IV. Islam

In Late Antiquity, various monotheistic communities – Jews, Christians, and others – continued to be fascinated by the supernatural malefactor called ὁ διάβολος in Greek and *haśśāṭān* in Hebrew, amplifying and developing the major themes of narratives concerning the devil found in Second Temple literature, the NT, early Christian Apocrypha, and the midrash. Older traditions about the devil, especially those portraying him as arch-tempter and fallen angel, had a decisive impact on the Qurʾān and early Islamic tradition, which in turn provided the foundation for the elaboration of a rich mythology about this figure's origins and role in the world in Islamic culture, literature, and religiosity.

1. Qur'ānic Foundations. As many scholars have noted, the Qurʾān presents a portrayal of the devil that is complex and drawn from diverse sources. He is often given the name *Iblīs*, which represents the devil in his guise as proud, rebellious fallen angel, and thus comes to be associated with the more nuanced and ambivalent aspects of the character in Islamic lore. The name appears in eleven scriptural passages, most of which recount the character's origins, and is conventionally seen as derived from the Greek διάβολος, possibly through a Syriac or Ethiopic intermediary.

Iblīs was an angel, or possibly a *jinn*, a supernatural being made of fire (cf. S 18 : 50, which labels him as "one of the *jinn*" though he is apparently found in the company of the angels), who dwelled in the heavenly realms as a member of the Deity's retinue of servants and attendants. Though it certainly has more proximate sources as well, it is striking that the qurʾānic version of the devil's origin story retains still-recognizable traces of the ancient Near Eastern mytheme of the Divine Council found in both ancient Israelite and Ugaritic literature, which itself gave rise to the idea of the Satan or "prosecutor" found in the book of Job in Second Temple times.

After the creation of Adam from clay, God commanded the angels of the heavenly host to prostrate themselves before this mortal being, but Iblīs refused out of arrogance and was cast out, becoming disgraced (*madʾūm*), banished (*madḥūr*), and accursed (*rajīm*, conventionally interpreted as "stoned", but more likely "discarded") (cf., e.g., S 15 : 26–50; 17 : 62–65; 38 : 71–84). In numerous places, the fall of Iblīs immediately precedes the sin of Adam and his wife, and their expulsion from the Garden (esp. S 7 : 11–27, and cf., e.g., 2 : 34–39 and 20 : 116–23). The thematic link between these two primordial transgressions is made entirely explicit in Iblīs' reiterated threat to prey upon humans and to lead them into sin after his condemnation, as well as in God's own emphatic warnings to people to beware the devil's pernicious influence. The linkage between the origin of the devil and the sin of the protoplasts is not original to the Qurʾān, but rather has significant precursors in late antique Christian sources, including the *Life of Adam and Eve*, extant in numerous versions in several languages, as well as the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*.

Fully in keeping with his paradigmatic act of disobedience and pledges of everlasting enmity to humanity, throughout the Qurʾān the devil is presented as a constant, lurking threat to believers, a role he is allowed to play until the end of time, when God will mete out the final punishment for his sin. In his role as arch-tempter – including in the abovementioned story of the fall of Adam and Eve – the preferred name for the character is *al-shayṭān*, which occurs sixty-four times in the Qurʾān. In classical Arabic philology, the word *shayṭān* is derived either from the root *sh-ṭ-n* (to be distant from) or *sh-y-ṭ* (to burn with anger). The general view among modern scholars, however, is that the word entered Arabic via Geëz, which in its turn borrowed it from the Hebrew *śāṭān*. This term is often regarded as representing the one-dimensional, unequivocal, wholly evil aspect of the devil; in this guise of arch-malefactor, he appears as the head of a host of other demonic entities or "satans" (*shayāṭīn*) who do his bidding and plague humanity in various ways. (In many of the generic references to "satans" throughout the Qurʾān, these beings seem to be largely interchangeable with the *jinn*, noteworthy because of the reference to Iblīs himself as "one of the *jinn*" in S 18 : 50).

