ?"—And I answered his Majesty : " Because there is no other God like Him, from whom I might draw a demonstration as to what is a being that has no beginning and no end."—And our King said to me : " It is never allowed to draw a demonstration from the creatures concerning the Creator."—And I said to Him : " We will then be in complete ignorance of God, O King of Kings."

And our King said : " Why ?"—And I answered : " Because all that we say about God is deducted from natural things that we have with us ; as such are the adjectives : King of all Kings, Lord of all Lords, Mighty, Powerful, Omnipotent, Light, Wisdom, and Judge. We call God by these and similar adjectives from things that are with us, and it is from them that we take our demonstration concerning God. If we remove Him from such demonstrations and do not speak of Him through them, with what and through what could we figure in our mind Him who is higher than all image and likeness ?"

And our victorious King said to me : " We call God by these names, not because we understand Him to resemble things that we have with us, but in order to show that He is far above them, without comparison. In this way, we do not attribute to God things that are with us, we rather ascribe to ourselves things that are His, with great mercy from Him and great imperfection from us. Words such as : kingdom, life, power, greatness, honour, wisdom, sight, knowledge, and justice, etc., belong truly, naturally and eternally to God, and they only belong to us in an unnatural, imperfect, and temporal way. With God they have not begun and they will not end, but with us children of men they began and they will end."

And I replied to his Majesty : " All that your Majesty said on

this subject, O our victorious King, has been said with perfect wisdom and great knowledge ; this is especially true of what you have just now said. It was not indeed with the intention of lowering God to a comparison with His creatures, that from the latter I drew a comparison concerning Him who, in reality, has no comparison with the created beings at all. I made use of such similes solely for the purpose of uplifting my mind from the created things to God. All the things that we have with us compare very imperfectly with the things of God. Even in saying of God that He is one, we introduce in our mind division concerning Him, because when we say for instance one man, one angel, one denarius, one pearl, we immediately think of a division that singles out and separates one denarius from many denarii, one pearl from many pearls, one angel from many angels, and one man from many men.

“A man would not be counting rightly but promiscuously if He were to say : one man and two angels, one horse and two asses, one denarius and two pence, one pearl and two emeralds. Every entity is counted with the entities of its own species, and we say : one, two, or three men ; one, two, or three angels ; one, two, or three denarii ; one, two, or three pearls, as the case may be. With all these calculations in saying one we introduce, as I said, the element of division, but in speaking of God we cannot do the same thing, because there are no other entities of the same species as Himself which would introduce division in Him in the same sense as in our saying : one angel or one man. He is one, single and unique in His nature. Likewise when we say three we do not think of bodies or numbers, and when we say : Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we do not say it in a way that implies division, separation, or promiscuity, but we think of it as something high above us in a divine, incomprehensible, and indescribable way.

“Our fathers and our children were born from marital union and intercourse, and their fatherhood and filiation have a beginning and an end. Further, a father was a son before becoming a father, and all relationships are liable to natural dissolution and cessation. As to Fatherhood, Filiation, and Procession in God they are not in a way similar to those of our humanity, but in a divine way that mind cannot comprehend. They do not arise from any intercourse between them, nor are they from time or in the time but eternally without beginning and without end. Since the above three attributes are of the nature

of God, and the nature of God has no beginning and no end, they also are without a beginning and without an end. And since He who is without a beginning and without an end is also unchangeable, that Fatherhood, therefore, that Filiation and that Procession are immutable and will remain without any modification. The things that are with us give but an imperfect comparison with the things that are above, because things that are God's are above comparison and likeness, as we have already demonstrated."

And our victorious King said : "The mind of rational beings will not agree to speak of God who is eternally one in Himself in terms of Trinity."—And I answered : "Since the mind of the rational beings is created, and no created being can comprehend God, you have rightly affirmed, O King of Kings, that the mind of the rational beings will not agree to speak of one God in terms of Trinity. The mind, however, of the rational beings can only extend to the acts of God, and even then in an imperfect and partial manner ; as to the nature of God we learn things that belong to it not so much from our rational mind as from the Books of Revelation, i.e. from what God Himself has revealed and taught about Himself through His Word and Spirit :

"The Word of God said, 'No one knoweth the Father but the Son, and no one knoweth the Son but the Father,'¹ and, 'The Spirit searcheth all things even the deep things of God.'² No one knows what there is in man except man's own spirit that is in him, so also no one knows what is in God except the Spirit of God. The Word and the Spirit of God, being eternally from His own nature—as heat and light from the sun, and as reason³ and mind from the soul—alone see and know the Divine nature, and it is they who have revealed and taught us in the sacred Books that God is one and three, as I have already shown in my above words from the Torah, the Prophets, the Gospel, and the *Qur'ān* according to what I have learned from those who are versed in the knowledge of your Book.

"Were it not for the fact that His Word and His Spirit were eternally from His own nature God would not have spoken of Himself in the Torah, as, '*Our* image and *Our* likeness ;'⁴ and 'Behold

¹ John *passim*.

² 1 Cor. ii. 10.

³ Here also the same Syriac word *milltha* means "word" and "reason."

