

Doctrine and Dogma in the Qur'an

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter focuses on the main theological beliefs expounded in the Qur'an. The central belief in the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) dominates the Qur'an and has an impact on the way in which it engages with pre-Islamic religion and Christianity. The theme of God as the Creator of the universe is related to the presentation of God as ruler, sovereign, and judge: God's ability to create also means that God has sovereignty over creation and can destroy and subvert the natural order, as well as judge humanity. The supernatural world, including jinn, devils (*shayāṭīn*) and angels, and the performance of miracles also plays an important part in Qur'anic doctrine and dogma.

Keywords: doctrine, oneness, theology, creation, mercy, supernatural

THERE have been a number of different reflections and approaches to the issue of doctrine and dogma in the Qur'an, and in Islam more broadly; and, consequently, it is necessary to distinguish between those studies which have examined the reception, elaboration, and discourses of Muslim scholars and those which have studied the Qur'an directly. Inevitably, it is not always possible to distinguish the two, but this chapter will focus on studies of dogma in the Qur'an, rather than those that explore later Muslim discussions, either medieval or modern.

To talk of dogma and doctrine in relation to a scripture, rather than to a faith, can sometimes be difficult, as scriptures do not always provide clear and unambiguous statements on all theological issues. So, whilst the Qur'an is explicit and unequivocal in its espousal of monotheism, the Muslim doctrine of *tawḥīd* (divine 'unicity' or 'oneness'), other doctrines are less clearly stated. This is best illustrated by the complex array of sources in Muslim literature on the problem of predestination and free will found in the Qur'an, the hadith, and theology—conveniently collected in a number of old but helpful sources (e.g. Salisbury 1866; de Vlieger 1903). For example, whilst there are verses in the Qur'an which clearly advocate divine predestination (Q. 51:22; 56:60; 57:22; 68:25, etc.), there is also a strong sense of *taklīf*—human responsibility for actions (Q. 2:25; 5:9; 10:9, etc.). This has led many scholars to engage with both the medieval Muslim theological respons-

es to this problem (Wolfson 1976: 601–719; De Cillis 2014), and to reflect on the relationship between Muslim theology and the dogmatic statements found in the Qur'an (Gardet 1967). Furthermore, different theologians and groups within Islam also use the same verses of the Qur'an to advocate contradictory positions (Hamza et al. 2008: 455–89). However, Muslim thinkers did develop a series of ideas or beliefs, known as the *uṣūl al-dīn* ('the roots of the faith'), that were deemed to form a central core, to which all Muslims should adhere. The Muslim theologian Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), for example, gives the core beliefs in his *al-Kashf 'an manāḥij al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla* as (i) the existence of God, (ii) the oneness of God, (iii), the attributes of (p. 431) God, (iv) the transcendence of God, and (v) the actions of God, which includes creation, interaction with humanity through prophets, predestination and free will, divine justice, and the resurrection and judgement of the dead (Ibn Rushd/Averroës 2001; see also Watt 1994). It is, therefore, necessary to be a little cautious about describing 'Qur'anic dogma', since there is little that is held in common by all Muslims, past and present. In recent years many Muslim scholars have tried to re-evaluate doctrinal positions in light of contemporary society, a process which began with the modernist movement and figures such as Muḥammad 'Abdūh and Rashīd Riḍā. For example, Mun'im Sirry has presented a study of modernist and reformist interpretations of Qur'anic passages relating to inter-faith concerns (2014) and Abdulaziz Sachedina has explored the idea of democratic pluralism in light of the Qur'an (2001). Both of these works can be seen as contemporary engagements with Qur'anic dogma and belief.

The dichotomy between those who believe and those who do not believe is a predominant theme, which reveals the importance of *tawḥīd* in the Qur'anic worldview. There are a number of words used in the Qur'an to describe believers and non-believers, particularly *mu'min* ('believer'), *muslim* ('Muslim' or literally 'one who submits'), *mushrik* ('one who associates [something with God]'), *ḥanīf* ('a pre-Islamic monotheist') amongst others. Some of the precise meanings of these words are contentious, especially *ḥanīf*, which has generated much discussion (Rubin 1990). Most recently Fred Donner has argued that the use of the term *muslim* to refer to the contemporary concept of a 'Muslim' was developed at a later date, during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705). Donner argues that statements that Abraham was both a *muslim* and a *ḥanīf*, suggest that the term *muslim* did not necessarily denote what we mean by it now (see Donner 2010: 57–8 and 203–4). Qur'anic dogma is the means by which people can be divided into the categories of 'believer' and 'non-believer'.