Despite the distinct context in which each term is usually used in the Qurʾān, the names Iblīs and al-Shayṭān are generally considered to be synonymous. The appearance of both terms in one qurʾānic passage (S 2 : 30–39) suggests that they are two interchangeable names for the same evil entity. This is also implied in S 19 : 44, which describes al-Shayṭān as rebelling (*ʿaṣiyyan*) against God, and S 34 : 20, where Iblīs tempts the people of Sheba (*Saba*ʾ). The names are interchangeable in the *ḥadīth* as well (see below).

2. Elaborations on the Devil's Biography in Qur'ān Commentary and Other Genres. The rich demonological and satanic material preserved in the Qurʾān was quickly developed into a complex and evocative mythology in early Islam, in a variety of disciplines and traditions.

The *tafsīr* sources deal extensively with the figure of Iblīs, his origin, his history before his fall, and his relationship with God. As the first reference to the fall of Iblīs in scripture, S 2 : 34 tends to serve as the *locus classicus* for discussions of these questions. One significant debate centers on the question of whether Iblīs was an angel or rather a lesser spirit or *jinn*, a response to the Qurʾān's lack of clarity on this point. If he was really a *jinn*, why was he dwelling in Heaven among the angels? Furthermore, if he was not actually an angel, why was he

punished for not obeying God's command to the angels to bow before Adam? If he was an angel, why is he called "one of the *jinn*," or said to be made of fire, as *jinn* are (whereas angels, according to Muslim belief, were created of light)? For that matter, how could he have defied God's command, when angelic beings are not generally thought to be endowed with free will, as humans are? The commentators often adopt rather baroque explanations to reconcile the various claims made about the devil in the Qurʾān, for example asserting that the *jinn* may actually be a species of angel, or that Iblīs was a *jinnī* child adopted by the angels.

The commentaries of al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) and other classical authors preserve many dramatic narrative traditions on Iblīs's origins that display clear points of contact and affinity with late antique Christian and Jewish sources, for example the so-called Enochic literature. The most conspicuous of these is the baroque tale recounted by al-Ṭabarī of the devil's involvement in suppressing a rebellion in Heaven before his own fall. That this narrative, among others, calls Iblīs by the name *ʿAzāzīl* – a term that does not appear in the Qurʾān – makes this tradition's derivation from older currents of exegetical and demonological speculation entirely certain. In the work of al-Ṭabarī and elsewhere, the name "Azazel" often represents Iblīs in his specifically "pre-fallen" state, with the change in his name signifying, in Awn's words, his "conversion to evil." (Notably, the influential commentator al-Thaʿlabī (d. 1035) lists ten consequences of Iblīs' disobedience to God, and specifies one of these as the changing of his name.)

Although this material awaits thorough scholarly investigation, the Azazel strand of tradition preserved in classical Islamic sources seems to have been taken over wholesale from late antique sources, often with minimal adaptation, and remained remarkably coherent as it was subsequently developed by later authors. Notably, the myth of the Watchers, from which the Azazel tradition is drawn, also seems to have inspired the qurʾānic allusion to the fallen angels Hārūt and Mārūt (S 2 : 102–3) as well as the further evolution of this story in later tradition. We should also note that the extensive elaboration of themes relating to fallen angels in Islamic sources had some impact on contemporary Jewish interest in these themes, as seen in later aggadic works such as *Midrash Abkir* and among medieval commentators on the Torah, a striking development considering the near-total absence of reference to Azazel and other fallen angels in classical rabbinic texts.

In addition to ʿAzāzīl, Muslim tradition knows a number of other names for the devil before his fall from grace. Ḥubāb (taken from a kind of snake) is the name by which he is known specifically in the context of his active collaboration with God in the creation of Adam. It is said that he succeeded in fetching the earth for Adam's creation after a number of angels failed to do so, an ironic complement to his later role as the enemy of humanity. Another term sometimes coupled with ʿAzāzīl is al-Ḥārith. (It is sometimes said that ʿAzāzīl and al-Ḥārith are the Syriac and Arabic names of Iblīs, respectively.) The verb *ḥaratha* means to cultivate, and seemingly derives from the image of the devil as sowing the seeds of evil in people. As another name for the devil in his pre-fallen state, al-Ḥārith specifically appears in a story regarding the devil's manipulation of Adam and Eve into naming their child after him.