⁴ Gen. i. 26.

the man is become as one of *us* ;¹ and ' Let us go down and there confound their language ;'² and the *Ḳur'ān* would not have said, ' And we sent to her *our* Spirit ;'³ and ' We breathed into her from *our* Spirit ;'⁴ and ' *We* did,' ' *We* said,' and so on. By such expressions (The *Ḳur'ān*) refers to God and His Word and His Spirit as we have said above. Has not the mind of the rational beings, O our victorious Sovereign, to follow the words of God rather than its own fanciful conceptions ? The inspired Books are surely right, and since we find in them that one and the same prophet speaks of God as one and as three, we are compelled by the nature of the subject to believe it."

And our powerful Sovereign said to me : " How does the nature of the subject compel us to believe it ?"—And I answered : " Because my Sovereign and my King granted full freedom to his obedient servant to speak before him, may I further implore your Majesty to be willing that I ask more questions ?" And our King said : " Ask anything you want."—And I then said : " Is not God a simple and uncircumscribed Spirit ?"—And our King said " Yes."—And I asked his Majesty : " Does He perceive in an uncircumscribed way with all His being, or does He perceive like us with one part only and not with another ?"—And our King answered : " He perceives with all its nature without any circumscription."—And I asked : " Was there any other thing with Him from eternity, or not ?"—And our King answered : " Surely not."—And I asked : " Does not a perceiver perceive a perceived object ?" And our King answered : " Yes."

And I then asked : " If God is a perceiver and knower from the beginning and from eternity, a perceiver and a knower perceives and knows a perceived and known object, and because there was no created thing that was eternally with God—since He created afterwards when He wished—in case there was no other being with Him, whom He might perceive and know eternally, how could He be called a perceiver and a knower in a Divine and eternal sense, and before the creation of the world ?"

And our victorious King answered : " What you have said is true.

¹ Gen. iii. 22.

² Gen. xi. 7.

³ *Ḳur'ān* xix. 17. (Here also read *lwāthah* in fem.)

⁴ *Ḳur'ān* xxi. 91 (Here also read *bah* in fem.)

It is indeed necessary that a perceiver should perceive a perceived object, and the knower a known one, but it is possible to say that He perceived and knew His own self.”—And I asked : “If He is all a perceiver without any circumscription, so that He does not perceive and know with one part and is perceived and known with another part, how can a perceiver of this kind perceive Himself ? The eye of man is the perceiver and it perceives the other objects, but it can never perceive its own self except with another eye like itself, because the sight of the eye is unable to perceive itself. If the sight of the composed eye cannot be divided into parts so that a part of it perceives itself, and the other part is perceived by itself, how can we think of God who is a Spirit without body, without division, and without parts that He perceives Himself and is perceived by Himself ?”

And our intelligent Sovereign asked : “Which of the two do you admit : does God perceive Himself or not ?”—And I answered : “Yes ; He perceives and knows Himself with a sight that has no limits and a knowledge that has no bounds.”—And our King asked : “How is it that your argumentation and reasoning concerning divisions, separations, and partitions do not rebound against you ?”—And I replied to him : “God perceives and knows Himself through His Word and the Spirit that proceeds from Him. The Word and the Spirit are a clear mirror of the Father, a mirror that is not foreign to Him but of the same essence and nature as Himself, without any limits and bounds. He was perceiving His Word, His Spirit, and His creatures, divinely, eternally, and before the worlds, with this difference, however, that He was perceiving and knowing His Word and His Spirit as His nature, His very nature, and He was eternally perceiving and knowing His creatures not as His nature but as His creatures. He was perceiving and knowing His Word and His Spirit as existing divinely and eternally, and His creatures not as existing then but as going to exist in the future. Through His Word and His Spirit He perceives and knows the beauty, the splendour, and the infiniteness of His own nature, and through His creatures the beauty of His wisdom, of His power, and of His goodness, now, before now, and before all times, movements, and beginnings.”

And our King asked philosophically : “Are they parts of one another, and placed at a distance from one another, so that one part

perceives and the other is perceived?"—And I replied to his Majesty: "No, not so, O King of Kings. They are not parts of one another, because a simple being has no parts and no composition; nor are they placed at a distance one from the other, because the infiniteness of God, of His Word, and of His Spirit is one. The Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Spirit, without any break, distance, and confusion of any kind, as the soul is in the reason and the reason in the mind, without break and confusion; and as the spheric globe of the sun is in its light, and this light in its heat; and as the colour, scent, and taste are in the apple, without any break, confusion, and promiscuity. All figures, comparisons, and images, are far below that adorable and ineffable nature of God, so there is fear that we may be falsely held to believe in the plurality of Godhead."

And our powerful and wise King said: "There is such a fear indeed."—And I said: "O King of Kings, this would arise in case we diminished something from Godhead, just as well as if we added something to it. As it is a blasphemy to add something to Godhead, it is also a blasphemy to diminish something from it in our belief, and as it is not allowed to add anything to the sun or to the pearl, so it is not allowed to diminish anything from them. He who divests God of His Word and His Spirit, resembles the one who would divest the sun of its light and its heat, and the soul of its reason and its mind, and the pearl of its beauty and its lustre. As it is impossible to conceive a pearl without lustre, or a sun without light, or a soul without reason and mind, so it is never possible that God should be without Word and Spirit. If, therefore, Word and Spirit are God's by nature, and God is eternal, it follows that the Word and the Spirit of God are also eternal. They are not added to Him from outside that one might think of the plurality of Godhead, but it is of the essence of God to possess both Word and Spirit."

