

THE NATURE OF "IBLĪS" IN THE QUR'AN AS INTERPRETED BY THE COMMENTATORS

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In this study we shall see what some of the classical Muslim exegetes of the Qur'ân say about the Devil (*Iblīs*) as he is figured out in the *Holy Book of Islām*.

Philological derivation of name "Iblīs"

Among the six commentaries consulted only two venture to speak about the philological derivation of the name "*Iblīs*": *Tabarī* explaining Q. 2,34; and *Alūsī* also explaining the same verse. From an overall glance at what is said by these two authors one comes to know that two are the current opinions circulating among the '*ulamā*' regarding the genesis of this proper noun. One of them retains that the noun is purely Arabic, while the other holds it to be of a non-Arabian origin.

Tabarī gives his own personal attempt. According to him *Iblīs* is shaped on *if'īl* from *iblās*, meaning: *desperation, giving up hope, remorse, grief*. In support of his theory *Tabarī* reports two *ḥadīth* narrations, one of which comes from *Ibn 'Abbās*:

— God caused *Iblīs* to despair in way of every blessing, and he made him a damned devil for punishment for his disobedience. From the other *ḥadīth* we come to know that originally, before his transformation, *Iblīs* was called *al-Hārith*.

But although *Tabarī* seems to interpose his own theory in the realms of orthodoxy, he does not make a mystery out of the foreign characteristics manifest in the word "*Iblīs*". Answering one of the gravest objections raised against his opinion, the fact that the noun is diptote, he said that once "*Iblīs*" is a noun with no parallel to it among Arabic nouns, the Arabs felt tempted to compare it with other loan nouns, which are generally diptotes. This gained for it a place among the nouns of the second declension, a place normally occupied by proper nouns of foreign derivation. According to *Tabarī* similar cases to this are: *Ishāq* (Isaac) and *Ayūb* (Job).

Alūsī speaks in the first place about "*Iblīs*" being a loan word, diptote for two reasons: (a) because it is foreign, and (b) a proper noun built on the *fi'līl* form. This he retains to be the more plausible theory. But he also reports the other option expounding it like *Tabarī*, with the difference that he gives *mif'īl* for paradigm instead of *if'īl*. He then raises an objection about its being a diptote, once one admits its pure derivation and once it is clear that there are parallels to it in the language which are regular triptotes, such as: *ihlīl* and *iklīl*. Like *Tabarī*, *Alūsī* tries to solve the problem by presuming the fact that "*Iblīs*" was compared to words of foreign deriv-

ation, owing to the fact that the noun is never used in Arabic except with reference to the Devil.

Apart from the commentaries, *Jeffery's Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân* was also consulted. Under "Iblis" the author gives the two tendencies already mentioned current among Muslim scholars, but he retains that the non-Arabic derivation of the noun is sustained by the more acute philologists among whom *Nawawî* and *Zamakhsharî*. Among the few Western scholars who promote the Arabian origin of the word Jeffery mentions *Pautz* and *Eickman*, but the overwhelming majority of these scholars recognise that *Iblis* is a corruption of Greek: *diábolos*. The author says that when compared to its Hebrew equivalent: *satan*, *Iblis* has merely the connotation of "the adversary", while in the New Testament and in other Christian literature the same word acquires the connotation of "the chief of the hosts of evil." Now, Qur'anic "Iblis" corresponds exactly to this latter connotation. This would justify, according to Jeffery, the search for a Christian origin of the word. He then discusses three possible Christian sources which might have passed on the word to *Muhammad*. He reports a Syriac transliteration of *diábolos* which might have dropped initial "dolat" (letter d) in passing on to Arabic and donned a new vocalic sequence to become: "Iblis". He also mentions the possibility that the word might have been introduced directly from the Greek through Arabic-speaking Christians belonging to the Byzantine Church. Finally the author discusses *Grimme's* theory which suggests that "Iblis" might have come from Southern Arabia through Ethiopic, an opinion which Jeffery judges very far-fetched.

