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Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, grec 1853, f. 186v

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he was also indebted to them on the crucial doctrine that features in the passage quoted above. When Euxitheus explains to his pagan opponent that “The Creator is a creator not because of things that individually come to be, but from his own being”, he is clearly endorsing the formula of the causation “for the own being” of the principle, ἀὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, that is based on Plotinus’ doctrine of causality, but was created by Syrianus, *In Metaph.*, pp.114.35-115.3 Kroll (in all likelihood echoing the formulae of Porphyry’s *Sent.* 13), and then largely adopted by all the subsequent Neoplatonists, especially Proclus (see e.g. *El. Th.* 122, p.108.13-17 Dodds).

In the same vein, Zacharias’ way of arguing for creation versus eternity pivots on his endorsement of the Neoplatonic rule of the independence of cause with respect to the mode of being of its effect. In Zacharias’ dialogue *Ammonius* the question of creation versus eternalism becomes prominent. As Gerts puts it in his *Introduction* (pp. 95-9), “Most significant (...) is the difference in content between the two works: the pre-existence of the soul and its reincarnation are not discussed in Zacharias’ dialogue at all, but treated at considerable length in the *Theophrastus*. On the other hand, the question of the eternity or otherwise of the world does not play a major role in Aeneas’ dialogue, but is the main subject of Zacharias’. (...) [L]ike Philoponus after him, Zacharias is eager to demonstrate how Plato, on the literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*, disagrees with Aristotle on the eternity of the world. The hostile report of Ammonius’ project of harmonising Plato and Aristotle should thus be read against this background of Christian attempts to drag Plato into the creationist camp” (pp. 97-7). In doing so, however, Zacharias does the same as Aeneas did before him: he turns against the Platonist “Ammonius” the Platonic doctrine of causality, that counts for him as the most natural account of the way in which God acts. “But in my view” says the Christian opponent of Ammonius “you people do not think that God is self-sufficient and in need of nothing and perfect, and least of all in need of what has come to be by him. For if he is not able to exist without this universe, by its existence this universe is giving him the greatest portion of himself, if not the whole, i.e. his very being. By this reasoning the universe would be his cause, not he that of the universe. For then, that which needs something else to ensure its existence (*sustasis*) would also be caused by that of which it is the cause. (...) That argument of yours turns the principle on its head and get things jumbled up, since [*sc.* on your view] God cannot exist without this universe. But if he, being good, wanted what exists to exist, not needing for his existence (for he existed before it, since he is perfect and stands in need of nothing, but is himself complete self-sufficiency), it is therefore not necessary that the product is co-eternal with its maker. The maker must be higher than his product, and the creator than what he creates, since what is made is second to the maker in cause and time” (p. 124). The point here is obviously less that of establishing whether or not this is a sound argument, than of noticing how deep the influence of the Neoplatonic causality on Zacharias’ way of reasoning is. The latter insists that the cause is greater than its effect, a principle that a Platonist should endorse and one that Zacharias thinks his opponent does not meet.

As we have seen before, Sorabji’s point in the general introduction is that “Philoponus goes beyond the Gazans in many ways (...). It is important that he almost always attacks his opponents on their own terms, quoting Christian Scripture only as an addition to the argument, and not as the main consideration, whereas the Gazans often play only to the Christian gallery” (p. xxii). This is surely true, but the force of the Neoplatonic interpretation of the causality of the supra-sensible principles spread far and wide, and influenced also writers who were in all likelihood unaware of the fact that they were crediting the God of *Genesis* with the kind of causality elaborated by Plotinus out of that of Plato’s account of the intelligible Forms.

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Controverses sur les écritures canoniques de l’Islam, sous la direction de D. De Smet - M. A. Amir-Moezzi, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2014 (Islam. Nouvelles approches), pp. 432

This collection of essays is the output of a series of lectures organized by the “Laboratoire d’études sur les monothéismes” of the French CNRS, aiming at unravelling the origins and multi-faceted implications of the creation of the canonic Scriptures of Islam: the Qur’ān and the corpus of the *hadīths*. “Bien que l’islam soit souvent considéré comme la ‘Religion du Livre’ par excellence” say the two editors in their Introduction “l’élaboration de ses écrits canoniques – en premier lieu le Coran et le Hadith – a été un processus long et

compliqué dont la recherche moderne, entamée dès le XIX^e siècle, entrevoit les mécanismes avec une précision croissante” (p. 7). The essays collected in this volume are a most welcome contribution to this thorny issue.

