



DIALOGUE BETWEEN ALLAH AND IBLĪS IN THE  
QUR'ĀN

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This library-oriented research examined the dialogue between *Allah* and *Iblīs* in the *Qur'ān*. The composition and form of the dialogue were evaluated in this study. The whole discussion between *Allah* and *Iblīs* were encapsulated in one exchange and then some important statistics were indicated about the words and sentences in this. Moreover, the essential principles of the dialogue were illustrated and this categorized in the *Qur'ān* based on its unique characteristics. This dialogue was compared and contrasted with similar ones in Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. Lessons obtained from the dialogue were then discussed. The verses from when the angels and *Iblīs* were commanded to bow down until the concluding words of Allah were elaborated: the refusal of *Iblīs*, the inquiry of Allah on the disobedience of *Iblīs*, the reactionary answer and expulsion of *Iblīs* from heaven, the request of *Iblīs*, the approval of respite for *Iblīs*, the final words of *Iblīs*, the revengeful vows and the destiny of *Iblīs* were widely explained. The study concludes that the dialogue between *Allah* and *Iblīs* was a revolutionary turning point in the history of man, and it tremendously determined the fundamental outlook of the life of man. A variety of principles, characteristics and teachings, in addition to its own specific form, distinguishes this dialogue from others in the *Qur'ān*. This is more apparent when the dialogue in the *Qur'ān* was more organized and conductive in comparison with similar dialogues between *Allah* and Satan in other religions.

## ملخص البحث

تطرقنا في هذا البحث المكتبي المنهج إلى تحليل الحوار الذي دار بين رب العزة وإبليس في القرآن الكريم. لقد تم تشكيل وتقويم وتبيان هذا الموضوع بوضوح وترتيب لأهمية الحوار الذي دار بين رب العزة وإبليس. تناول البحث مناقشة مضمون الحوار فيما يخص العبارات والجمل المستعملة فيه. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فقد تم توضيح وتصنيف الخصائص والمبادئ الأساسية للحوار في القرآن مما لا يستغني عنه احد على الإطلاق. تطرقنا أيضا لنسخ الحوار الموجودة في التوراة والإنجيل وفي الزرادشتية وقمنا بمقارنتها بالنص القرآني لإظهار التوافق والتعارض في ذلك. آيات القرآن أظهرت بوضوح شديد ما حدث بين الملائكة وإبليس فيما يخص أمر بالسجود لآدم عليه السلام. فما كان من إبليس إلا أبى واستكبر، فحقت عليه كلمة الله عز وجل بسوء العاقبة مما أدى إلى لعنه وطرده من الجنة ومن ثم ذكر ردة فعله وطلبه الإمهال وغير ذلك مما قد تم توضيحه بإسهاب. أخيرا، يمكننا القول أن ما جاء في هذه الدراسة يدل على التحول الجذري الذي طرأ على حياة الإنسان بعد حادثة الحوار بحيث حددت بشكل كبير الآفاق الأساسية لحياته. على أية حال، فإن للحوار القرآني خصائص وتعاليم متنوعة متميزة تختلف تماما عما يوجد في كتب الأديان السماوية وغير السماوية الأخرى، وبالأخص الحوارات المماثلة بين الله والشيطان مما يدل على إعجاز القرآن وقوة بلاغته قياسا بما في الديانات الأخرى.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Islamic and Other Civilization.

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole or in part for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Mohammad Zarasi

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Qur'ān-as the main source of understanding Islam and one of the fundamental components that shaped Islamic civilization- reveals remarkably different models of dialogue. In the Qur'ān we find various kinds of conversations between different people. Most of the time we find verses narrating the interactions between the Prophets and others by way of dialogue, such as when a specific Prophet invites people to truth. Also, some commands in the Qur'ān have been expressed in the form of dialogue. For example, the early Muslims asked Prophet Mohammad about the decree concerning drinking wine and gambling. Prophet Mohammad's answer was a kind of command that they should be aware about the decree of these two things. This question and answer indicates another aspect of dialogue in the Qur'ān.

Dialogue in the Qur'ān, however, is not only between people. One of the important categories of dialogue in the Qur'ān is between Allah and others. Dialogue between Allah and Moses or between the former and Ibrāhīm are exemplars of this category of dialogue. Other than these, there is a very specific dialogue between Allah and Iblīs in the Qur'ān. This conversation belongs to the early period of creation where the angels were present at that stage. When Allah commands them to bow to Adam, they do so without hesitation; but among them, Iblīs, who was a jinn, did not bow and disobeyed Allah. Thereby, dialogue takes place between Allah and Iblīs and finally Allah curses the latter and expels him from the Stage.