Qur'anic texts

Before examining the material we have in hand regarding the nature of *Iblis* as presented in the Qur'ân, we should say immediately that the 'ulamâ' are divided into two global factions when pronouncing their opinions about *Iblis*. Some say that originally he was an angel of immense beauty who was then transformed by God into a damned devil after his act of disobedience. This theory is held by many Muslim scholars. Others, especially the *Mu'tazilites*, claim that *Iblis* was never an angel but a *jinnî*.

The name "Iblis" is mentioned in the Qur'ân 11 times: in Q. 2,34; 7,11; 15,31; 15,32; 17,61; 18,50; 20,116; 26,95; 34,20; 38,74; and 38,75. Of all these texts only two hit directly our interest, the principal of which being Q. 18,50 and complementary to it Q. 2,34. We shall here look into the two verses in their English interpretation as rendered by *Arthur J. Arberry*.

- And when We said to the angels, 'Bow yourselves to Adam'; so they bowed themselves, save Iblis; he was of the jinn, and committed ungodliness against his Lord's command. What, and do you take him and his seed to be your friends, apart from Me, and they an enemy to you? How evil is that exchange for the evildoers! (Q. 18,50).
- And when We said to the angels, 'Bow yourselves to Adam'; so

they bowed themselves, save Iblis; he refused and waxed proud, and so he became one of the unbelievers. (Q. 2,34).

Iblis an angel

1) *Tabarī*

The major arguments reported by *Tabarī* favouring the angelic nature of *Iblis* are three, even though they are then presented in variegated *ḥadīth* narrations. *Tabarī's* major informant in this problem is *Ibn 'Abbās*, although in one instance he advances a narration which seems to expound contrary ideas to those he elsewhere retains.

a) *Iblis came from a tribe of angels called "Jinn"*:

- From *Ibn 'Abbās*: *Iblis* was from a tribe of angels called the "Jinn". They were created from the flaming fire (*min nār alsamūm*) from among the angels. His name was *al-Hārith*. He was one of the treasurers of paradise. The angels not of this tribe were created from light (*nūr*). The *jinn* that are recorded in the Qur'an were created from a smokeless fire (*min mārij min nār*) i.e. from fire tongues which are in the extremities of fire when it flares up.

In another *ḥadīth* the same *Ibn 'Abbās* says that *Iblis* was an angel of the earth, coming from a tribe called *Jinn*, and his name was then *'Azāzil*.

b) *Iblis was head of the treasurers of paradise; he is called "jinnī" in relation to "janna" (paradisē)*:

- From *Qatāda* reporting *Ibn 'Abbās*: He was over the treasurers of the lowest heaven (*al-samā' al-dunyā*).
- From *Ibn 'Abbās*: *Iblis* was among the most noble of angels and came from their most noble tribe. He was a treasurer of paradise, and he enjoyed power over the lowest heaven and over the earth. He used to behave in accordance to God's will. But he saw that with that he acquired nobility and greatness over the people of heaven, and because of this, pride conquered his heart, a fact no one knew but God. So when the prostration problem cropped up, i.e. when God ordered him to bow himself before Adam, God made his pride manifest and cursed him and made him fall down until judgement day. The words: "he was of the *jinn*" (*kāna min al-jinn*: Q. 18,5) indicate rather his relationship with heaven (*janna*), for he was a treasurer therein. Just as a man is called *Makkī* (from Mekka), *Madanī* (from Medina), *Kūfī* (from Kūfa), or *Basrī* (from Basra).

c) *Iblīs* was head of the angels of the lowest heaven (*al-samā' al-dunyā*):

— *Ibn Mas'ūd* from some companions of the Prophet: *Iblīs* was set over the dominion of the lowest heaven, and he came from a tribe of angels called *Jinn*...

— *From Sa 'id b. al-Musib*: *Iblīs* was the leader of the angels of the lowest heaven.