And our victorious King said: "In your previous words you said that the perceiver perceives the one that is perceived, and the one that is perceived perceives also the one that perceives; and that if they be near a thing they are all there at the same time, because the Word and the Spirit of God are the object that is perceived by God and are eternal like the perceiver; and if there is no perceiver there is no perceived object either, and if there is no perceived object there is no perceiver. Did you say these things, or not?"—And I answered:

“I did say them, O our victorious King.”—And the King of Kings said: “But it is possible that God was perceiving His creatures before He created them.”—And I said: “O our victorious King, we cannot think or say otherwise. God perceived and knew eternally His creatures, before He brought them into being.”

And our King said: “The nature of the subject will not compel us, therefore, to believe that if the perceiver is eternal, the perceived should also be eternal, because the fact that God is an eternal perceiver of the creature does not carry with it the necessity that the creature which is perceived by Him is also eternal, and the fact that the creature is perceived does not carry with it the necessity that He also is the perceived object like it. As such a necessity as that you were mentioning in the case of the creature has been vitiated, so also is the case with regard to the Word and the Spirit.”

And I said: “O our King, it is not the same kind of perception that affects the creature on the one hand, and the Word and the Spirit on the other. This may be known and demonstrated as follows: it is true that God was perceiving the creature eternally, but the creature is not infinite, and God is infinite, the creature has a limited perceptibility, and the perception of God has no limits. Further, the nature of God having no limits, His knowledge also has no limits, as the divine David says, ‘His understanding is infinite.’¹ If God, therefore, has any perception, and if He is infinite and unlimited, that perception must by necessity be infinite and unlimited, and if His perception is infinite, it perceives a perceived object that is likewise infinite; but the perceived object that is infinite being only the nature of God, it follows that His Word and His Spirit are from His nature, in the same way as the word and the spirit of a man are from human nature. It is, therefore, obvious that if God is an infinite perceiver, the Word and the Spirit that are from Him are also infinite.

“God knows His Word and His Spirit in an infinite way as His Knowledge and His perception are infinite, but He perceives and knows His creature not in the same infinite way as are His perception and His Knowledge, but in a finite way according to the limits of the creature and of the human nature. He perceived His creature only

¹ Ps. cxlvii. 5.

through His prescience, and not as a substance that is of the same nature as Himself, and, on the contrary, He perceived the Word and the Spirit not through His prescience but as a substance that is of the same nature as Himself. This is the reason why the prophet David said, 'For ever, art thou O Lord, and Thy Word is settled in heaven ;'¹ and likewise the prophet Isaiah, 'The grass withereth and the flower fadeth, but the Word of our Lord shall stand forever.'² In this passage Isaiah counts all the world as grass and flower, and the Word and the Spirit of God as something imperishable, immortal, and eternal.

"If, therefore, God is an infinite perceiver, the object that is perceived by Him has also to be infinite, in order that His perception of the perceived should not be incomplete in places. And who is this infinite-perceived except the Word and the Spirit of God? God indeed was not without perception and a perceived object of the same nature as Himself till He brought His creature into being, but He possessed along with His eternal perception and eternal knowledge a perceived object that was eternal and a known object that was also eternal. It is not permissible to say of God that He was not a perceiver and a knower, till the time in which He created. And if God is eternally a perceiver and a knower, and if a perceiver of the perceived and a knower of the known is truly a perceiver and a knower, and if His Word and His Spirit were perceived by Him divinely and eternally, it follows that these same Word and Spirit were eternally with Him. As to His creatures, He created them afterwards, when He wished, by means of His Word and His Spirit."

And our King said to me : "O Catholicos, if this is your religion and that of the Christians, I will say this, that the Word and the Spirit are also creatures of God, and there is no one who is uncreated except one God."—And I replied : "If the Word and the Spirit are also creatures of God like the rest, by means of whom did God create the heaven and the earth and all that they contain? The Books teach us that He created the world by means of His Word and His Spirit—by means of whom did He then create this Word and this Spirit? If He created them by means of another word and another spirit, the same conclusion would also be applied to them : will they

¹ Ps. cxix. 89 (Peshitta).

² Is. xl. 8.

be created or uncreated? If uncreated, the religion of the Catholics and of the Christians is vindicated; and if created, by means of whom did God create them? And this process of gibberish argumentation will go on indefinitely until we stop at that Word and that Spirit hidden eternally in God, by means of whom we assert that the worlds were created."