P. Athanassiadi, “Un calife avant la lettre: l’empereur Julien et son hellénisme” (pp. 19-50) develops an idea already advanced in her 2006 book *La lutte pour l’orthodoxie dans le platonisme tardif: de Numénius à Damascius*, namely that late Neoplatonists evolved towards the creation of a sort of “church”, with its canonic scriptures and rituals; in this paper, she claims that this attitude created a model for the rise of Islam, without however addressing the question of how the transmission of this model might have happened from the 4th century court of Julian the Emperor to the 7th century Mecca. Ch. Batsch, “La canonisation de la Bible hébraïque au filtre des manuscrits de Qumran” (pp. 51-75) explores the interpretive adaptations that a written corpus undergoes in order to reach a canonical status. The “parabiblical” texts of Qumrān are analyzed as an example of reworking that verges on exegesis, and raises the question of how different from the original a text need to be to be called a “rewritten” Bible.

The topic of the Qur’ān with respect to its Biblical “subtext” is discussed also in the two articles by Van Reeth and Dye. J.M.F. van Reeth, “Les prophéties oraculaires dans le Coran et leur antécédents: Montan et Mani” (pp. 77-145) offers a comparison of the prophetic logia embedded in the Qur’ān with the Montanist “Oracles” and “Testimonia” on the one hand, and with the Manichean *Kephalaia* on the other. Various elements point to the possibility that Muḥammad and the early Muslim community were inspired by religious groups with pronounced Montanist and Manichean traits. All these texts, including the Qur’ān, bear the hallmark of exegeses of the Bible, and count as many examples of the canonization of a revealed discourse. G. Dye, “Réflexions méthodologiques sur la ‘rhétorique coranique’” (pp. 147-76) works on the assumption that the methods and criteria of textual criticism as adopted for the Old and New Testament, and in particular the principle that the core ideas were shaped by their transmission, should be adopted for the Qur’ān as well. This article contains an in-depth discussion of the view that the decisive key to understanding the Qur’ān is its analysis according to the criteria of Semitic rhetoric – a view that is currently widespread, and that Dye challenges, at least to some extent.

G. Miskinzoda, “Some Remarks on Oral and Written Tradition in Early Islam” (pp. 177-98) explores the opposition to writing down *ḥadīths* that is attested in the early Muslim community. At variance with the Qur’ān, whose writing did not meet objections, the Tradition was conceived of, at least by a part of the early Muslim community, as something to be kept unwritten. The main point in this opposition was the reluctance to have, or create, another book besides the Qur’ān. Miskinzoda accounts for the different interpretations of this fact propounded by Goldziehr, Sezgin, Schoeler, and Cook. M.A. Amir-Moezzi, “al-Ṣayḥ al-Mufīd (m. 413/1022) et la question de la falsification du Coran” (pp. 199-229) deals with the ṣīī topic of *tahrīf*, the “falsification” of the Qur’ān, focussing on the work of the imāmī scholar al-Mufīd. Although engaged in the “rationalist” movement typical of the post-Buyyid Ṣī‘a – a movement that propounded in various ways a rapprochement with Sunni Islam – al-Mufīd continues to maintain that the original Qur’ān was falsified in the ‘Uṭmānian recension, the canonized text (*al-muṣḥaf*). The article by D. De Smet, “Le Coran: son origine, sa nature et sa falsification. Positions ismaéliennes controversées” (pp. 231-68) is devoted to an analysis of the different attitudes towards the Qur’ān in the Sunni and Ismā‘īli traditions. At variance with the Sunni approach, the Ismā‘īli tradition paid no attention to the Sunni typical exegetical topics, such as the so-called “circumstances of the revelation” or the variant readings: the Ismā‘īli approach does not focus on the *lafz*, the “letter” of the revelation, but on its spiritual or esoteric meaning (*ta’wīl*). After having highlighted the Neoplatonic sources of the Ismā‘īli approach, De Smet presents its implications for the topic of the *tahrīf* of the ‘Uṭmānian recension of the Qur’ān. Especially interesting for the readership of *Studia graeco-arabica* is the fact that De Smet detects the Plotinian topic of non-verbal communication among souls when they dwell in the intelligible world as the (silent) source of the Ismā‘īli author Ġa‘far ibn Maṣū‘ al-Yaman (d. ca. 957). The *Book of Decision on Religions, Heresies, and Sects* by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) forms the core of the article by C. Adang, “Reading the Qur’ān with Ibn Ḥazm. The Question of the Sinlessness of the Prophets” (pp. 269-95). Ibn Ḥazm’s aim is to demonstrate the superiority of Islam over all other religions and doctrines and, within Islam, the superiority of Sunnism over Ṣī‘ism, a move that implies taking into account the question whether or not a prophet can disobey God. A fierce enemy of the idea that prophets are capable of deliberate transgressions of God’s command, Ibn Ḥazm ran into difficulties because of

his strong allegiance to the literalist doctrine: given that for him the only legitimate sense of the Qurʾān is the apparent one, and given that in the Qurʾān Adam and various prophets are described as having committed sins or unbelief, Ibn Ḥazm had a hard time in seeking to salvage their reputation.