This chapter will begin by exploring four areas of dogma that are used to distinguish Muslims from others as believers. The four areas concern different beliefs or attributes of God: (i) the Qur'anic views on divine unity (*tawḥīd*), which is expressed often, but most clearly in the statement, 'Say: "He is God, One"' (Q. 112:1); (ii) the belief that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth (cf. Q. 2:29; 6:1–2; 7:54 etc.), and the theological beliefs that emerge from this view of God, namely that God is also 'ruler' or 'sovereign' of the created order; (iii) a belief in divine mercy and communication with the created or-

der; and (iv) the belief that God also created other supernatural beings, such as the jinn, angels (*malā'ika*), and devils (*shayāṭīn*).

God as One

Monotheism or 'Oneness' (*tawḥīd*) is a central tenet in Islam, and different scholars have approached the question of *tawḥīd* in different ways. Much time and energy has been spent in Islamic studies in attempts to understand the theology of the Qur'an, and especially the emergence of *tawḥīd* in the context of pre-Islamic Arabia: why did (p. 432) monotheism develop in Arabia, and how can the Arabian context help frame our interpretation of the Qur'anic *tawḥīd*? (Welch 1979). There have been a number of different ways in which this subject has been approached by historians of religion. The field is extremely complex, partly because of the paucity of sources for first-/seventh-century Arabia, but also because of the various responses scholars have made regarding the authenticity and accuracy of the Muslim accounts of its early development. Although it is something of an oversimplification, it is possible to separate studies of the development of Qur'anic dogma into two main approaches: (i) that Qur'anic dogma should be viewed as a product of its Arabian context; and (ii) that late-ancient Christian and Jewish thought had a profound influence on Qur'anic monotheism.

The study of the Qur'an and the emergence of Islam in its Arabian context has been the focus of a number of studies, but it is necessary to place any modern studies in the context of the work of early figures such as Julius Wellhausen (1897/1927), and Josef Henninger (1959/1981) who set the tone for much of the work that has followed them. Scholars such as M. M. Bravmann (1972) and Jacques Ryckmans (1989) developed the study of pre-Islamic religion; their studies, although more directly concerned with pre-Islamic paganism, provide the religious context in which Islamic dogma emerged, and such studies continue to be of interest (e.g. Hoyland 2001). Of those who have discussed Islam in its Arabian context more specifically, Jacques Chelhod, Toufic Fahd, and W. Montgomery Watt deserve particular attention, since it was these sorts of studies that 'revisionist' views of early Islamic history and doctrine reacted against.

Jacques Chelhod's work of the 1950s and 1960s viewed Muslim doctrines as developing out of pre-Islamic belief systems (Chelhod 1955; 1964). Influenced by the development of the anthropology of religion, he argues that Arabian religion underwent a process of theological development, which showed increasing monotheism. He and other scholars argued that the Qur'an bears witness to this process, with the Qur'an displaying stronger monotheist statements over time (Welch 1980; Waardenburg 1984). Toufic Fahd's work places Islam and Qur'anic theology within the milieu of pre-Islamic religion, exploring the social and religious structures and beliefs of pre-Islamic paganism and their relationship to the Qur'an (Fahd 1968). This approach continues to garner great interest and a number of studies exploring the Qur'an in light of late antique Arabia (de Blois 2010).

Whereas Chelhod approaches Qur'anic *tawhīd* from an anthropological perspective, Montgomery Watt's 'High God' theory attempted to present a historical account for the emergence of *tawhīd* in Arabia (Watt 1971, 1979; Rubin 1984), which developed earlier studies of pre-Islamic Arabian monotheism (Gibb 1962). The theory argues that as Arabian society became more integrated, with a particular focus on the Ka'ba in Mecca, Arab religious thinking began to coalesce around Allāh, the 'High God' of the Arabian pantheon. Qur'anic *tawhīd*, then, was part of this gradual movement towards the worship of a single deity within the region. Watt's position that Allāh was the pre-eminent divinity of the Arabs gained some support (e.g. Pavlovich 1982), but recently it has been critiqued by G. R. Hawting (1999: 20–44), Patricia Crone (2010), and Aziz al-Azmeh (2014). For example, al-Azmeh argues that archaeological evidence suggests the persistence of pagan cultic worship in Central Arabia (2014: 279). More widely al-Azmeh (p. 433) argues that it is necessary to place pre-Islamic paganism in its late ancient context, particularly the fact that late ancient paganism also went through a monotheizing process, without being Judaeo-Christian (2014: 47–99, 279–357). The benefits of utilizing both Muslim and non-Muslim sources to understand aspects of Qur'anic and early Muslim dogma has been stressed by Robert Hoyland (1997: 523–98).