And the King said: "You appear to believe in three heads, O Catholics."—And I said: "This is certainly not so, O our victorious King. I believe in one head, the eternal God the Father, from whom the Word shone and the Spirit radiated eternally, together, and before all times, the former by way of filiation and the latter by way of procession, not in a bodily but in a divine way that befits God. This is the reason why they are not three separate Gods. The Word and the Spirit are eternally from the single nature of God, who is not one person divested of word and spirit as the weakness of the Jewish belief has it. He shines and emits rays eternally with the light of His Word and the radiation of His Spirit, and He is one head with His Word and His Spirit. I do not believe in God as stripped of His Word and Spirit, in the case of the former without mind¹ and reason, and in the case of the latter without spirit and life. It is only the idolators who believe in false gods or idols who have neither reason nor life."

And our victorious King said: "It seems to me that you believe in a vacuous God, since you believe that He has² a child."—And I answered: "O King, I do not believe that God is either vacuous or solid, because both these adjectives denote bodies. If vacuity and solidity belong to bodies, and God is a Spirit without a body, neither of the two qualifications can be ascribed to Him."—And the King said: "What then do you believe that God is if He is neither vacuous nor solid?"—And I replied to His Majesty: "God is a Spirit and an incorporeal light, from whom shine and radiate eternally and divinely His Word and His Spirit. The soul begets the mind and causes reason to proceed from it, and the fire begets the light and

¹The author is constantly playing on the Syriac word *milltha* which means both "word" and "reason."

²Cod. *is*; the reading *ith laih* seems, however, to be better than *ithauh*. The Caliph's objection bears on the fact that since God begets, something goes out of Him and He is consequently vacuous.

causes heat to proceed from its nature, and we do not say that either the soul or fire are hollow or solid. So also is the case with regard to God, about Whom we never say that He is vacuous or solid when He makes His Word shine and His Spirit radiate from His essence eternally."

And our victorious King said : "What is the difference in God between shining and radiating?"—And I replied : "There is the same difference between shining and radiating in God as that found in the illustration furnished by the fire and the apple : the fire begets the light and causes heat to proceed from it, and the apple begets the scent and causes the taste and savour to proceed from it. Although both the fire and the apple give rise, the former to light and heat, and the latter to scent and savour, yet they do not do it in the same manner and with an identical effect on the one and the same sense of our body. We receive the heat of the fire with the sense of feeling, the light with the eyes, the scent of the apple with the sense of smell, and the sweetness of its savour with the palate. From this it becomes clear that the mode of filiation is different from that of procession. This is as far as one can go from bodily comparisons and similes to the realities and to God."

And the King said : "You will not go very far with God in your bodily comparisons and similes."—And I said : "O King, because I am a bodily man I made use of bodily metaphors, and not of those that are without any body and any composition. Because I am a bodily man, and not a spiritual being, I make use of bodily comparisons in speaking of God. How could I or any other human being speak of God as He is with a tongue of flesh, with lips fashioned of mud, and with a soul and mind closely united to a body ? This is far beyond the power of men and angels to do. God Himself speaks with the prophets about Himself not as He is, because they cannot know and hear about Him as He is, but simply in the way that fits in with their own nature, a way they are able to understand. In His revelations to the ancient prophets sometimes He revealed Himself as man, sometimes as fire, sometimes as wind, and some other times in some other ways and similitudes.

"The divine David said, 'He then spoke in visions to His holy ones ;'¹ and the Prophet Hosea said on behalf of God, 'I have

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 19 (Peshitta).

multiplied my visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets ;¹ and one of the Apostles of Christ said, 'God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto our fathers by the prophets.'² If God appeared and spake to the ancient in bodily similitudes and symbols, we with stronger reason find ourselves completely unable to speak of God and to understand anything concerning Him except through bodily similitudes and metaphors. I shall here make bold and assert that I hope I shall not deserve any blame from your Majesty if I say that you are in the earth the representative of God for the earthly people ; now God maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and the unjust.³ Your Majesty also in the similitude of God will make us worthy of forgiveness if in the fact of being earthly beings we speak of God in an earthly way and not in a spiritual way like spiritual beings."

And our victorious King said : "You are right in what you said before and say now on the subject that God is above all the thoughts and minds of created beings, and that all the thoughts and minds of created beings are lower not only than God Himself but also His work. The fact, however, that you put the servant and the Lord on the same footing you make the creator equal with the created, and in this you fall into error and falsehood."

And I replied : "O my Sovereign, that the Word and the Spirit of God should be called servants and created I considered and consider not far from unbelief. If the Word and the Spirit are believed to be from God, and God is conceived to be a Lord and not a servant, His Word and Spirit are also, by inference, lords and not servants. It is one and the same freedom that belongs to God and to His Word and Spirit, and they are called Word and Spirit of God not in an unreal, but in a true, sense. The kingdom which my victorious Sovereign possesses is the same as that held by his word and his spirit, so that no one separates his word and his spirit from his kingdom, and he shines in the diadem of kingdom together with his word and his spirit in a way that they are not three Kings, and in a way that he does not shine in the diadem of kingdom apart from his word and his spirit.

¹ Hos. xii. 10.

² Heb. i. 1.

³ Matt. v. 45.