There are many other *ḥadīth* narrations reported by *Tabarī* both under Q. 18,50 and Q. 2,34, only six of which are contrary to *Iblīs* being an angel. The following *ḥadīth* tries to give the philological explanation of root *J N N*. We are citing it because of its originality in sustaining *Iblīs*, angelic nature through philological and historical arguments:

— *From Muḥammad b. Ishāq*: The Arabs say the *jinn* are nothing else but all those creatures that are hidden and are not seen (invisible beings). As to the words: "except *Iblīs*, he was of the *jinn*" (Q. 18,50) they mean he was an angel, and that is because angels are hidden and are not seen. God, great be his praise, said: "And they set up a relationship between Him and the *jinna*..." (Q. 37,158). That refers to the saying of the *Quraysh*: the angels are God's daughters. But God says: If they were my daughters, *Iblīs* would also be such, so that they set up between me, *Iblīs*, and his seed a relationship. *Al-A 'shā*, mentioning Solomon and what God conceded him, said:

... And he subjected nine *jinn* of the angels, erect before him serving him without payment. (Cfr. Q. 27,17; 38,36-38). He said: The Arabs insisted upon the fact that the *jinn* are all the invisible creatures. God did not call the *jinn* by this name except for the fact that they are hidden and not seen, and He did not call the children of Adam "ins" except for the fact that they are seen and not hidden. So what is visible is "ins" (mankind), and what is invisible is "jinn" (any spirit).

2) *Rāzī*

Under Q. 18,50 *Rāzī* reports briefly the opinions in favour of *Iblīs*' angelic nature. The arguments are essentially the same as those more abundantly illustrated by *Tabarī*. The only new element to be found in this author is that which puts *Iblīs* among a more specific category of heavenly treasurers: *the Jewellers of Paradise*.

— *Sa 'id b. Jubayr* says that he (*Iblīs*) came from among the gardeners who work in the gardens (paradise), a tribe of angels who invent the embellishments (jewels) of the people of paradise since they were created.

Under Q. 2,34 *Rāzī* is more prolific, but unfortunately it is here that the author renders himself confusingly unclear. In this part of his *tafsīr*, *Rāzī* gives a whole account of the polemic contended between the 'ulamā' on the ever discussible point of *Iblīs*' existential status. Strangely enough,

in his exposition the author sometimes does not distinguish between the different contrary opinions which he advances from various sources, neither does he seem to be always clear as to which opinions he is accepting and which he is confuting. So that the one who ventures to study Râzi's text is faced with the grave difficulty of interpreting objectively what has been written.

Among the objections brought against *Iblis* being a *jinnî* we find questions like: why should it be unfitting that he is called *jinnî* because of his relationship with paradise (*janna*)? And: why should it be unfitting that he was transformed from a magnificent angel to a damned devil? If this is befitting and possible, it would translate "*kâna min al-jinn*" of Q. 18,50 by "*he became a jinnî/one of the jinn*", and not by "*he was of the jinn*". Now this would make Q. 18,50 parallel to Q. 2,34 where of *Iblis* it is affirmed: "*kâna min al-kâfirîn*" which Arberry translates: "*he became one of the unbelievers*".

But according to Râzi the two principal arguments sustained by those in favour of *Iblis* being an angel are the following:-

- a) The exception "*illâ Iblis*" of Q. 18,50; 2,34 cannot be an interrupted exception (*istithnâ' munqati'*), but it is an uninterrupted exception (*istithnâ' muttasil*) and avails the expulsion of him who intervened contrary to God's will and, at the same time, it stresses his being one of the angels. Other parallels to this sort of exception would be: Q. 43,26; 4,29; 4,92.
- b) Once it is established that *Iblis* was with the angels when they were ordered to bow themselves before Adam, and once it is equally established that he was punished for disobeying, it follows that he should have been an angel for God's speech was exclusively addressed to the angels. Proving this there is God's question to *Iblis* after his disobedience: "What prevented you not to prostrate yourself when I commanded you?" (Q. 7,12).

3) *Baydâwî*

Baydâwî is very generic under Q. 18,50. But under Q. 2,34 he treats the problem more profoundly, citing authorities and making his own much of the material which promotes *Iblis*' angelic essence.