Many of these studies based their ideas on the later Muslim understanding of its early history, typified by Ibn Ishāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, which contains many stories about pre-Islamic religion, and Ibn al-Kalbī's *K. al-Aṣṇām* (1952); however, such assumptions were challenged by John Wansbrough (1977, 1978). Regarding the Qur'anic doctrine of *tawhīd*, the most important contribution is Hawting's *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam* (1999). Hawting argues that the polemics against idolatry (*shirk*) in the Qur'an do not necessarily suggest an Arabian context; rather, he argues, the discourse is similar to other inter-monotheist disputes, in which certain monotheist rituals and beliefs are declared 'idolatrous' by a reforming party (1999: 67–87). The religious history of Islam subsequently went through a process of Arabization (1999: 88–110), which located the origins in the Arab heartlands, rather than in Mesopotamia. Although not all will be convinced by Hawting's arguments, *The Idea of Idolatry* emphasizes the importance of viewing Qur'anic *tawhīd* in conjunction with its discourse against *shirk*: the two cannot, and should not, be viewed separately. More recently Michel Cuypers has presented an analysis of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, in which he argues that the whole sura should be read in terms of a Qur'anic engagement with Christian, and to a lesser extent, Jewish, beliefs, and their incompatibility with the new religion given in the Qur'an (Cuypers 2007/2009).

In recent years, the idea of 'Late Antiquity' has developed significantly in relation to the Qur'an and beliefs such as *tawhīd*, although it is important to place these modern works in the context of the scholarship that preceded it. The material in the Qur'an that is related to the Bible solicited much interest from non-Muslim scholars, who attempted to read the Qur'an and its beliefs in light of Judaism and/or Christianity. Although there are many examples, the early works of Richard Bell (1926), Charles Cutler Torrey (1933), and James Sweetman (1947–55) are notable examples. In more recent scholarship, the interest has shifted from a Jewish and/or Christian 'origin' of Muslim beliefs, to a contextualization of the Qur'an and its beliefs, within a wider scope of Late Antiquity. In relation to

tawḥīd, the focus has often been on the Qur'anic attacks on the Trinity and the Incarnation, both of which it describes as *shirk*. Much research has focused on the interpretation of Q. 112 (*Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*), and what this sura says about both Trinitarian beliefs and pre-Islamic religion (Kropp 2011). Although this sura does present some interpretative challenges, the studies show the importance and benefits of placing the Qur'anic belief in the oneness of God in the context of interlocutors, whether they are Jewish, Christian, or pagan. Indeed, Angelika Neuwirth, who advocates a kind of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, has shown that the use of suras such as *al-Fātiḥa* and *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* in the devotional and liturgical life of the nascent Muslim community reveals the importance of theological concepts of ideas such as *tawḥīd* (2010: 451–509).

(p. 434) God as Creator and Ruler

The fact that Allāh was the 'creator of heaven and earth' is a dominant theme in the Qur'an. Some scholars, such as al-Azmeh, have argued that such a position has elements of *henotheism*, in which other gods are accepted as existing but whose power is meaningless in comparison to the authority of *Allāh* (al-Azmeh 2014: 293–315; Watt 1971). It is, however, extremely difficult to assess such theories, as the evidence for such a belief in the Qur'an can only be made through inferences. For example, the so-called 'Satanic verses', which are part of the hadith literature and are not in the Qur'an, suggest that nascent Islam did accept the existence of other goddesses (the *banāt Allāh*; 'daughters of God'; viz. *al-Lāt*, *al-'Uzzā*, and *al-Manāt*). However, these 'verses' present a number of difficulties for interpretation (cf. Ahmed 1998). Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that God's creative power is an integral part of the Qur'anic understanding of God, and a number of other religious beliefs develop out of reflections on God's role as the creator.