“If it please your Majesty, O my powerful Sovereign, I will also say this : the splendour and the glory of the kingdom shine in one and the same way in the Commander of the Faithful¹ and in his sons Mūsa and Hārūn,² and in spite of the fact that kingdom and lordship in them are one, their personalities are different. For this reason no one would venture to consider, without the splendour of kingdom, not only the Commander of the Faithful but also the beautiful flowers and majestic blossoms that budded and blossomed out of him ; indeed the three of them blossom in an identical kingdom, and this one and the same kingdom shines and radiates in each one of them, so that no one dares to ascribe servitude to any of them. In a small and partial way the same light of kingdom, lordship, and divinity shines and radiates eternally in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, or if one prefers to put it, in God, His Word, and His Spirit, and no one is allowed to give to any of them the name of servant. If the Word and the Spirit are servants of God, while they are from God Himself, the logical conclusion to be drawn I leave to a tongue other than mine to utter.”

And the King said : “It is very easy for your tongue, O Catholicos, to prove the existence of that Lord and God, and the existence also of that consubstantial servant, and to draw conclusions sometimes or to abstain from them some other times, but the minds and the will of rational beings are induced to follow not your mind which is visible in your conclusions, but the law of nature and the inspired Books.”

And I replied : “O our victorious King, I have proved my words that I have uttered in the first day and to-day both from nature and from Book. So far as arguments from nature are concerned, I argued, confirmed, and corroborated my words sometimes from the soul with its mind and its reason ; sometimes from the fire with its light and its heat ; sometimes from the apple with its scent and its savour ; and some other times from your Majesty and from the rational and royal flowers that grew from it : Mūsa and Hārūn, the sons of your Majesty. As to the inspired Books, I proved the object under

¹ The Caliph Mahdi himself.

² Hārūn is of course the future and famous Hārūn ar-Rashīd. About Mūsa, the other son of the Caliph Mahdi, see Ṭabari, *Annales*, iii. 1, pp. 452-458.

discussion sometimes from Moses, sometimes from David, and some other times I appealed to the *Qur'ān*, as a witness to prove my statement.

“God said to the prophet David and caused him further to prophesy in the following manner concerning His Word and His Spirit, ‘I have set up my King on my holy hill of Zion.’¹ Before this He had called Him His Christ, ‘Against the Lord and against His Christ.’² If the Christ of God is a King, it follows that the Christ is not a servant but a King. Afterwards David called Him twice Son, ‘Thou art my Son and this day I have begotten Thee,’³ and, ‘Kiss the Son lest the Lord be angry and ye perish from His way.’⁴ If the Christ, therefore, is a Son, as God called Him through the prophet David, and if no son is a servant, it follows, O King, that the Christ is not a servant. In another passage the same prophet David called the Christ ‘Lord,’ ‘Son,’ and ‘A priest for ever,’ because he said, ‘The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand.’⁵ And in order to show that Christ is of the same nature and power as God, he said on behalf of the Father as follows, ‘In the beauties of holiness from the womb I have begotten Thee from the beginning.’⁶ God, therefore, called Christ ‘a Lord’ through the prophet David, and since no true Lord is a servant, it follows that Christ is not a servant.⁷

“Further, Christ has been called through David one ‘begotten of God’ both ‘from eternity’ and ‘In the beauties of holiness from the womb.’ Since no one begotten of God is a servant, the Christ, therefore, O King of Kings, is not a servant and created, but He is uncreated and a Lord. God said also through the prophet Isaiah to Ahaz, King of Israel, ‘Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called—not a servant—but Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.’⁸ The same Isaiah said, ‘For unto

¹ Ps. ii. 6.

² Ps. ii. 2.

³ Ps. ii. 7.

⁴ Ps. ii. 12.

⁵ Ps. cx. 1 and 4.

⁶ Ps. cx. 3 (Peshitta).

⁷ The Muslim apologist, ‘Ali b. Rabban Ṭabari, argues that the term “lord” in Syriac *māra* is applied sometimes in the Bible to men, and therefore in Deut. xxxiii. 23; Is. xl. 10-11 and lxiii. 14-16 the word designates Muhammad. See *Kitāb ad-Dīn*, pp. 87, 100, and 116 of my edition. The idea that the word *māra*, “Lord,” refers sometimes in the Bible to men is of course taken by Ṭabari from Syrian commentators whom he knew perfectly.

⁸ Is. vii. 14; Matt. i. 23.

us a Child—and not a servant—is born, and unto us a Son—not a servant and a created being—is given, and His name has been called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God of the Worlds.’¹ If the Christ, therefore, is the Son of God, this Son of God, as God Himself spoke through the prophet Isaiah, is the ‘mighty God of the worlds,’ and not a servant in subjection, but a Lord and a Prince. It follows, O our victorious King, that the Christ is surely a Lord and a Prince, and not a servant in subjection.