In addition to this story, Satan has a very important place in the Qur'ān. Considerable verses have discussed this being. Satan, as the Qur'ān states, has a mission to mislead people. He mobilizes all his forces and helpers to do the best in this regard. He even produces very big lies to misguide people as the Qur'ān states that: “behold, I fear God, for God is severe in retribution!”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, he has very extraordinary and unusual forces. For example, he can present himself in different forms. Al-Rūmī composes in this regard:

استعید الله من شیطانہ      قد هلكنا آه من طغيانه  
يك سگست و در هزاران می رود      هر که در وی رفت او او می شود

I seek refuge with God from his Satan: we have perished, alas, through his overweening disobedience.  
He is (but) one cur, and he goes into thousands (of people): into whomsoever he goes, he (that person) becomes he (Satan).<sup>2</sup>

Besides, long age and intuition or perception of those things that we cannot see, is other abilities of Satan. Moreover, since he is a very great and skillful psychologist and knows the weaknesses of all people, he can easily misguide them and unfortunately he has been successful.

Therefore, having such personality as described in the Qur'ān provokes us to scrutinize all the stories of Satan to acquire more knowledge about him. The event of creation, which results in dialogue between Allah and Satan, is one of the most important aspects of the latter's story.

<sup>1</sup> Qur'ān: 8:48; Mohammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, (Gibraltar: Dar Andalus, 1980), 247.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn Mohammad, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 2, Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson, vol. 2, (Cambridge: The Trustees of the “E.J.W. Gibb Memorial”, 1926), 254.

## 1.2 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Allah in the Qur'ān has clarified what our stand should be against Satan. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

أَلَمْ أُعْهِدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ (60) وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ  
(61)يس

“Did I not enjoin on you, O you children of Adam, that you should not worship Satan -since, verily, he is your open foe-”, “and that you should worship Me [alone]? This would have been a straight way!”<sup>3</sup>

In these two verses, while Allah invites us to worship him, he forbids us to worship Satan. The worship of Satan means that we follow his desires and passions. Additionally, we see in this verse the word “enjoin” which emphasizes the avoiding of this worshipping as essential. Therefore this forbiddance of worshipping Satan leads us to know him and to understand his desires and to refrain from those desires.

Moreover, Allah, in different verses including the above, has reminded us to take care and to be cautious about this dangerous being and introduces him as an open enemy to humanity. He is a very serious enemy because he can lead us hell. This aspect of Satan indicates that he can cause much suffering and if we want to be secure and safe from this hostility, we need to study his personality and its ways of hostility.

In dialogue between Allah and Iblīs, the former has described very basic notions of the latter, therefore scrutinizing this dialogue will be significant. Based on this evaluation we will understand the personality of Satan and his deep hostility for humanity. In light of this perception, we will be more cautious about his seductions.

Apart from Satan, the dialogue itself would be part of evaluation to extract characteristics, principles and methods of certain dialogue. It is because to promote our perception about the structure of dialogue as an essential part in the Qur'ān.

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<sup>3</sup> The Qur'ān, 36:60, 61; Mohammad Asad, 679.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

One of the very general objectives of every research related to the Qur'ān is a deeper awareness of its guidance, decrees and commands regarding certain themes. Apart from this general goal, I would like to achieve a number of objectives; the most important of them are as follows:

- 1- To discuss the form and composition, essential principles and characteristics of this dialogue
- 2- To examine this dialogue in other religions
- 3- To study all the teachings and guidelines of this dialogue
- 4- To evaluate the important literatures such as *tafsīr* books and Sufi tradition connected to this dialogue
- 5- To be aware of the seductions and deceptions of Iblīs

### **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is mainly based on library research. The literature consists of books, journals, articles, eBooks and websites. Translations of Arabic or Persian books are also used in this thesis.

The Qur'ān is of central importance in this research. Thus, the study organized all the dialogues between Allah and Iblīs as recorded in the Qur'an, into one section and discussed them at length.

The study relied on Mohammad Asad's English translation of the Qur'ān, even though Asad has not claimed perfection in the translation. In fact, Asad believes that it is impossible to reproduce the Qur'ān in other languages. However, he says: "The work which I am now placing before the public is based on a lifetime of study and of many years spent in Arabia. It is an attempt -perhaps the first attempt- at a really

idiomatic and explanatory rendition of the Quranic message into a European language.”<sup>4</sup>

The other trait of this translation is the use of contemporary English and avoidance of old words and phrases. But, he mentions that “I did not see any necessity of rendering the Quranic phrases into a deliberately “modern” idiom, which would conflict with the spirit of the Arabic original and jar upon any ear attuned to the solemnity inherent in the concept of revel.”<sup>5</sup>

The other issue is reference to basic sources such as *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, Arabic dictionaries and books regarding Satan and Sufi traditions.