The Qur'anic view of the universe is cosmically dualist, in the sense that heaven and earth form two distinct realms: God and the angels reside in heaven, humans, animals, and jinn on earth. This is not to be confused with *ethical* dualism, in which good and evil are equal opponents competing for control over the universe, as can be found in Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism (see Gammie 1974). Although it has not received significant attention, particularly in relation to the Qur'an specifically, it must be remembered that heaven and hell are part of the created cosmos (cf. Rustomji 2009), and contribute to the Qur'anic view of the created order. Whilst the earth, the 'lower world' is temporal and has a specific time of existence (an *ajal*), heaven and hell are often believed to be eternal, although the eternality of hell is often debated. As with other areas of theological belief, the focus of the secondary literature is more interested in later Muslim reflections on this idea (e.g. Abrahamov 2002).

Many scholars have reflected on the nature of creation in Islam, and whether God created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). There have been some studies of this concerning the Qur'an directly, principally by O'Shaughnessy (1985: 1–11), and it has received more interest recently. However, since the Qur'an does not engage with the belief in *creatio ex nihilo* explicitly, the focus in the secondary literature is often on later discussions in exegesis, Is-

lamic philosophy, and theology (al-Alousi 1965; Wolfson 1976: 355–409). The Qur'an is, however, much more explicit in the descriptions of God creating human life, particularly Adam, but also all creatures. The Qur'an provides a basic outline of the development of the embryo within the womb (Q. 23:12–14), which has received some attention in the secondary literature (O'Shaughnessy 1985: 10–19; Bakker 1965: 9–19). Such description is also used in *tafsīr 'ilmī* (or 'scientific exegesis'), to argue that the Qur'an (and the hadith) and modern scientific advances are compatible (e.g. Albar 1986). Similar approaches to the Qur'an have been used to argue for or against the idea of evolutionism (cf. Shanavas 2005), and there are numerous studies on these discussions (Ayoub 2005).

(p. 435) God's act of creation also makes God sovereign or ruler over creation. This sovereignty is symbolized in the Qur'an with the image of God sitting upon a throne ('*arsh*'; Q. 25:59; 32:4 etc.), often with attendant angels (e.g. Q. 39:75; 69:17). Such imagery has much in common with biblical and Judaeo-Christian motifs (see O'Shaughnessy 1973), and these images generated much discussion in medieval Muslim thought, since they could lead to a belief in anthropomorphism (see Gimaret 1997: 123–261). Although some read the references to God's throne literally, both in the medieval and modern periods, the Qur'an clearly uses the image to describe God's authority and 'kingship', indeed, the same word is used to describe both heavenly and human, kingly thrones (Q. 27:23–42; 38:34 etc.). Although the uses of the imagery of divine kingship do not properly constitute dogmatic statements, the concept of divine sovereignty is an essential element in Islamic doctrine; and a number of critical and definitive beliefs flow out from the notion of divine authority, which warrant discussion.

First, one consequence of the view of God as the sovereign and creator of all things, both heavenly and divine, is that God is able to subvert the natural order of creation when events necessitate. This manifests itself in a number of different ways: first, there is a theological and semantic link between God's creative and destructive power (Makino 1970; Smith and Haddad 1981); second, God can create life and so is able to create Adam and Jesus without there being a process of divine incarnation (Robinson 1990: 156–66). Third, God is able to give this ability to subvert the natural order to the prophets, so Jesus is able to create birds from clay (Q. 5:110; Robinson 1989; Dzon 2011); prophets are able to raise the dead (Q. 2:259; O'Shaughnessy 1969: 45–49; Reynolds 2009: 167–85); Moses can part the Red Sea (Q. 20:77–8), and so on. The study of the supernatural elements of the Qur'anic and Muslim worldview has recently gained the interest of scholars, and is being continually developed (Williams 2013).

