

Surah 23. Al-Muminun

Asad: NOW, INDEED, We create man out of the essence of clay,⁴

Malik: Indeed We have created man from an essence of clay,

Pickthall: Verily We created man from a product of wet earth;

Yusuf Ali: Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay);²⁸⁷²

Transliteration: Walaqad khalaqna alinsana min sulalatin min teenin

Khatab:

And indeed, We created humankind¹ from an extract of clay,

Author Comments

4 - The frequent Qur'anic references to man's being "created out of clay" or "out of dust" or (as in this instance) "out of the essence (sulalah) of clay" point to the fact that his body is composed of various organic and inorganic substances existing on or in the earth, as well as to the continuous transmutation of those substances, through the intake of earth-grown food, into reproductive cells (Razi) - thus stressing man's humble origin, and hence the debt of gratitude which he owes to God for having endowed him with a conscious soul. The past tense in verses {12-14} (lit., "We have created", "We have caused him to remain", etc.) emphasizes the fact that all this has been ordained by God and has been happening again and again ever since man was brought into being by Him; in the above context, this recurrence is brought out best by the use of the present tense.

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Adam (?).

2872 - In this beautiful passage, Allah's creative work, as far as man is concerned, is recapitulated, in order to show man's real position in this life, and the certainty of the future: to which he was referred for his reward in verses 10-11 above. For the various stages of creation, see n. 120 to ii. 117. Here we are not concerned with the earliest stage, the creation of primeval matter out of nothing. It is also a process of creation when inorganic matter becomes living matter. Thus inorganic constituents of the earth are absorbed into living matter by way of food and living matter reproduces itself by means of sperm. This is deposited in the ovum and fertilises it and rests for a time in security in the mother's womb. The first change in the fertilised ovum is the conversion into a sort of clot of thickly congealed blood; the zygote cells grow by segmentation; then the mass gradually assumes shape in its growth as a foetus. From the lump develop bones and flesh and organs and a nervous system. So far man's growth is like that of an animal, but a further process takes place which makes the infant animal into the infant man. This is the breathing from Allah's spirit into him (xv. 29). It may be a continuous process parallel to that of physical growth. The child is born; it grows; it decays and dies; but after death another chapter opens for the individual, and it is to remind us of this most momentous chapter that the previous stages are recapitulated.

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