Iblīs is often posited to have been an important official in the heavenly realm, not just an angel but one of the *khizana* or "treasurers" of Paradise, or else an archangel responsible for preserving order in the divine realm. Such claims underscore the stark irony of his fall: once the guardian of the Garden, Iblīs would have to resort to subterfuge (such as concealing himself within the mouth of the serpent) to gain access to Adam and Eve within; formerly charged with suppressing rebellion among the heavenly host, after his own fall, Iblīs would become the very paragon of defiance and disobedience.

Iblīs was supposedly also called al-Ḥakam ("the judge") before his fall, due to his role as a judge among the *jinn*. The devil's superiority over God's angels is also suggested by another name, Abū l-Karūbiyyīn ("the father of the angels/cherubim"). This could stem from Iblīs' high status in the heavenly host prior to his fall, as the head of angels stationed in the lower heavens and the most knowledgeable of them all.

Material on the devil in early and classical sources may even be explicitly marked as Jewish or Christian in origin, as in the case of a well-known tradition on the fall of Adam and Eve which al-Ṭabarī attributes to the Successor Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 728), a famous conduit for such material into Islam. This narrative draws on both legendary material and the canonical text of Gen 3 in expanding upon the qurʾānic story of Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve and their subsequent fall from grace; notably, other early and classical sources attribute traditions on this episode to Wahb that are clearly drawn from other genres of literature and sources such as the Apocrypha. This suggests that ascriptions to Wahb are not objectively reliable, but rather indicate that Muslim religious scholars expressed their perception of these texts as being Jewish or Christian in origin through attribution to such figures. It also reflects the rich sources and wide circulation of mythological material on the devil and his interference in human affairs in the early Islamic milieu.

3. Practical Protection and Theological Reflection. In the *ḥadīth* there are thousands of references

to the devil. The nine compilations used in Wensinck's *Concordance* to the *ḥadīth* corpus, which include the six collections recognized by Sunnīs as canonical, contain over a thousand devil-related reports. The most prominent title used for the devil in the *ḥadīth* is al-Shayṭān; in Wensinck's *Concordance* there are about a thousand references to al-Shayṭān, and only fifty to Iblīs. A similar proportion is observed in the non-authoritative compilations. In Shīʿī *ḥadīth* the name Iblīs appears somewhat more often, but al-Shayṭān is still more common by far. Reports on al-Shayṭān usually address his presence in human life, and how to avoid his tricks; the practical details of dealing with him are found in traditions pertaining to prayer, food and drink, medicine, the interpretation of dreams, verses of the Qurʾān efficacious for repelling him, and the like. Other types of reports concerning the devil are more didactic and less practical, primarily expressing a moral, religious, or political message; these are found in traditions dealing with such topics as the creation (*badʾ al-khalq*) and eschatology (*fitan*).

The Qurʾān itself contains apotropaic formulae for believers to use against the malign influence of the devil and his ilk, especially Sūras 113 and 114, the *Muʿawwidhatayn*, called thus for their initial phrase of invocation, "I take refuge" (*aʿūdhu*). Sūra 114 specifically mentions "the whisperer who creeps away," *al-waswās al-khannās*, i.e., the devil, as the one from whom God's protection must be sought; whispering harmful and corrosive temptations and insinuations into the ears of believers is one of the devil's characteristic activities in the Qurʾān.

