

CHAPTER 21

Satan



In Islam, Satan is identified as the single angel who, setting himself apart from all other angelic beings, refused God's command to bow down before Adam on the day of his creation. When questioned by the Creator as to why he disobeyed, the Devil answered that he bowed down solely to the Divine, not to any of the created. Unrepentant, he also argued that God's will determines all things, so it would not have been possible for him to refuse God's command unless God himself had allowed him to do so.

For this, he was banished from Heaven and was taken away from the presence of God. No more does the eye of God enlighten him; no more will the touch of God give him joy.

But in spite of this punishment, he has never lost his love for God.

He alone, of all the beings in the cosmos, loves God without gain, without hope, without even the possibility of feeling loved in return. Thus, seen objectively, this unrequited love is the most pure of any. The Devil serves without reward.

Even while bearing the burden of eternal separation, the Devil has taken on the thankless and usually misunderstood task of creating obstacles for human beings. What few realize is that, through rising above these obstacles, we are able to rise to where he cannot go, stepping over him in our ascent toward our own higher natures. The Devil toughens us, forces us to remain awake, and offers lessons as no other angel can. Would we ever have learned to walk if our parents had continued to carry us everywhere? Our troubles and temptations, even if truly given to us by the Devil, are still ultimately gifts of God.

Rabia was asked, "Do you love the Lord of Glory?"

She said, "I do."

Then she was asked, "Do you hold Satan as an enemy?"

She replied, "No."

The questioner was astonished. "How is that?"

Rabia said, "My love of God leaves not room for hating Satan." She went on: "I saw the Prophet in a dream, and he said to me, 'O Rabia, do you love me?' I said, 'O Prophet of God, who is there who does not love thee? But my love to God has so possessed me that no place remains for loving or hating any save Him.'"

Attar

Someone asked Satan, "O wretched one, when it became apparent that you had been cursed, why did you accept it so wholeheartedly in your heart like a treasure?" Satan replied, "A curse is the King's arrow. When he fires it he looks to the target. If you have eyes, look at the archer's target, not at his arrow."

Attar

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What is not God?

Look around in every direction. Look at the people you know: the shining beings, the simple souls, the sad, the angry, the gentle, the kind, the cruel. Look at the smallest creatures: fleas, dust mites, viruses, bacteria. Look inside yourself: at your thoughts, feelings, memories, opinions, reflections, and dreams. What is not God?

Whatever you answer, whatever you identify as "not God"—Hitler, breast cancer, garbage dumped on your lawn, your father-in-law's temper, your own indolence—by separating these from what you think is God, you are missing the essential point. Everything is infused with God. Everything is animated by God. Everything is a facet, a reflection, of the Divine.

There are no idols or images in Islam. Whatever you see, within or without, is a manifestation of God. The Sufi lives in a world of true monotheism. This homage to a single deity is not to be compared with the theoretical monotheism of Christianity, with the holy Trinity, the plethora of saints, and the nine ranks of angels.

At the center of Sufi prayer, of service, and of daily life, one truth resounds—there is nothing, created or uncreated, that is not God.

If you walk toward Him, He comes to you running.

Muhammad

Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of Allah.

Koran

I don't know what sort of a God we have been talking about.
The caller calls in a loud voice to the Holy One at dusk.
Why? Surely the Holy One is not deaf.
He hears the delicate anklets that ring on the feet of an insect
as it walks.

Go over and over your beads, paint weird designs on your
forehead,
wear your hair matted, long, and ostentatious,
but when deep inside you there is a loaded gun, how can you
have God?

Kabir

Rose and mirror and sun and moon—where are they?
Wherever we looked, there was always Thy face.

Mir

I am the companion of him who remembers Me.

Muhammad

Those who adore God in the sun behold the sun, and those
who adore Him in living things see a living thing, and those who
adore Him in lifeless things see a lifeless thing, and those who
adore Him as a Being unique and unparalleled see that which has

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