The author interprets the sentence in Q. 18,50 "... *save Iblis; he was of the jinn*" saying that *Iblis* was a *jinnî* with regards to his action, but an angel with regards to his quality (essence). But to stress the opinion that the *jinn*, in this case, are nothing but angels, the author reports a *hadith* from *Ibn 'Abbâs* narrating that there exists a variety of angels that multiply by generation and these are called "*jinn*"; *Iblis* was one of them. This would answer an objection from the opposite side claiming that *Iblis* has seed and offspring while the angels have not. *Baydâwî* makes it clear that both Q. 18,50 and Q. 2,34 refer to at least two factions of angels

gathered together before God and Adam: the *jinn*, which constitute a tribe of angels on their own; and the other angels. So that the verb "*fa-sajadū*" (so they bowed themselves) refers to all the angels who were present and were ordered prostration. The sentence therefore may be interpreted thus: "*and the ones who were ordered prostration bowed themselves, except Iblīs.*"

But if we retain that *Iblīs* was an angel, how could have he disobeyed, once it is known that angels are impeccable? *Baydāwī* answers: angels are not impeccable, even though the majority of them is. It is the same thing when it is said that mankind is faultless but the major part of mankind is not. In other words, the author thinks that there is a species of angels that does not differ in essence from devils, but it differs from them in accidents as in godliness and ungodliness, which are two qualities proper to mankind and *jinn*. So *Iblīs* was an inferior type of angel. This opinion is corroborated by the authority of *Ibn 'Abbās*. According to *Baydāwī* this merely accidental difference between *jinn* and angels is manifest in the narration of their creation reported in a *ḥadīth* from 'A'isha which says that the angels were created from light and the *jinn* from a smokeless fire. The author explains how light and fire are one in essence but different as regards to accidents.

4) *Alūsī*

Alūsī is abundant in explanations and evidences both when he treats Q. 18,50 and Q. 2,34. Under Q. 18,50 he lists three groupings of *ḥadīth* which promote *Iblīs'* angelic essence from which we shall extract only some original elements which are not repeated elsewhere.

- From *Ibn 'Abbās*: He was the noblest of angels... He was a treasurer of paradise... and he owned the congestion of the two seas (*majma' al-baḥrayn*) — the sea of Byzantium and the sea of Persia...
- Reported by *Abū al-Shaykh* from *Qatāda* about the meaning of his being a *jinnī*: He hid from submissiveness to God, i.e. he hid and refused.

In this part of *Alūsī's* commentary we find some important affirmations regarding the question of the impeccability of angels:

- *Qādī 'Iyād* records that a group of thinkers believe in the impeccability of those angels who are messengers and *muqarrabūn*, but they do not say anything about the impeccability of other categories of angels. So he who claims that *Iblīs* was an angel would not rid himself of opposition except in the case that he retains that *Iblīs* was not one of the *muqarrabūn* (or one of the messengers).
- Some *Sūfī* believe that the angels of earth were not impeccable and that *Iblīs* was one of them.

Under Q. 2,34 *Alūsī* affirms that the great majority of the '*ulamā'* among the companions of the Prophet and their followers hold the opinion that *Iblīs* was an angel. They draw their conclusions from the obvious

exception "*illâ Iblîsa*" (except *Iblîs*) which is stressed by the following clause: "*kâna min al-jinn*" (he was of the *jinn*). They also come out with the idea that if *Iblîs* was one of them, then he was their leader, so that he was not unpopular among them.

Explaining the disobedience of *Iblîs* as confronted with the impeccability of angels, *Alûsî* gives two possibilities. The first one is similar to that given by *Baydâwî*, the second one is original:

- ... Or because God most high deprived *Iblîs* from the angelic qualities and made him wear the satanic qualities, so that following this, he disobeyed. But an angel, as long as he remains an angel¹, does not disobey.

Commenting on the elements from which the angels are said to have been created, *Alûsî* says that although the major current agrees with 'A 'ishâ's *ḥadīth* which affirms that angels were created from light, there are nevertheless other traditions narrating the creation of angels from fire, from ice, and from other contrasting elements. The author then gives a *ḥadīth* without *isnād* (chain of authorities) which, owing to its curiosity, is not to be passed over:

- It is narrated that under the throne there is a river, and when Gabriel bathes in it and shudders, an angel is created from each drop of water emitted by him.

At this point the author passes on to discuss the grammatical implications of the exception employed in both verses: "*illâ Iblîsa*". He explains that an interrupted exception is produced when a thing is excepted from other things not of the same genre, while the contrary for an uninterrupted exception. In our case, if we consider "*illâ Iblîsa*" an uninterrupted exception it will follow that *Iblîs* was an angel¹, if on the contrary, we consider it an interrupted exception, then *Iblîs* would not be an angel. *Alûsî* seems to imply an accusation of a-priori judgement against those who hold the second position. He says: "they consider unnatural its uninterruptedness to hold the second opinion."