“As your Majesty would wax angry if your children were called servants, so also God will be wrathful if anybody called His Word and His Spirit servants. As the honour and dishonour of the children of your Majesty redound on you, so also and in a higher degree the honour and dishonour of God’s Word and Spirit redound on Him. It is for this reason that Christ said in the Gospel, ‘He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent Him,’² and, ‘He who honoureth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God shall abide on him.’³

“The above is written in the Gospel. I heard also that it is written in the *Ḳur’ān* that Christ is the Word and the Spirit of God,⁴ and not a servant. If Christ is the Word and the Spirit of God, as the *Ḳur’ān* testifies, He is not a servant but a Lord, because the Word and the Spirit of God are Lords. It is by this method, O our God-loving King, based on the law of nature and on divinely inspired words, and not on purely human argumentation, word, and thought, that I both in the present and in the first conversation have demonstrated the lordship and the sonship of Christ, and the Divine Trinity.”⁵

Our victorious King said: “Has not the Christ been called also several times a servant by the prophets?”—And I said: “I am aware, O my Sovereign, of the fact that the Christ has also been called a servant, but that this appellation does not imply a real servitude is borne out by the illustration that may be taken from the status of *Hārūn*, the blossom and the flower of your Majesty. He is now

¹ Is. ix. 6.

² John v. 23.

³ John iii. 36, where “believeth” for “honoureth.”

⁴ *Ḳur’ān*, iv. 169. Cf. iii. 40.

⁵ Some of the above Biblical verses are quoted also by the Christian apologist Kindi in his *Risālah*, pp. 146-148.

called by everybody 'Heir Presumptive,'¹ but after your long reign, he will be proclaimed King and Sovereign by all. He served his military service through the mission entrusted to him by your Majesty to repair to Constantinople against the rebellious and tyrannical Byzantines.² Through this service and mission he will not lose³ his royal sonship and his freedom, nor his princely honour and glory, and acquire the simple name of servitude and subjection, like any other individual. So also is the case with the Christ, the Son of the heavenly King. He fulfilled the will of His Father in His coming on His military mission to mankind, and in His victory over sin, death, and Satan. He did not by this act lose His royal Sonship, and did not become a stranger to Divinity, Lordship, and Kingdom, nor did He put on the dishonour of servitude and subjection like any other individual.

"Further, the prophets called Him not by what He was, but by what He was believed by the Jews to be. In one place the prophets called Him, according to the belief of the Jews, 'A Servant, a Rejected one, one without form or comeliness, a Stricken one, a Smitten one, a man of many sorrows.'⁴ In another place, however, it has been said of Him that, 'He is the fairest of the children of men,⁵ the Mighty God of the worlds, the Father of the future world, the Messenger of the Great Counsel of God, Prince of Peace, a Son, and a Child,⁶ as we demonstrated in our former replies. The last adjectives refer to His nature, and He has been spoken of through the first adjectives on account of the mission that He performed to His father for the salvation of all, and in compliance with the belief of the Jews who only looked at Him in His humanity, and were totally incapable of considering Him in the nature of His divinity that clothed itself completely with humanity.

¹ Arab. *walī al-'ahd*.

² This expedition of Hārūn, son of the Caliph Mahdi, against the Byzantines led by Nicetas and governed by the Empress Irene and Leo is told at some length on the Muslim side by Tabari under the year A.H. 165 (A.D. 781), *Annales*, iii. i. pp. 503-505. Cf. also the historians, Ibn Khaldūn, iii. p. 213, and Muḳaddasi, p. 150, etc.

³ It appears that this second conversation between Timothy and the Caliph took place in A.D. 781, while Hārūn, the Caliph's son, had not returned yet from his expedition against the Byzantines. The sentences used in the text do not seem to yield to another interpretation.

⁴ Is. liii. 2-4.

⁵ Ps. xlv. 2.

⁶ Is. ix. 6.

“Some ignorant Byzantines who know nothing of the kingship and sonship of your son Hārūn, may consider him and call him a simple soldier and not a Prince and a King, but those who know him with certainty will not call him a simple soldier, but will consider him and call him King and Prince. In this way the prophets considered the Christ our Lord as God, King, and Son, but the unbelieving Jews believed Him to be a servant and a mere man under subjection. He has indeed been called not only a servant, on account of His service, but also a stone, a door, the way, and a lamb.¹ He was called a stone, not because He was a stone by nature, but because of the truth of His teaching ; and a door, because it is through Him that we entered into the knowledge of God : and the way, because it is He who in His person opened to us the way of immortality ; and a lamb, because He was immolated for the life of the world. In this same way He was called also a servant, not because He was a servant by nature, but on account of the service which He performed for our salvation, and on account of the belief of the Jews.

“I heard also that it is written in your Book that the Christ was sent not as a servant, but as a son, ‘I swear by this mountain and by the begetter and His Child.’² A child is like his father, whether the latter be a servant or a freeman, and if it is written, ‘The Christ doth surely not disdain to be a servant of God,’³ it is also written that God doth not disdain to be a Father to Christ because He said through the prophet about the Christ, ‘He will be to Me a Son’⁴—and not a servant’—and, also ‘I will make Him a first-born—not a servant—and will raise Him up above the Kings of the earth.’⁵ If Christ has been raised by God above the Kings of the earth, He who is above the Kings cannot be a servant, Christ is, therefore, O King, not a servant and one under

¹ All these adjectives are known to the Muslim apologist Ibn Rabban. *Kitāb-ad-Din*, p. 83 of my edition.