Based on these materials and verses of the Qur’ān, analyses were made about this particular dialogue. In this regard, the outline of chapters which shows how the thesis was organized is presented below.

## **1.5 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter one discusses the background, objectives, significance and scope of this research. Also, it discusses the outline of each chapter. A collection of important works on the topic were evaluated under the literature review section of this chapter. Chapter two analyzes the form, composition, essential principles and characteristics of this dialogue before going in-depth into the themes of the dialogue.

Some statistics of the words crucial to the understanding of the dialogue are presented in tables. Since this dialogue has been repeated several times in the Qur’ān, the study organized each theme into certain section of this chapter. This organized dialogue word tables were used as templates for later discussions. Moreover, questions on the essential principles of the dialogue and whether it was a dialogue or

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<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Asad, v.

<sup>5</sup> Mohammad Asad, viii.



debate (*jadal*) are examined in this chapter. Additionally, by categorizing this dialogue in the Qur'ān, it also brings to fore the fundamental features therein.

In Chapter three, the study examines the dialogue between Allah and Satan in other religions and compares and contrasts them with the Quranic narrative.

The evaluations in this chapter responded to the following questions. Is there any dialogue between Allah and Satan in the literatures of other religions? If so, how have they encapsulated this dialogue? What are the differences and similarities between them and the dialogue between Allah and Iblīs in the Qur'ān?

Chapter four discusses the first part of the teachings and guidelines of this dialogue. The chapter covers the pre- and post-dialogue events till the approval by Allah of the respite requested by Iblīs.

This chapter investigates the command of Allah to the angels to prostrate before Adam and the refusal of Iblīs. It also evaluates the inquiry of Allah about the disobedience of Iblīs and the arrogant response of Iblīs to this inquiry. The expulsion of Iblīs from the stage and the request of Iblīs for respite as well as its approval by Allah were examined in this chapter.

Chapter five discusses the second part of the teachings and guidelines of the dialogue between Allah and Iblīs and evaluates how the dialogue ended. Thereafter, it examines the final words of Iblīs. The promises of Iblīs against man are discussed extensively in this chapter. The final words of Allah on what will be the destiny of Iblīs and men are also examined in this chapter.

Chapter six concludes the study with a summary of the findings in the in the previous chapters.

## 1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Apart from the Qur'ān I have to use six categories of books. These categories include *tafsīr* books, *aḥādīth* books, Arabic dictionaries, the books written about dialogue in the Qur'ān, the books written directly about Satan and Sufis books.

The first category is *tafsīr* books. *tafsīr* books are many. Some *tafsīrs* are classical, others are more recent origins and few of them belong to the contemporary period. Nevertheless, some are more useful than others

The first *tafsīr* is “*Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*” which is a classic Sunnī *tafsīr* by the Persian scholar Mohammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. The work is very rich in content, and a major source for academic research and historical inquiry. Al-Ṭabarī's method is that he mentions verses of the Qur'ān, then clarifies their meaning and interpretation thereof. Moreover, this *tafsīr* is very detailed in its explanation and analysis by the means of using the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet. In addition, he has collected numerous quotations from statements that were made by companions and their followers and then analyzes those which are more acceptable for certain verses. Since this *tafsīr* is nearest to the time of companions and their followers, it could be considered as a reliable *tafsīr* in order to know the views of companions and their followers about certain verses in connection with dialogue.

The other *tafsīr* is al-Zamakhsharī, which is known as “*al-kashshāf*”, and was written in the 12th century. This *tafsīr* is noticeable in terms of terminology and linguistics. The meanings of the words have been widely explained in this *tafsīr*. Al-Zamakhsharī followed the Mu'tazilah sect and he has primarily interpreted the Quranic verses according to this perspective. He does not develop the issues of jurisprudence in his interpretation. Another characteristic of this *tafsīr* is that he frequently poses questions for inquiry and then gives interesting answers.

The other *tafsīr* is “*Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*”. This *tafsīr* is primarily based on *ḥadīth* and examines the reliability of narrators and tries to align each verse with *ḥadīth* reports. Therefore it will be a useful source for understanding the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Ibn-Kathīr also sometimes tries to interpret certain verses in very short phrases to indicate the main idea of these verses. In addition, Ibn Kathīr relies on interpreting the Qur'an through the Qur'ān, called *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* or intratextual exegesis. Another trait of this *tafsīr* is that he often quotes different ideas and then critically analyzes them with a view to finding which one is more valid and prefers and selects the better. With respect to quoting most of time he narrates the quotations of *tafsīr al-ṭabarī*.

