

The Use of the Book of Isaiah in Catholicos Timotheos' Dialogue with Caliph al-Mahdi

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Abstract

The Catholicos Timotheos was the first East Syriac Patriarch, who actually moved permanently in the new city of the Caliphs, Baghdad. He is one of the most interesting authors of the Church of the East, who were involved in the Christian-Islamic dialogue.

No other prophet is so often cited by Timotheos in dialogue with the Caliph as the prophet Isaiah. The Isaiah book is to be seen in Timotheos as biblical basis for the acceptance of Christ (Isaiah 7.14; 9.5; 35.4-6 and 53.5). In Timotheos' opinion such passages show a kind of image of Jesus Christ. The image of Christ is already in the prophets very visible, not only in the Gospels. In contrast, he is of the opinion that Mohammed is not identified in the statements of the prophets.

With his understanding of figure of servant from Isaiah's book, as evidence against the divinity of Jesus, the caliph compels the patriarch to abandon this figure of Jesus. Timotheos answers to the Caliph giving a valid argument: although the son of the Caliph appeared during the campaign against Byzantium only as soldier, he remained nevertheless still the son of the Caliph. Likewise it was in case of Jesus: although he appeared merely as servants, he remains Lord and Son of God.