² *Qur’ān* xc. 1-3, is interpreted by late Muslim commentators to mean : ‘I do not swear by the Lord of the land . . . nor by the begetter and what He begets.’ In the early Islam the first word was evidently read as *la-uksimu*, ‘I shall swear’ (with an affirmation), instead of *lā-uksimu*, ‘I shall not swear’ (with a negation). I believe that the ancient reading and interpretation preserved in the present apology are more in harmony with the *Qur’ānic* text.

³ *Qur’ān* iv. 170. The author is using the Arabic word *istankafa* as in the *Qur’ān*.

⁴ 2 Sam. vii. 14 : Heb. i. 5.

⁵ Ps. lxxxix. 27.

subjection, but a King of Kings and a Lord. It is not possible that a servant should be above angels and kings.

“God said also about the Christ through the same prophet David, ‘His name shall endure for ever, and His name is before the sun. All men shall be blessed by Him, and all shall glorify Him.’¹ How can the name of a servant endure for ever, and how can the name of a servant be before the sun and other creatures, and how can all nations be blessed by a servant, and how can all nations glorify a servant? God said to His Word and His Spirit, ‘Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt shepherd them with a rod of iron. Be wise now, O ye Kings, and be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and hold to Him with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye stray from His way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.’² If all the nations and the uttermost parts of the earth are the inheritance and the possession of the Christ, and if he who has under his authority all the nations and the uttermost parts of the earth is not a servant, the Christ, therefore, O our victorious Sovereign, is not a servant, but a Lord and Master; and if the Kings and the judges of the earth have been ordered by God to serve the Christ with fear and hold to Him with trembling, it is impossible that this same Christ who is served, held to, and kissed by the Kings and judges of the earth should be a servant.

“It follows, O our victorious Sovereign, that the Christ is a King of Kings, since Kings worshipped and worship Him; and a Lord and judge of judges, since judges served and serve Him with fear. If He were a servant, what kind of a wrath and destruction could He bring on the unbelievers, and what kind of a blessing could He bestow on those who put their trust in Him? That He is a Lord over all and a Master over all, He testifies about Himself, and His testimony is true. Indeed He said to His disciples when He was about to ascend to heaven, and mount on the Cherubim and fly on the spiritual wings of the Seraphim, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.’³ If Christ has been given all the power of heaven and earth, He who

¹ Ps. lxxii. 17 (Peshitta). See above p. 56 how Ibn Rabban, the Muslim apologist, refers this verse to Muḥammad.

² Ps. ii. 8-12 (Peshitta).

³ Matt xxviii. 18.

is constituted in this way in heaven and in earth is God over all, and Christ, therefore, is God over all. If He is not a true God, how can He have power in heaven and in earth ; and if He has power in heaven and in earth, how can He not be true God ? Indeed He has power in heaven and in earth because He is God, since any one who has power in heaven and in earth is God.

“The Archangel Gabriel testified to this when he announced His conception to the always virgin Mary, ‘And He shall reign over the house of Jacob, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.’¹ If the Christ reigns for ever, and if the one who reigns for ever there is no end to his kingdom, it follows, O our Sovereign, that Christ is a Lord and God over all. The prophet Daniel testified also to this in saying, ‘I saw one like the son of men coming on the clouds of heaven, and they brought Him near before the Ancient of days, who gave Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all nations should serve Him and worship Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom shall not pass away and be destroyed.’² If the kingdom of Christ shall not pass away and be destroyed, He is God over all, and Christ is, therefore, God over all, O our King : over the prophets and the angels.³

“If Christ has been called by the prophets God and Lord, and if it has been said by some people that God suffered and died in the flesh, it is evident that it is the human nature which the Word-God took from us that suffered and died, because in no Book, neither in the prophets nor in the Gospel, do we find that God Himself died in the flesh, but we do find in all of them that the Son and Jesus Christ died in the flesh. The expression that God suffered and died in the flesh is not right.”

And our victorious King asked : “And who are those who say that God suffered and died in the flesh.”—And I answered : “The Jacobites and Melchites say that God suffered and died in the flesh, as to us we not only do not assert that God suffered and died in our nature, but that He even removed the passibility of our human nature that He put on from Mary by His impassibility, and its mortality by His immortality, and He made it to resemble divinity, to the extent that a created being is capable of resembling his Creator. A created

¹ Luke i. 33.

² Dan. vii. 13-14.

³ About two words are here missing in the MS.

being cannot make himself resemble his Creator, but the Creator is able to bring His creature to His own resemblance. It is not the picture that makes the painter paint a picture in its own resemblance, but it is the painter that paints the picture to his own resemblance ; it is not the wood that works and fashions a carpenter in its resemblance, but it is the carpenter that fashions the wood in his resemblance. In this same way it is not the mortal and passible nature that renders God passible and mortal like itself, but it is by necessity God that renders the passible and mortal human nature impassible and immortal like Himself. On the one hand, this is what the Jacobites and Melchites say, and, on the other, this is what we say. It behoves your Majesty to decide who are those who believe rightly and those who believe wrongly."

