

THE NEW TEXT OF THE KURAN.

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IT is certainly a notable discovery to be able to show, by the aid of an early Syriac translation, that the Kuran was in the first days of its circulation a somewhat different book from the authorised Bible of Islam.

Dr. Mingana has done a service to Islam itself in drawing attention to the discrepancies between the Syriac text and the official Arabic. He is, however, too sound a scholar, and too much in sympathy with all that is best in Moslem faith and tradition, to exaggerate these differences and make more of them than may be lawfully affirmed by an unprejudiced reader.

If I may tread in the footsteps of so judicious a scholar as my good friend Mingana, I should like to ask whether the passages which appear to have been excised from the Kuran will throw any light upon the history of the religion itself.

I will confine myself to two passages : the first, the converse between Allah and the Pen ; the second, the attitude of the angels at the creation of Adam.

First, *the Pen*. It runs as follows :—

“ He first created the Pen of the writer, and He said to the Pen, ‘ Walk and write,’ and the Pen answered, ‘ What shall I write ? ’ and He said, ‘ Write concerning what happens till the end.’ ”

Dr. Mingana reports the existence of very early Moslem traditions dealing with this verse. We do not affirm more with regard to the authorities that he quotes than that they at least establish an early currency of the tradition about Allah and the Pen, even if they do not finally prove its canonicity. Our enquiry is in another direction. We want to know where the statement came from, which is here credited to Mohammed himself. The answer seems to be in the following direction.

The Arabic for pen is *kalam*, which is immediately recognizable as being related to the Latin *calamus* (= reed), however the relation is to be explained. There is, however, another word hardly to be distinguished from it, viz. *kalam* (= word). Now we begin to see daylight. Mohammed (or some one who passes in his name), has heard it said that God first of all created His Word, and that He conferred with His Word in contemplating the creative acts. This is the early Christian doctrine, viz. that Wisdom, later identified with the Logos or Word, was the beginning of the Creation of God: "the Lord created me the beginning of His way for His works," says the writer of the eighth chapter of Proverbs (LXX): and for the conference between God and His Word at the Creation, it was customary to refer to the first chapter of Genesis, "Let Us make," etc. It would be superfluous to give further illustrations. The reference to the *Creation* of the Word, which caused so much trouble in the controversy between the Arians and Athanasians, is also too well known to need illustration.

Mohammed, then, heard a Christian teacher explain how God first of all created the Word, and took it to mean that the first thing God created was the Pen. Hence the curious passage in the new Kuranic supplement. It is one more instance of the dependence of the Kuran upon Christian sources, and may be added to the story of Jesus' creating the mud-sparrows and other similar matter.

Second: *Adam and the Angels*. The sentence which it is proposed to add to the canonical text runs as follows:—

"And Adam was fashioned and was lying on the earth forty years without soul, and the angels passed by and saw him."

Here also we leave the traditional evidence for the currency of the passage in the hands of Dr. Mingana. Our concern is to show, as in the previous passage about the Pen, that we are here drawing upon a Christian or a Jewish source, including under the term Christian such traditions as may be classed as heretical or Gnostic.

First of all with regard to a possible Christian origin for the passage.

The Christian writer, Hippolytus of Rome, tells us in his account of a heretical sect called the Naassenes (Serpent-worshippers?) that they or some closely related sects, made the following statements with regard to the creation of Adam:—

“This Adam is the man whom alone earth brought forth : and he lay inanimate, unmoved, as still as a statue, being an image of Him who is above.” Hippolytus, *Refutation*, v. 2.

Here we have a Gnostic statement as to the creation of Adam—that he lay upon the ground, and was without a soul, as the new passage from the Kuran affirms.

We are not, however, limited to Gnostic or heretical sources for parallels to the angels who look upon the soul-less Adam. There is a long line of Jewish tradition as to the relation between Adam and the angels. The starting point is in the Scripture itself where God says, “Let Us make man.” In the beginning there was no thought of interpreting *Us* as a plural of majesty. The early disputes between Jews and Christians of which we find traces in the dialogues between representatives (real or imaginary) of either faith, show clearly that the Christians said that *Us* meant *God and His Wisdom*, or *God and His Word*, which soon led to the belief that *Us* meant the *Trinity*. > The Jew, in such dialogues, replies that God was talking to the angels. For instance, in the Dialogue of *Athanasius and Zacchæus* we find as follows :—

Athanasius said : “Certainly God was speaking to some one when He said, Let Us make man in Our image and likeness.”

Zacchæus said : “He was talking to Himself.”

Athanasius said : “But He does not say, Let Me make man, but, Let Us make.”

Zacchæus said : “He was talking to the angels.”

Dial. c. 5.

Here is something similar from the Latin Patristic literature : in the treatise of Maximus of Turin *Against the Jews*, we find as follows :—

Audi adhuc : dixit Deus faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram ; et fecit Deus hominem, ad imaginem Dei fecit illum. Dicit forte Judæus : ad angelos Deus dixit : convincitur in eo quod dicitur, et Deus facit hominem ; non enim ‘angeli’ dixit ‘fecerunt,’ sed Deus, inquit, fecit hominem ; Deus dixit et Deus fecit ; id est, Pater imperavit et Filius adimplevit.

The explanation must be a very early one, for it has influenced the Christian Scriptures. It underlies the argument of the first chapter of the Hebrews, where the “ministering angels” appear abruptly, to be regarded as inferior to the Son by whom the worlds were made. In

the Jewish literature there are abundant traces of God's conference with the angels, *re* the creation of man, accompanied by the refusal of certain angels to worship man, when created. For instance, in *Bereshith Rabba* we are told that "When the Holy One, Blessed be He, desired to create man, He took counsel with the ministering angels." Not unnaturally, the angelic powers replied by quoting the eighth Psalm, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Similar traces of contempt on the part of the angels are found in the *Ḳuran* (Sura 11) : where the Lord says to the angels, "I am about to place a vice-gerent upon earth," and the angels reply, "Wilt thou place there one who will do evil therein, and shed blood? but we celebrate Thy praise and sanctify Thee." The contemptuous attitude of the angels resulted in open rebellion, and in the refusal to worship the newly-formed first-born Man, when he was brought into the world. When, therefore, in the new *Ḳuranic* sentence, we find the angels looking upon Adam, not yet animate, but only shaped, we can see that the statement requires completion. They not only look, but they despise Adam, until God convinces them of their error. There is abundant Jewish evidence on the first point, so that it would be possible to argue that here, as elsewhere, Mohammed was under Jewish influence.

But why does the new text say that Adam was lying *forty years* on the ground without soul? This must be an attempt to harmonize the two accounts of the creation of man in the first two chapters of Genesis; we are told that God created man in His image, and then later that He breathed into his nostrils and he became a living soul. An interval of time is postulated, during which the new-made man lies soul-less. This forty years interim of life, if life it can be called, has again a Jewish look about it, and can hardly be a Moslem invention. So we infer finally that Jewish tradition underlies the new verse.