

Concerning What is Written Against The Slave

Says the Shaykh Abu Ja'far, the mercy of Allah be on him: Our belief concerning this is that there is not a single human being (lit. "slave")¹ without having two angels specially deputed to record every one of his actions.

Whoso intends a good act, a good act is written down to his credit; and if he acts according to his intention, ten meritorious acts are set down to his credit. But if he intends a bad deed, nothing is written down against him, until he acts. When he does act, he is given seven hours.

If (within that period) he repents, his repentance will be accepted and nothing will be written against him; and if he does not, one single bad deed will be written down against him.

These angels record every act of the individual, even the act of blowing upon ashes;² and Allah the Mighty and Glorious says

"Lo! There are above you guardians, generous and recording, who know (all) that ye do" (Qur'an 82: 10-12).³

The Prince of Believers ('Ali bin Abi Talib) once upon a time passed by a man, who was talking at random.⁴ And he ('Ali) said: O man, you are dictating to your angel a letter to Allah, so speak what concerns you and omit that which does not concern you.

'Ali, on whom be peace, said: A *Muslim* so long as he remains silent is recorded as doing a good act; but when he speaks, he is written down either as righteous or as unrighteous.

And the two angels reside amongst the sons of Adam in their collarbones. And verily the angel on the right side records the good acts, while he on the left records the bad ones. The two angels of the day write down the acts of men done during the day; while the two angels of the night record the acts of men done during the night.⁵

1. MC, 129, art. 17. Also Macdonald in EI, iii. 190 citing Qur.82, 10- 12.

2. An idiomatic expression which generally means "striving uselessly".
3. MC, 199. The Urdu translator adds a footnote that from this verse it is clear that men are responsible for their actions and have free will. It is not as if God is the Creator of good and bad acts, for if that were so, human responsibility would be at an end, nor would the actions be attributed to human beings and they would not be punished for their evil deeds. Thus it is clear that actions proceed from human beings and not from God.
4. N بفضول الكلام; D بفتون الكلام.
5. The expressions ملكا النهار and ملكا الليل lead to the certainty that there are two sets of angels, one pair for day, the other for night.

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