As the creator of all things, what God creates, God is also able to destroy; indeed the companion pair of life and death is common throughout the whole of the Qur'an. The belief that death is generated by God is central to Muslim belief and forms a break from what is known about pre-Islamic beliefs, which appear to have been much vaguer and abstract (Homerin 1985). The Qur'an makes frequent reference to the *ajal*, the 'moment of death' or the 'span of a life', which is decreed by God and under God's authority. This theme is developed in great detail in the hadith literature (see Smith and Haddad 1981) and beyond, with the remembrance of death (*dhikr al-mawt*) becoming a focus of Islamic

piety (Winter 1989: i-xxx). The sense of ending and completion is not just applicable to human life, but is also seen in the end of time and the cataclysmic events that accompany it: creation has a violent end and the natural order is subverted through the authority of God (Smith and Haddad 1981: 31-62, 127-46). More importantly, the earth also has a fixed time for existence, that is, an *ajal* (Q. 30:8; 46:3), and all of creation is geared towards the completion of the *ajal*.

After the 'death' of the world, there comes judgement, and the subsequent consignment to hell (*jahannam*) or admittance into the Garden. The Qur'an is quite clear about when judgement will take place—on the Day of Resurrection—and that judgement is (p. 436) based on the actions committed by each individual, principally belief in God and His messenger (Smith and Haddad 1981: 62-98). The belief in the two Muslim angels, Munkar and Nakīr, who come to visit the grave after death, is a much later development (see Burge 2012: 190-2). In recent years, there has been much reflection on whether non-Muslims are able to enter heaven; Mohammed Hassan Khalil in particular, highlights a number of Muslim theologians who have argued for a pluralistic approach to salvation (Khalil 2012) that engages with Qur'anic understandings of salvation and the afterlife.

Such approaches highlight the main problem with considering a scripture such as the Qur'an and questions of 'dogma' and 'doctrine'. At a basic level, the Qur'an is clear about the need for humans to acknowledge divine authority and to behave accordingly, since judgement is based on these criteria; but the application of such a belief is much more complex and no answer is provided within the text. In this respect, dogma always remains fluid and susceptible to change; but, nevertheless, it is possible to draw out overarching themes, of which God's ultimate sovereignty over the universe, through God's own creative power, is a central belief. Other considerations, such as whether God is actually seated on a throne, or who precisely will gain admittance into heaven, can tend to miss the main, wider point being made: namely, that God holds authority over the universe and acts accordingly.

God's Mercy

The extent to which divine mercy can constitute a matter of dogma or doctrine is hard to say, but the concept of mercy forms an essential element of the Qur'anic worldview; and, furthermore, certain ideas flow out from the belief in divine mercy, particularly the Qur'anic view of salvation, prophethood, and revelation. Although these three ideas can be treated individually, they are all manifestations of divine mercy.

God's mercy is expressed in the forgiveness of humans who commit sins and the human inclination to be ungrateful for the benefits that God bestows on them. Hamartiology, the study of sin, has received relatively little consideration in comparison to other areas of Qur'anic theology, although there are some short early surveys of the theme (e.g. Rahman 1980: 17-36). The focus has tended to be on legal aspects and the categorization of different types and classes of sins. However, sin is a central theme in the Qur'an, with the sin of Adam in the Garden providing an account of why humans can and do sin (e.g.

Neuwirth 2000). It is through an acknowledgement of God's sovereignty, as well as God's beneficence, that sins can be forgiven by God. This is illustrated clearly throughout *Sūrat Yūnus* (Q. 10), in which unbelief (*kufr*) and 'associationism' (*shirk*) are linked theologically to a failure to see God's signs (*āyāt*) in creation and to give thanks to God for them. As has been mentioned above, the Qur'an envisions a universe in which the divine and earthly worlds are separate and distinct spheres and the expulsion of Adam from the Garden marks human separation from God. However, whilst sin abides (p. 437) in the earthly world, God, through kindness and mercy, sends messengers to humans in order to provide them with an opportunity to be shown God's *āyāt*. Prophecy and prophethood are consequently an essential component in the articulation of divine mercy.