Another outstanding book is “*al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*”, written by Fakhr al-Rāzī. The book explains and elucidates on the different issues. Sometimes, Fakhr al-Rāzī dedicates many pages to elaborate on a certain verse. In order to prove his ideas, he first presents different views on a certain issue and then explains his own opinion on it. Fakhr al-Rāzī is also very sensitive to the opinions of the al-Mu'tazilites. He alludes to their ideas in different verses and then criticizes them or sometimes he leaves the opinion uncriticized.

Another unique trait of this *tafsīr* is the close attention it devotes to the core of issues by pointing out some deep and philosophical questions they raise. However, based on his background as a scholar who is well-versed in philosophy and *‘ilm al-kalām*, Fakhr al-Rāzī often presents some strange and odd ideas. Using different verses of the Qur'ān to elaborate a certain issue is very prominent in his *tafsīr*. Moreover, oftentimes he quotes from Zamakhsharī, whether or not by mentioning his name. Overall, there are many ideas about the dialogue between Allah and Iblīs in this *tafsīr*, which is very useful for this research.

The next *tafsīr* is “*al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Qur’ān*” written by al-Qurṭubī. He attempts to divide a certain verse into different themes and then explains them. This *tafsīr* broadly discusses the issues of jurisprudence. Al-Qurṭubī presents different opinions of jurisprudence on certain verses and then selects one of them. Since the verses on the dialogue between Allah and Iblīs include some issues related to jurisprudence Al-Qurṭubī elaborates on these verses. The *tafsīr* not only explains the issues of jurisprudence, it also elaborated on some controversial ideas in these verses. Quoting *hadīth* and using verses of the Qur’ān in order to explain certain verses of the Qur’ān is another trait of this *tafsīr*.

The next *tafsīr* is “*al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*” written by al-Zuḥaylī. Al-Zuḥaylī chooses a set of verses and determines the motif and general themes of these verses. He first explains the analysis (i’rāb) of words in the sentences. Then, he elucidates on the eloquence of every verses. Afterwards, in a very particular manner, he explains the meaning of the words in the verses. Subsequently, he interprets and explains the verses. Finally, at the end of the interpretation of every set of verses, he declares very important statements and decrees deduced from this set of verses. These statements and decrees sometimes aim to indicate how to implement practically the verses of the Qur’ān in real life. It goes beyond the theory and ideas which we have kept in our mind.

The last one is “*tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*” of ibn-‘Āshūr. One of ibn-‘Āshūr’s method regarding interpretation of the Qur’ān is *al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*. He also relies on his deep understanding of the terminology of the Qur’ān, and by extensively and critically using Arabic literature, about which he is remarkably knowledgeable. He also indicates different aspects of *i’jāz al-Bayānī* in the Qur’ān.

Since he thinks that the problems of societies can be solved through referring to the Qur'ān, sometimes he provides socio-political interpretations of certain verses. He also widely discusses the connection between two or more successive verses and talks about the succession of chapters, stating that the Qur'ān has meaningful consistency. In general, the themes of the science of the Qur'ān, such as *qirā'āt* (readings) and *asbāb al-nuzūl* (causes of descending) have occupied important aspects of this interpretation. Ibn-'Ashūr, in his interpretation, has discussed different ideas about certain verses. He also has expressed his own opinion about various issues raised in Quranic verses and examined the stories of the Qur'ān.

The next category is *Aḥādīth* and *Sīrah al-Nabī* books. These books help us to understand the approach of the Prophet about different issues and are very beneficial. In this regard, such basic books as *Sahīh Muslim* and *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* are indispensable for this research. In these books, some chapters have narrated a couple of *Aḥādīth* about Satan.

Arabic dictionaries are another category of books which will be required. These books are necessary for understanding the meaning of terms in the Qur'ān and other basic sources. In addition, there is another category of books which only analyzes the terms of the Qur'ān called *Mufradāt-al-Qur'ān*. Both categories include many books but in academic research some of them are more important. "*Lisān al-Arab*" and "*Mufradātal-Gharīb al-Qur'ānli-al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī*" are exemplars.

The next categories of the books which shall be used are about or related to dialogue in the Qur'ān. These books contain the verses about dialogues such as that between Allah and Iblīs. They discuss this particular dialogue and also present some useful teachings. Most of these books are contemporary works.

One of the most important books in this category is written by Hussayn Faḍl Allah in his work “*al-ḥiwār fī al-Qur’ān*”. In the entire book, he discusses all dialogues in the Qur’ān and extracted the principles and methods of dialogue. He also discusses the dialogue between Allah and Iblīs and gives critical views about the strange notions of some philosophers. He proves that Iblīs is suitable for hell. He briefly puts forward some roles of Iblīs with regard to human beings and to what extent Iblīs can dominate us.