According to Bodman, the qurʾānic references to al-Shayṭān and Iblīs not only reflect multiple strands of late antique tradition on the figure of Satan, but also come to constitute distinct but interrelated discourses – the *shayṭānī* and *iblīsī*, respectively – within the mature Islamic tradition. The former has a more dualistic focus (the devil portrayed as malevolent tempter and embodiment of evil) and the latter has far more ambiguous and complex connotations (the devil as divine servant and tragic figure). Other modern scholars also emphasize the distinction between the two terms as representing different aspects of the devil in Islam. Rippin suggests that the use of the two names in the Qurʾān reflects an internal change of essence between the devil's pre-fallen and post-fallen states, and may have been introduced through Christian influence. According to Awn, it is the unequivocal evil of al-Shayṭān, unlike the ambiguity of Iblīs, that is most suitable for the purposes of the *ḥadīth* literature; the legalistic and practical orientation of the *ḥadīth* encouraged the emergence of a more one-dimensional understanding of the devil.

In the classical Muslim sources, however, the distinction between Iblīs and al-Shayṭān is not so clear-cut. For instance, in the *ḥadīth* collection of al-Bukhārī, the section entitled "the description of Iblīs and his armies" mainly contains reports about al-Shayṭān. Within the reports themselves the two terms are sometimes interchangeable, with versions of the same story sometimes using the term Iblīs, and other times al-Shayṭān.

The blurring of the distinction between the names appears to signal a more profound ambiguity and liminality that is characteristic of the devil in Islam on the whole. This is particularly evident in the ongoing uncertainty about his origins, as well as in the depiction of Iblīs as the androgynous progenitor of the *jinn* and the *shayāṭīn*. Further, sometimes al-Shayṭān is depicted as equally ambivalent, complex, and liminal as Iblīs, evident in descriptions of him as inhabiting marginal, fringe domains such as the marketplace or the line between light and shadow. Likewise, al-ʿAqqād interprets the qurʾānic Paradise story of the temptation of Adam and his wife by al-Shayṭān to eat the forbidden fruit as representing a movement from ignorance to awareness; this reading implies that al-Shayṭān facilitates humanity's transition through its own experience of liminality.

While al-Shayṭān and his minions are commonly blamed for all kinds of maladies and misfortunes in popular culture in the Islamic world, the Qurʾān depicts the threat he presents as primarily moral: the devil's role is instrumental, inasmuch as he serves as an agent through whom God continually tempts humanity, testing their faith and strengthening their moral resolve. The implication is that the devil's very existence and the liberty he enjoys in the world to lay snares and lead people astray seem to be not only tolerated by the Deity, but actually deliberate, insofar as the devil serves a providential purpose and occupies a crucial place in the moral economy. That is, the devil as envisioned in Islam often tends to represent not a cosmic force arrayed against God and doing battle with the Creator – the "ancient enemy" common to many dualistic worldviews – but rather a servant totally subordinate to God and tasked with fulfilling the greater divine plan as one of God's minions. His role as divine collaborator is perhaps most vividly portrayed in traditions about his cooperation with God in the process of Adam's creation. At the same time, the devil is also commonly portrayed as opposing God, wishing to take his place and motivated by jealousy of the Creator; thus his epithet *ʿadūww Allāh*, "enemy of God".

The fundamental ambiguity of the devil is also seen in traditions depicting him as a teacher and even as a sincere believer and aspiring Muslim. Some reports state that one of Iblīs' responsibilities before his fall was as teacher to the angels; but already at this early stage, he misused his knowledge, causing strife and contention among the ranks of

the heavenly host. The devil is also depicted as teaching major prophets such as Noah and John the Baptist about religion and morality. Notably, Muḥammad is usually excluded from such claims, though al-Ṭabarī does record a story of an encounter between Muḥammad and Iblīs in which the latter transmitted some information to the Prophet. But the devil is a deceitful teacher, as is demonstrated by the notorious "Satanic Verses" incident in which he interpolates false words into the true revelation of God. The devil appears as an "anti-teacher" in other contexts as well, in which he causes the Prophet to forget important information such as the exact date of *laylat al-qadr*.