The role of prophets in the Qur'an has generated much discussion in the secondary literature. Many of the early studies of the prophets in the Qur'an were made as they provided a bridge between the Muslim and Judaeo-Christian traditions. Some early scholarship includes an element of anti-Muslim polemic, but more recent studies have highlighted the centrality of the prophets within Qur'anic discourse. Studies have looked at prophecy and prophethood in general (e.g. Rahman 1980: 80–105; Tottoli 2002), while others have looked at the portrayals of specific prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, and Solomon (Firestone 1990; Wheeler 2002; Lassner 1993). This recent scholarship has tended to focus on the way the Qur'an makes use of prophets within a wider theological discourse, rather than source-critical comparisons with Jewish and Christian material, and these studies aim to gain a deeper understanding of what prophecy and prophethood means in the Qur'anic worldview. Some of the wider implications of prophethood have also been given some attention in the secondary literature. For example, God's use of angels and men as messengers of God's word also establishes a link between God and humanity that forms an essential part of the Qur'anic worldview. Toshihiko Izutsu has explored the patterns of communication between God and prophets in the most detail (Izutsu 2002: 133–97; see also Wild 1996). The giving of revelation (*tanzīl*, *inzāl*) is not simply a private experience for the prophet, but is something that needs to be passed on to the prophet's audience as a divine proclamation. This relationship is also embodied in the idea of covenant (*mīthāq*, 'ahd'), of which the covenant made between God and the Children of Israel is the most significant (Humphreys 1989; Mårtensson 2008). The idea of making oaths and covenant also had an impact on early Muslim politics, in which the giving of an oath to a caliph formed an important part of the acknowledgement of political leadership (Marsham 2009).

Just as God is merciful, there is an expectation that humans will also behave in a like manner, although this moves away from the realm of doctrine into the sphere of ethical thought. Although, it should be noted that an interesting trend in the discussion of divine mercy has recently emerged, in which the Qur'anic concepts of mercy and forgiveness are used to aid conflict resolution within the contemporary world (Abu-Nimer and Nasser 2013). In many respects, this illustrates that doctrine and dogma are not isolated academic issues, but are ones that can have an important impact on a community as a whole.

The Otherworldly

The Qur'an clearly describes a created universe which incorporates both human and supernatural elements, of which angels, jinn, and devils are the most notable. The study of Qur'anic angelology and demonology has received much less attention than other (p. 438) aspects of Qur'anic doctrine, but more recently a number of new works have begun to open out the study of the supernatural in the Qur'an.

In many early studies of Qur'anic angelology scholars have often posited a strong influence of Jewish and Christian ideas (Fahd 1971). Although there is, undoubtedly, much in common between Qur'anic angelology and that of sixth-century Judaism and Christianity (both biblical and extra-biblical), scholars have begun to acknowledge that there are some unique elements to Islamic and Qur'anic angelology (Burge 2012: 52–69; cf. O'Shaughnessy 1953: 33–42). The role of angels as 'messengers' has also been stressed throughout the literature, with scholars often asserting that the Arabic for angel (*malak*, pl. *malā'ika*) should be interpreted in light of its verbal root (*alaka* or *la'aka*), meaning 'to send'; *malā'ika* are, therefore 'sent things' or 'messengers'. However, *malak* is frequently glossed with *rasūl* ('messenger'), which implies that role of angels as messengers had to be spelt out (Burge 2008: 51–4). This means that the Qur'anic *malak* is conceived as a divine creature, rather than as a 'messenger'. This view of angels as a species of supernatural being, rather than functionaries, fits in with the ways in which other supernatural creatures, such as the jinn and the *shayāṭīn*, are conceived (El-Zein 2009: 32–52). Angels also have a clear role in both worship (Burge 2009) and the eschatological events of the Last Day (Smith and Haddad 1981), which are not strictly 'messenger' roles.

One of the most difficult issues to deal with concerning angelology is the prostration of the angels to Adam in Q. 2:34. It is an issue that presented many problems for medieval Muslims and it still remains largely unresolved and continues to generate debate (Tottoli 1998; Chipman 2002). The angelic prostration to Adam is important since it provides a confluence of the supernatural, as it involves God, the angels, Adam, Iblīs, and jinn. It is worth discussing the episode in a little detail as it illustrates the problems that can be encountered with aspects of dogma in the Qur'an, as well as Qur'anic beliefs about angels, jinn, and devils. The Qur'anic narrative appears to be relatively straightforward: God commands the angels to prostrate to Adam, but Iblīs refuses (Q. 2:34; 7:11), and then subsequently vows to lead humans astray (Q. 7:16; 20:117). After this Iblīs becomes known as Shayṭān ('Satan'), who then gains fellow 'devils' (*shayāṭīn*; Q. 2:14, 257 etc.). This simple story provides a mythical-historical account of the origin of evil; but on closer inspection it can open wide a number of theological problems, but two are worthy of mention and have a bearing on Qur'anic doctrine.