And our victorious King said : " In this matter you believe more rightly than the others. Who dares to assert that God dies ? I think that even demons do not say such a thing. In what, however, you say concerning one Word and Son of God, all of you are wrong."— And I replied to his Majesty : " O our victorious King, in this world we are all of us as in a dark house in the middle of the night. If at night and in a dark house a precious pearl happens to fall in the midst of people, and all become aware of its existence, every one would strive to pick up the pearl, which will not fall to the lot of all but to the lot of one only, while one will get hold of the pearl itself, another one of a piece of glass, a third one of a stone or of a bit of earth, but every one will be happy and proud that he is the real possessor of the pearl. When, however, night and darkness disappear, and light and day arise, then every one of those men who had believed that they had the pearl, would extend and stretch his hand towards the light, which alone can show what every one has in hand. He who possesses the pearl will rejoice and be happy and pleased with it, while those who had in hand pieces of glass and bits of stone only will weep and be sad, and will sigh and shed tears.

" In this same way we children of men are in this perishable world as in darkness. The pearl of the true faith fell in the midst of all of us, and it is undoubtedly in the hand of one of us, while all of us believe that we possess the precious object. In the world to come, however, the darkness of mortality passes, and the fog of ignorance dissolves, since it is the true and the real light to which the fog of ignorance is

absolutely foreign. In it the possessors of the pearl will rejoice, be happy and pleased, and the possessors of mere pieces of stone will weep, sigh, and shed tears, as we said above."

And our victorious King said : "The possessors of the pearl are not known in this world, O Catholicos."—And I answered : "They are partially known, O our victorious King."—And our victorious and very wise King said : "What do you mean by partially known, and by what are they known as such ?"—And I answered : "By good works, O our victorious King, and pious deeds, and by the wonders and miracles that God performs through those who possess the true faith. As the lustre of a pearl is somewhat visible even in the darkness of the night, so also the rays of the true faith shine to some extent even in the darkness and the fog of the present world. God indeed has not left the pure pearl of the faith completely without testimony and evidence, first in the prophets and then in the Gospel. He first confirmed the true faith in Him through Moses, once by means of the prodigies and miracles that He wrought in Egypt, and another time when He divided the waters of the Red Sea into two and allowed the Israelites to cross it safely, but drowned the Egyptians in its depths. He also split and divided the Jordan into two through Joshua, son of Nun, and allowed the Israelites to cross it without any harm to themselves, and tied the sun and the moon to their own places until the Jewish people were well avenged upon their enemies. He acted in the same way through the prophets who rose in different generations, viz. : through David, Elijah, and Elisha.

"Afterwards He confirmed the faith through Christ our Lord by the miracles and prodigies which He wrought for the help of the children of men. In this way the Disciples performed miracles greater even than those wrought by Christ. These signs, miracles, and prodigies wrought in the name of Jesus Christ are the bright rays and the shining lustre of the precious pearl of the faith, and it is by the brightness of such rays that the possessors of this pearl which is so full of lustre and so precious that it outweighs all the world in the balance, are known."

And our victorious King said : "We have hope in God that we are the possessors of this pearl, and that we hold it in our hands."—And I replied : "Amen, O King. But may God grant us that we too may share it with you, and rejoice in the shining and beaming

lustre of the pearl ! God has placed the pearl of His faith before all of us like the shining rays of the sun, and every one who wishes can enjoy the light of the sun.

“ We pray God, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, to preserve the crown of the kingdom and the throne of the Commander of the Faithful for multitudinous days and numerous years ! May He also raise after him Mūsa and Hārūn and ‘Ali¹ to the throne of his kingdom for ever and ever ! May He subjugate before them and before their descendants after them all the barbarous nations, and may all the kings and governors of the world serve our Sovereign and his sons after him till the day in which the Kingdom of Heaven is revealed from heaven to earth ! ”

And our victorious King said : “ Miracles have been and are sometimes performed even by unbelievers.”—And I replied to his Majesty : “ These, O our victorious King, are not miracles but deceptive similitudes of the demons, and are performed not by the prophets of God and by holy men, but by idolaters and wicked men. This is the reason why I said that good works and miracles are the lustre of the pearl of the faith. Indeed, Moses performed miracles in Egypt, and the sorcerers Jannes and Jambres performed them also there, but Moses performed them by the power of God, and the sorcerers through the deceptions of the demons. The power of God, however, prevailed, and that of the demons was defeated.

“ In Rome also Simon Cephas and Simon Magus performed miracles, but the former performed them by the power of God, and the latter by the power of the demons, and for this reason Simon Cephas was honoured and Simon Magus was laughed at and despised by every one, and his deception was exposed before the eyes of all celestial and terrestrial beings.”

At this our victorious King rose up and entered his audience chamber, and I left him and returned in peace to my patriarchal residence.

Here ends the controversy of the Patriarch Mar Timothy I. with Mahdi, the Caliph of the Muslims. May eternal praise be to God !

¹ A third son of Mahdi, nicknamed ibn Rūṭah. See Tabari, *Annales*, iii. 3, pp. 137, 501, 522, 1035. The Cod. has erroneously ‘Alah.