Still other reports describe the devil as worshipping God with the angels, or attempting to obtain God's forgiveness. Nonetheless, the devil's belief is conditional, and not the unconditional faith of the true Muslim. Those reports about his seeking forgiveness are contrasted with others about his refusal of the terms necessary to obtain God's pardon. The devil is conflicted, torn between his wish to become a sincere believer and the fatal flaw of pride which he forever fails to overcome. His ambivalence prevents him from ever fully submitting himself to God, and so he can never truly achieve *Islām*.

Thus, the devil emerges in Islamic tradition as a multi-faceted character, simultaneously an adversary and a collaborator, a rebel and a believer, destructive and creative, immanent and cosmic, a deceiver and a teacher. This characterization applies regardless of the term used in a given text, be it Iblīs, al-Shayṭān, or some other diabolical appellation.

4. Sympathetic Reinterpretations of Iblīs: The Sufi Tradition. Some Muslims have attempted bold reinterpretations of the devil. For example, as the ultimate symbol of disgrace and damnation, the myth of Iblīs was embraced in literary culture, especially in the poetry of the notorious Abū Nuwās (d. 814), who adopts a self-consciously "satanic" mode in his most transgressive poems and calls Iblīs his uncle and *shaykh*. But it is the Sufis who have most consistently sought to appropriate the figure of the devil and subvert the qurʾānic and traditional portrayal of him to cast him in a tragic and sympathetic light.

Sufi literature has often explored the seeming contradiction underlying Iblīs' damnation: he is justly punished for defying the divine command to prostrate himself before Adam, but at the same time, his refusal can be seen as motivated by an unswerving desire to uphold divine unity (*tawḥīd*) by not worshipping a created being. Al-Ḥallāj (d. 922) is one of the earliest authors to develop a sympathetic portrayal of the devil; however, al-Ḥallāj actually condemns Iblīs for his preference for the principle of *tawḥīd* over obedience, which is perhaps unsurprising given his own predilection for courting controversy and flouting convention – that is, subordinating himself to the overwhelming power of the divine will even at the expense of violating the strict standards of orthodoxy. Many later Sufi authors showed a particular interest in various aspects of Iblīs' experience, including his psychology and his possible victimization by divine predestination. Several major figures, including Rūmī (d. 1273) refer to the name ʿAzāzīl and use it to evoke the image of the character's original favored status and to emphasize the tragedy of his fall. While many Sufis use the story of Iblīs as a cautionary tale, warning of the dangers of arrogance and pride, al-Diyārbakrī (d. 1574) takes this a step further, depicting ʿAzāzīl as the model ascetic who had actually worked his way up to his exalted status through strenuous devotion, only to lose that status with a single, momentary lapse.

5. The Devil's Human Collaborators. Various passages in the Qurʾān refer to humans in league with Satan and his minions, for the devil is the steadfast ally of unbelievers and hypocrites (see esp. S 7 : 27). The devil also attempts to replace God as the subject of human worship, and thus the Qurʾān commands humanity directly: "Do not worship the devil" (S 36 : 60). The commentators make several references to the devil as urging people to worship him, and as bringing revelation to diviners, or to the non-believers of Quraysh.

In S 2 : 14, "satans" appears to refer to ordinary human evildoers. This paves the way for a recurring tendency in Islam – as in other religious traditions – for deviants, outsiders, and opponents to be literally demonized. As in Christianity, Satan has sometimes been understood in Islam as the father of disbelief, idolatry in general and heresy in particular – a natural consequence of his ordained role as the arch-tempter who misleads the unwary. Ironically, the view of sectarianism as diabolically inspired seems to have arisen among sectarians themselves; the theme is particularly prominent in the heresiographical work of the Ismāʿīlīs Abū Tammām and al-Shahrastānī (though the Ismāʿīlī affiliation of the latter is still debated) in the 9th and 11th centuries respectively. This sectarian theme was subsequently taken up in the twelfth century by the Sunnī Abū l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī, whose *Talbīs Iblīs* or *The Devil's Deception* continues to be a widely read source on sectarianism in the Islamic world even today.