First, why did God command the angels to prostrate to something that was not God? The most common response has been that the prostration was not an act of worship, but is related to Adam's, and by extension human, superiority over other created beings (Tottoli 1998). However, the reason humans are hierarchically higher than other creations is unclear. Numerous reasons have been posited: first, the designation of Adam as the *khālifa*

(‘representative’ or ‘vice-regent’) of God; but even the meaning or significance of this title is unclear and it has generated much discussion in both medieval and contemporary scholarship (Crone and Hinds 1986). Second, Adam is able to use reason (cf. Q. 2:31); this is used to distinguish and promote Adam above other creations, particularly angels, jinn, and *shayāṭīn*, but also animals (El-Zein 2009: 24–31; Burge 2012: 88–108). Third, the substance out of which creatures are created influences their place in (p. 439) the hierarchy of the universe: angels are made of light, jinn are made out of ‘smokeless fire’ (Q. 15:27), Adam is made out of mud, into which God breathes the divine spirit (Q. 15:28–29). Iblīs’ protestations to God focus on the question of physical substance (Q. 17:61; 38:76); but why does the matter out of which creations are made create a hierarchy? Reynolds, drawing on Syriac texts, has argued that the prostration is a result of the divine spirit that is placed with Adam (Reynolds 2009: 29–54). Fourth, the prostration to Adam is in anticipation of human faith in God and the moral responsibility (*taklīf*) that is imposed on humans despite God’s hiddenness, unlike the angels who see and know God’s existence (Burge 2012: 93–7). All of these solutions are consonant with wider Qur’anic theology, but the Qur’an does not provide a full account of the reasons behind the prostration to Adam, revealing the problems of reflecting on Qur’anic dogma: something theological and ‘dogmatic’ is clearly intended by the episode, but exactly what it is remains difficult to establish.

The prostration to Adam has also raised debates about the justice of God, since Iblīs is dealt with harshly (Awn 1983; Neuwirth 2000). However, these debates are more concerned with later Muslim reflection on the episode than on specifically Qur’anic dogma. The *rūḥ al-quḍus* (‘the holy spirit’) mentioned in Q. 19:17 and identified by both the *tafsīr* tradition and many secondary commentators with the angel Gabriel (cf. Luke 1:26) has also generated much discussion in the scholarly literature (MacDonald 1932; O’Shaughnessy 1953; Hawting 2011); however these discussions are more concerned with later interpretation.

The Qur’an also accepts the presence of other, supernatural creatures on earth: the jinn and the *shayāṭīn* (‘devils’). These have both received relatively little attention in the secondary literature, save where they become relevant in other discussions (such as the prostration to Adam). Since Eichler’s early monograph, which includes specific discussions of the Qur’anic representation of jinn (1928: 8–39) and *shayāṭīn* (1928: 40–80), there have only been a few articles on either species in the Qur’an (e.g. Fahd 1971; Welch 1979; Waardenburg 1984). The focus of scholarly attention has often been focused on the belief that mental illness is derived from jinn possession, and the only recent monograph on the jinn focuses on jinn in medieval Arabic literature (El-Zein). However, the stories in the Qur’an that feature jinn, particularly their involvement with Solomon have been treated more fully (Klar 2004). Above all, the Qur’an stresses that the revelation was not given just to humans but also to the jinn, and that the jinn are subject to judgement on the Day of Resurrection (Waardenburg 1984: 276–278).

Conclusion

Any discussion of dogma and doctrine in the Qur'an is likely to prove problematic: the many different groups and schools within Islam have interpreted the same text in widely different ways. This is a problem shared by most, if not all, religions with a written scripture. The controversies of later dogmatic theology (*kalām*) often arose as differing (p. 440) responses to linguistic and syntactic ambiguities within the Qur'anic text. Nevertheless, there remains a core set of beliefs which are central to all Muslim groups. First, the Qur'an espouses strict monotheism (*tawḥīd*), which is placed in contrast to its religious environment. This has been an area of Qur'anic studies that has and will continue to generate much discussion. Second, that God is creator of the universe; and from this a number of other beliefs and doctrines emanate, such as divine sovereignty and eschatology. Third, in the Qur'an God is merciful and interacts with creation and sends messengers. Lastly, the Qur'an envisions a cosmic order in which there are a number of different species of being, each having a different relationship between God and humans.

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