M.M. Bar-Asher, “Avis musulmans sur la question de la traduction du Coran” (pp. 297-327) is an interesting survey of the opinions of jurists and theologians on whether or not it is possible to translate the Qurʾān into languages other than Arabic. The common basis for all the positions is obviously the tenet of the *ī ḡāz al-Qurʾān*, roughly speaking, the “incomparability of the Coran”, but the interpretations vary. Some followers of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 787) think that whoever reads the Qurʾān not in Arabic is not reading the Qurʾān itself but another book, and a not sacred one at that. This is also the opinion of Ibn Ḥazm. On the other hand, Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) takes into account the possibility of translating the Qurʾān into other languages for the purposes of the propagation of the faith, still emphasizing the difficulties of such an enterprise because of the dogma of the incomparability mentioned above. Among contemporary Muslim scholars, attention is paid to the position of Rašīd Rīḏā (d. 1935), the author of a *fatwā* against the translation of the Qurʾān. However, translations proved to be indispensable. Bar-Asher pays attention also to the translations made by non-Muslims, both in ancient and modern times. It is instructive to learn that translations were made of the Qurʾān into Syriac and Byzantine Greek; however, the translations of the Qurʾān into Latin, from the Middle Ages onwards (Robert of Ketton in the 12th century, Mark of Toledo in the 13th century, Ludovico Marracci in the 17th century) are not mentioned.

O. Mir-Kasimov, “The Word of Descent and the Word of Ascent in the Spectrum of the Sacred Texts in Islam” (pp. 329-72) begins with the observation that the codification and canonisation of the Qurʾān did not happen at a given point in the history of Islam, rather it was a gradual process. Compared with the process of codification of the Qurʾān, that of the corpus of the *ḥadīths* was much more flexible and hesitant. Other kinds of inspired discourse surfaced in the messianic currents of Islam, generated by the idea of a continuous guidance divinely granted to the Muslim community, until the end of human history: the *šīʿī* collections of *ḥadīths* provide a good example of this belief, since they include the words of the *šīʿī* Imāms, which represent post-Muḥammadan revelations. As an example of the “spiritual” interpretation of the Scripture (*taʾwīl*), Mir-Kasimov presents the Persian work *Ġāwidān-nāma-yi kabīr* (*The Great Book of Eternity*) by Faḍlallāh Astarābādī (d. 1394), who expresses the idea that at the end of history a Saviour will bring not a new prophetic book, but the archetype and source of all prophetic books of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. R. Brunner, “Quelques débats récents autour du hadith en Islam sunnite” (pp. 373-432) explores the problem, raised by some contemporary bizarre *fatwās*, of the *ḥadīths* as sources for jurisprudence in Sunni Islam. A very instructive survey follows of the opinions of Muslim reformist thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries (especially in India and Egypt) about whether or not the *ḥadīths* are reliable sources for lawgivers.

As the two editors say in their presentation, “Tout au long de l’histoire de l’islam, le Coran demeure une source inépuisable de controverses” (p. 8). This rich volume helps us to understand why. One of the additional, yet not minor among its merits consists in that each chapter contains a specialized bibliography: a great help to the reader.

EC

Jim Al-Khalili, *La casa della saggezza. L’epoca d’oro della scienza araba*, trad. di Andrea Migliori, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2013 (Saggi Scienze), 341 pp.

Several educational books on the transfer of learning have been published in English or French during the last decades, and some of them have been also translated into other languages. One of the first examples of this literary genre was the book by Scott L. Montgomery, *Science in Translation. Movements of Knowledge through Cultures and Time*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago - London 2000. The conversations held by Ahmed Djebbar with the historian of science Jean Rosmorduc, published under the title *Une histoire de la science arabe* (Seuil, Paris 2011) have been translated into Italian as *Storia della scienza araba. Il patrimonio intellettuale dell’Islam* (Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milano 2002). The book published by John Freely under the captivating title *Aladdin’s Lamp*, Knopf, New York 2009, has been translated into German as *Platon*