The next and crucial category comprises the books which discuss directly Satan or Iblīs in the Qur’ān or in general in Islamic tradition. These books have discussed widely the personality and characteristics of Satan from different perspectives.

The first book is “*Misleading Ways of Satan*” which was authored by Faisal Zia Siddique. Different ways of Satan to mislead people have been discussed in this book. After giving a general perception about some key concepts such as Satan, Soul, Heart and Worshiping in chapter one, he concentrates on queries on Satan and jinns. He considers Iblīs a Jinn and then talks about the jinns. He points out some questions such as, “Do the jinns have body or not? Or do jinns die? Or can the jinns foretell the future? Or what powers have they?”, and then answers these questions.

The creation of Adam is given some explanation as well. In the next chapters, he deeply discusses Satan. In chapter four, he identifies some general characteristics of Satan and discusses the biography of Satan. Chapter Five and Six focus on the activities and the ways and means of Satan to mislead people. He illustrates some attributes that Satan comes through to seduce people. Major sins, arrogance, obsession, demagoguery, doubt, fear, hypocrisy, alcohol, corruption and many other things are examples that Satan resorts to. In chapter eight, he discusses the negative

effects of satanic influence upon the human body and in Chapter nine he elucidates on how we can protect ourselves against Satan. In all of these chapters, Faisal Zia Siddique cites many verses to explain his points.

The next book is “*Beware Satan: Strategies of Defense*” by Mehmet Yavuz Seker. In the first chapter, Seker explores the creation and essence of Satan. He clarifies the definition of the words like Shayṭān and Iblīs and explains why Satan has been created. He briefly discusses the refusal of Satan to bow to Adam and then describes his interaction with Adam.

One of the useful and important sections of this book is chapter two where Seker describes Satan based on the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. In the *ḥadīth*, Seker mentions different issues concerning Satan such as his influence on dreams, involvement in food consumption by narrating the related *ḥadīth* on these issues. In the next chapter, Satan's attributes, methods and infestation of the heart are explained. The book reveals how Satan exploits different symbols of worship to mislead people. For example, he says that “Satan approaches human beings during the prayers reminding them of irrelevant matters in order to break their concentration”<sup>6</sup>. Similarly, he indicates some points concerning fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca and *Zakāh*. Finally, the means of protection against Satan are identified in the last chapter.

Another book is “*Al-Shayṭān fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī*” written by Hussayn Solaymān. This book includes fifteen chapters that discuss very broadly many issues in connection with Satan. After elaborating on some important key concepts such as Al-Shaytan, Iblīs, and jinn, in chapter four Solaymān discusses the philosophy of the creation of Satan and indicates important verses in this regard with some critical views such as why Allah created Iblīs. Or why did Allah allow him among the group of

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<sup>6</sup> Seker, Mehmet, *Beware! Satan: strategies of defence*, (Somerset, N.J: Tughra books, 2008), 95.

angles? Or why did Allah command him to bow down while he knows he would disobey? Or why didn't Allah destroy him when he did not bow down?<sup>7</sup> Solaymān tries to find suitable answers to each of these questions.

In the next chapter, Solaymān points out the story of creation and opens a topic called “the Hard Test” to give some point about the dialogue between Allah and Iblīs. Explanation of the meaning of prostration and the truth of the prostration of the angles to Adam is another discussion featured in this chapter. In the next chapters, the interaction between Prophets and Satan was discussed and this covers all the prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān and their stories. The features and traits of Satan, the purposes and means of misleading, how he seduces people and his activities were also examined from different perspectives.

The next crucial book is “*Satan: a biography*” written by Henry Ansgar Kelly. This book is very useful in chapter three of this research where the dialogue between God and Satan in other religions was discussed. The change of concept and function of Satan from the Old Testament to modern era are elaborated upon in this book. Kelly attempts to give a clear understanding about Satan in the Old Testament, apocryphal works and New Testament. He believes that the understanding of Satan when viewed from canonical and non-canonical works of Judeo-Christian literatures is totally different from the dogma of Christianity.

Most of the dialogues between God and Satan in Judeo-Christian literatures are indicated in this book. These dialogues are presented with explanations to properly compare and contrast them with the dialogue in the Qur'ān.

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<sup>7</sup> Sulaymān, Hussayn, *Al-Shayṭān fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, (*Satan in Islamic Notion*), (Bayrūt: Dār al-Hādī, 1999), 63.