Alûsî concludes his *tafsîr* on this subject abiding by the unorthodox theory of the *pre-existence of Muḥammad*. He says that after all the totality of created beings is created from the *Muḥammadan essence*. But one has to distinguish in what way this is done. Tradition explains: heavenly angels were created from him (*Muḥammad*) with regard to beauty (*jamâl*), while *Iblîs* was created from him with regard to sublimity (*jalâla*)... God most high does what He wants... and there is no way to altering it. This is marked by the fact that God called him *Iblîs* after his fall, while before his name was 'Azâzil or *al-Hârith* and his *kunya*: *Abû Marra*.

5) 'Abduh — Ridâ

The authors of *Tafsîr al-Manâr* are very short and sweet. In Q. 2,34 *Iblîs* is an individual angel, while *sûrat al-Khaf* (18,50) indicates that he is a *jinnî*. This is no contradiction at all, for — say 'Abduh and Ridâ — we

have nothing to show that there is a substantial difference between angels and *jinn*, but rather a difference of species. The *jinn* are a class of angels. In fact the word *jinnā* is applied in the Qur'an to angels both in Q. 37,158 and in *sūrat al-nās* (Q. 114,6).

Iblis a jinnī

1) *Tabarī*

We have seen that the major part of the *ḥadīth* narrations reported by *Tabarī* promote the supposition that *Iblīs* is an angel transformed into a devil. In fact under Q. 18,50 only two very short *ḥadīth* narrations are to be found in favour of his *jinnī* nature.

— From *al-Ḥasan*: *Iblīs* was never an angel; he is indeed the origin of the *jinn* just as Adam is the origin of mankind.

— From *Shahr b. Hawshab*: *Iblīs* was of the *jinn* whom the angels drove away, but some angels captured him and carried him to heaven.

Under Q. 2,34 two *ḥadīth* narrations opt for *Iblīs* being a *jinnī*. But one of these remains somewhat ambiguous. The following *ḥadīth* reported from *Sa 'd B. Mas 'ūd* begins just like the above from *Shahr b. Hawshab* but then it continues:

— ... He was with the angels and with them he devoted himself to the service of God. But when they were ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam, they did so and *Iblīs* refused. That is why God said: Except *Iblīs*, he was of the *jinn*.

Ibn 'Abbās, who up till now has always defended *Iblīs'* angelic essence, provided *Tabarī* with a *ḥadīth* narration which can be described as ambiguous. In it *Iblīs* is said to have been created amidst certain creatures which it is not clear enough to define "angelic". It was these creatures who disobeyed God not the angels.

— From *Ibn 'Abbās*: God created some creatures and said, "Bow yourselves before Adam." They said, "We shall not!" So God sent upon them a fire which burnt them. Then he created some other creatures and said, "I am the creator of a man from clay, bow yourselves before Adam." But they refused. So God sent upon them a fire and it burnt them. Then He created these (i.e. the angels) and said, "Bow yourselves before Adam." They said, "Yes!" Now, *Iblīs* was among those who refused to prostrate themselves before Adam.

In one point of his commentary *Tabarī* gives a summary of the principal arguments brought forward by those who uphold the *jinnī* essence of *Iblīs*:

(a) From the Book (i.e. the Qur'an) we know that God created *Iblīs* from fire, while it is not said that He created the angels in such a way;

(b) God himself said that *Iblīs* is of the *jinn*;

- (c) *Iblīs* has seed and offspring while the angels are neither begotten nor do they beget.