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V. Literature

In western literature, the representation of the devil veers repeatedly between pathos and comedy and also between literalism and allegory. It also plays off the strong presence of demonology in European folklore. From modest pretextual roots in the HB, the story of Satan and of his battle with God developed from clues in intertestamental literature and then such NT texts as Rev 12:7–12 into the full-blown Christian eschatological narrative recited by Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*. The Jewish tradition meanwhile mainly offered a different trajectory, concentrating on Satan the source of the evil impulse in human life and Satan the tester.

The devil or Lucifer appears as a Teutonic hero in the Old English *Harrowing of Hell* and in *Genesis B*. In *Christ and Satan* the two figures are dichotomized, with the humble and victorious Christ set against his proud, doomed adversary. Refusing reality, Satan creates his own hell. In *Beowulf*, Grendel, his mother and the third monster form a sort of demonic Trinity. In Aelfric's *Homilies,* the human race is created in order to replace the fallen angels, who thereafter seek to regain their position. In the various versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Satan is very prominent in his dialogue with hell before the arrival of Christ, who frees the heroes of faith and finally binds his adversary.

Having mentioned Lucifer in *Paradiso* 19 as the stupidly impatient rebel, Dante in *Inferno* (c. 1320) holds back his account of the fate of the devil until the end (Canto 34), where, introduced by a burlesque of a Holy Week hymn, Lucifer is presented as a parodic Trinity, with 3 vile faces, encased in ice, deep below Jerusalem, the point at which he penetrated the earth on his fall. A hairy, inert giant, he shares the innermost circle of hell with the worst of traitors, Judas, Brutus and Cassius.

Chaucer and Chrétien de Troyes played down the demonic, but the devil remained prominent through the continuing circulation of lives of the saints and was reasserted in the *Vision of Tundall*. In Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370) there is an epic battle between Christ the knight and the devil. The Mystery Plays gave a strong part to the devil, creating an archetype for the stage demon. The opening York play dramatized Satan's sudden transformation from beauty to ugliness, while several plays borrowed devil-names from other religions. A strong feature was the female costume used for the tempting devil/serpent in the Fall plays. In the Newcastle Noah play, the devil enlists the help of Noah's wife, as in *Queen Mary's Psalter*. In the Grében Passion the devil tries to put a stop to the Crucifixion play. In several German plays he orders Satan (here a subordinate) and the demons to steal Christ's soul at Crucifixion. Outside the plays, Eloy D'Amerval's *Le Livre de la diablerie* (1508) anticipated C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* in constructing the devil's perspective on human life, while the *South English Legendary* contained the story of Theophilus, a proto-Faust. Women's fashions, particularly the horned headdress, were condemned as the snares of the devil in contemporary sermons.

Medieval Jewish folklore entertained a benign demonology which formed a sort of parallel universe to the familiar world of reality (as in "The Demon Princess"), but also invaded the afterlife of biblical figures such as Solomon. Meanwhile, the 12th-century poem The "Akedah" by Rabbi Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn (chronicler of Blois and other massacres) was the culmination of a long tradition which introduced Satan into the Gen 22 story, assimilating it to the story of Job.

Leaving behind the powerful stereotype of the devil in medieval literature, Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1533/34) is the first major work to feature sympathetic demonic figures, particularly in its portrait of Panurge as the devil. Much less sympathetic was the Satan of Theodore de Bèze's play *Abraham Sacrificiant* (1550), who, disguised as a monk in this Calvinist play, attempts to persuade Abraham to follow the path of evil.

The devil played a significant part in the early Morality Plays in England. He appears in the Macro plays as Lucifer in *Wisdom*, as Tityvillus in *Mankind* and as Belial in *The Castle of Perseverance*, all in the role of tempter. In the latter play Belial has a son, the Anti-Christ, whom Christ destroys at the Sec-