2) *Rāzī*

Under Q. 2,34 *Rāzī* reports a good argumentation brought forward by those who hold that *Iblīs* is a *jinnī*. Although from the linguistic point of view one can apply the word "*jinn*" to angels, for they are invisible, on the other hand, the Qur'ān makes a net distinction between the *jinn* and the angels, so that it cannot be said that the ones and the others coincide. This is shown in Q. 34,40 which says: "*Upon the day when He shall muster them all together, then He shall say to the angels, 'Was it you these were serving?' They shall say, 'Glory be to Thee! Thou art our Protector, apart from them; nay rather, they were serving the jinn; most of them believed in them.'*"

The apology in favour of *Iblīs'* *jinnī* nature goes on along these lines:-

a) The words: "*except Iblīs, he was of the jinn*" constitute the motivation for his abandoning the *sujūd* (prostration). It is not possible that he did so because he was a treasurer of paradise, but because he was a *jinnī*. This confutes the idea of *Iblīs* being transformed from angel to *jinnī*. Consequently, if this is the case, the clause: "*kāna min al-jinn*" should be translated: "*he was of the jinn*", and not "*he became one of the jinn*".

b) The Qur'ān concedes seed and offspring to *Iblīs* but it denies such a thing to angels: "*And they have made the angels, who are the servants of the Merciful, females. What, did they witness their creation?...*" (Q. 43,19). When femininity is denied, procreation is also denied, and no doubt, seed is also denied with it.

c) *Iblīs*, like the *jinn*, was created from fire, the angels from light. In support of the first statement Q. 7,12; 15,27; and 55,15 are cited, while supporting the second we find the following *ḥadīth*:

— From 'A'isha, from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and keep him, he said: The angels were created from light and the *jānn* from a smokeless fire.

d) Angels are impeccable, *Iblīs* was not. The impeccability of angels is proved by the fact that they are God's messengers (Q. 35,1) and as such they must be impeccable: "*God knows well where to place His message*" (Q. 6,124).

3) *Alūsī*

Under Q. 18,50 *Alūsī* reports an authority affirming that the opinion that *Iblīs* was a *jinnī* who was captured by the angels is held by many an '*ulamā'*. In this section of his tafsīr the author records three *ḥadīth* narrations in favour of *Iblīs* being a *jinnī*, only one of which gives some new elements:

— From *Abū Shaykh*: *Iblīs* was never an angel; he is indeed the origin

of *jinn* just as Adam is the origin of mankind. This means that before his existence there was no *jinn*, just as before Adam's existence there was no mankind. All that is contained in the heart (seat of the intellect) originates from his power. This is the opinion held by the majority and it is nearer to truth than the other one which holds that before the existence of *Iblīs* there existed *jinn* but were destroyed and no descendant was left but he. This theory wants to make believe that the *jinn* and the demons of today all have their origin from *Iblīs*, so that he would be among the *jinn* what Noah is among mankind, as the well-known story goes.

The commentator's own point of view

It is not always easy to deduct from the commentaries what might have been the personal opinions of the authors regarding the question discussed. Sometimes it is evident that the *mufassirūn* camouflage their own personal ideas in the midst of polemical expositions, at other times they seem to be cautious not to manifest what they think. On other occasions, again, they show themselves uncertain as to what position should be taken.

From a firsthand examination of the texts one would deduce the following:

- a) *Tabarī* and *Tafsīr al-manār* agree that *Iblīs* is a declined angel, although the former ends with a note of uncertainty.
- b) *Zamakhsharī* and *Rāzī* are definitely for *Iblīs* being a *jinnī*.
- c) *Baydāwī* and *Alūsī* affirm that in Q. 18,50 *Iblīs* is surely a *jinnī*, while in Q. 2,34 he is definitely an angel.
- d) *Baydāwī* tries to make a compromise about which we shall speak further on.

Explaining Q. 2,34, *Tabarī* says that once it is clear that all the angels obeyed God's order except *Iblīs*, it follows that *Iblīs* was one of them. In support of his argument the author cites Q. 15,31-32: "Save *Iblīs*; he refused to be among those bowing. Said He, 'What ails thee, *Iblīs*, that thou art not among those bowing?'" Another argument in favour of *Iblīs*' angelic nature advanced by *Tabarī* regards his being created from fire. He says that it is not objectionable that God created his angels from different sources, for He could have created some from light, others from fire, and still others from whatever other material. In Revelation there is no information pointing to the constituting elements of the angelic essence, while there is with regards to *Iblīs*' nature. But this very fact does not postulate *Iblīs*' exclusion from among the angels. Neither should the fact that *Iblīs* had seed and offspring or that of his liability to sin constitute an impediment against his angelic nature, for these were permitted him by God. Commenting the incision "*kāna min al-jinn*" of Q. 18,50, however, *Tabarī* plunges into uncertainty. He says that this expression is not repelled by retaining that all those beings which are hidden from the eyesight are "*jinn*" as is retained by those who hold that *Iblīs* is an angel.

Zamakhsharī interprets "*kāna min al-jinn*" (Q. 18,50) as an answer explaining why *Iblīs* had refused to perform prostration (*sujūd*). As if one had asked: why did he not bow to Adam? And the reply would be: *he was of the jinn* (Q. 18,50). In consonance with this line of thought, the author interprets the "*fa*" of "*fa-fasaqa*" (and be committed ungodliness — Q. 18,50) to be a "*fa sababiyya*" (*fa* of causality). This would mean that the reason for *Iblīs*' disobedience lies in the fact that he was a *jinnī*. *Zamakhsharī* concludes saying that once it is known that angels are impeccable, *Iblīs* was surely not one of them.

Rāzī manifests clearly his opinion about *Iblīs* under Q. 18,50. He says that in this verse God shows that *Iblīs* was of the *jinn*. To prove his standpoint *Rāzī* mentions the fact that God conceded *Iblīs* seed and offspring, something which He did not concede to angels. Under Q. 2,34 the author expounds the ideas of others not his own.

Baydāwī agrees with *Zamakhsharī* in interpreting Q. 18,50. So that according to this author the incision "*kāna min al-jinn*" must be either a condition with enforcing particle "*qad*" understood, or a renewed explanation. The same goes with "*fa-fasaqa*", in which, *Baydāwī* agrees, the "*fa*" is "*sababiyya*", so that it is there to indicate that *Iblīs* disobeyed because he was a *jinnī*. But once in Q. 2,34 it is not that evident that *Iblīs* is a *jinnī*, and once it can be deduced from this same verse that, on the contrary, he was an angel, *Baydāwī* makes a sort of compromise allotting to *Iblīs* a *jinnī* nature with regards to his action, but an angelic one with regards to his essential quality. So that he would be an angel behaving himself in a *jinnī* manner.

Alūsī agrees with *Baydāwī* and *Zamakhsharī* in the interpretation of Q. 18,50 from which he deduces that *Iblīs* must have been a *jinnī*. The author's position, however, is not quite clear when he discusses Q. 2,34. He gives ample space and importance to the defenders of *Iblīs*' angelic nature whom he believes to be the great majority of the '*ulamā*' among the companions of the Prophet and their followers. Neither does *Alūsī* refrain from defending this theory, every now and then, inserting his own ideas. This makes one think that in this part of his *tafsīr Alūsī*'s personal opinion regarding the question of *Iblīs* is contrary to what he actually retains under Q. 18,50.

Muhammad Abduh and *Rashīd Ridā* are more straightforward than the others in their exposition, and by far more coherent to their principal opinion. They opt for *Iblīs* being an angel because, as they say, in all verses where he is mentioned it is evident that he was so. The authors do not make a mystery, however, out of Q. 18,50 from where it is clear that *Iblīs* is a *jinnī*. They try to solve this problem by retaining that the *jinn* are but a variation of angels.

Conclusion

At the end of it all one would expect to find some conclusion at hand.

But this is where one will get disappointed. No objective conclusion can be deduced from all the various and sometimes contradictory opinions we have reviewed. It is easy to note that many of the opinions studied result from unfounded suppositions and sometimes from pure fancy. Before we have in hand a good exegetical study giving an acceptable existential status to the *jinn*, we can never conclude whether it is more sound to put *Iblis* among their lot by nature or by degradation. Until then we must satisfy ourselves with a personal note given by the two authors of *Tafsir al-Manâr* which concludes their talk about *Iblis*, the *jinn*, and the angels:

"Notwithstanding all these citations referring to these names from the knowledge of the unseen, we do not know the right things on this subject, and we shall not search about it, neither shall we say anything relating to it which is not presented to us in a text taken from the Faultless (*al-ma 'sûm*, i.e. the Prophet Muhammed), may God bless him and keep him."

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