

THE END OF REASON

SAMPLE CHAPTER

Bahira said, “Man will not be damned because of the consequences of his actions, but according to his intentions. The outcome is entirely God’s. Thus, if a man’s intention is evil and the consequence is good, he is not to be accounted good himself. If his intention is good and the consequence is evil, he is not to be accounted evil himself. The world is not man’s kingdom, but all the worlds belong to God. Though Nimrod and Pharaoh conquered and considered themselves ‘the lord supreme,’ their conquering proceeded from God’s ordination. Their pride they forged themselves in the furnace of their ignorance. That Nimrod conquered the world and died from the bite of a gnat was God’s command. That Nimrod considered himself *God* was Nimrod’s own doing.”

Iblis said, “I accept God’s command and do not question Him concerning those He curses and those He blesses—for it is all His choice. Nor do I separate volition from action, for I consider no dominion apart from God’s dominion.

“Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? Who leads astray whom He will? You say Nimrod called himself God and this was his own doing, and you exclude God from this. Thus you make Nimrod independent of God. You make him His associate. You make Nimrod into God by affixing to him the power to believe something contrary to what God intends him to believe. There is no true opposition to God. If He

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makes men wicked, then He curses me to punish them. If He makes men good, then He curses me to test them. There is no power nor might but God. He rose up Nimrod to oppose Abraham; he rose up Pharaoh to oppose Moses. He rose up Babylon to cast down Israel. If Ahmad is an instrument of God's mercy, why do you condemn me? I am His instrument of wrath.

“The Angel of God announced to Abraham, ‘He will destroy these cities.’

“Abraham said, ‘Would He destroy the innocent with the wicked? If He finds only ten righteous in these cities, will He spare them all?’

“The Angel answered, ‘Far be it for you to question Him. Trust that He can spare the righteous and yet destroy the wicked. But because He is merciful and you have interceded, He will spare them all His judgment for a time, if ten righteous are found there.’

“But how many righteous did the angels of God discover there? Not ten—no, only Lot and his daughters. Not even his wife was spared! Therefore, God destroyed those cities leaving not a trace for living men to find. He would have erased them from history also, except that He sought a demonstration of His tyranny.

“When the fire and brimstone rained from Heaven, none of the righteous cursed the fire and none of the angels rebuked the brimstone, for these proceeded by God's command and were servants of God's wrath. Only the wicked condemned the fire.

“Only wicked men condemn me, for I have power over them. The righteous refrain from condemnation, for they know my true station.

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“I have no power over men to make them wicked, but their wickedness gives me power over them. The fire from Heaven did not make the Sodomites wicked; but through their wickedness they brought fire upon themselves.

“Yet you condemn me and make me a partner with God in His creation, all because I would not bow. But if He commands me to disobey the outward command, how will I refuse? If He wished me to bow down, certainly it was within His power to make me bow down. Or do you still imagine Him such a weakling that I could oppose Him?

“When Moses went up Mount Horeb and heard the voice of his Lord, he said, ‘How will I speak for You in Pharaoh’s court? I am a murderer and a fugitive from his kingdom. He will not believe me.’

“The Angel of God said, ‘He will give you five tokens of His power that Pharaoh might believe you.’

“When Moses returned to Egypt, Pharaoh said, ‘By what name does your God go? Who is the one you Hebrews worship?’

“Moses said, ‘I Am. By this name is my Lord manifest.’

“Pharaoh said, ‘You cannot claim this station. You are a murderer and a fugitive. On such a man, a criminal, God cannot confer this station.’

“Moses said, ‘I am a murderer, this is true. I am also a fugitive from your court; I feared retribution. But I do not come to you as the man who fled from you. I bring you a message from God and tokens of His power.’

“Pharaoh said, ‘Show me His power.’

“Moses said, ‘I will give you five signs.’ And Moses cast down his staff and it became a serpent, writhing at Pharaoh’s feet. Moses reached down and grasped the serpent by its tail and it became a staff again.

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“Then Moses placed his hand within his shirt. When he withdrew it, the skin was white with leprosy. Again he placed his hand within his shirt, and the skin was healed.

“Then Moses turned over a tureen of water and spilled it on the floor and it became blood, though before it was pure.

“Pharaoh said, ‘These are three signs. You promised five.’

“Moses said, ‘I am the fourth sign, and you are the fifth.’

“Pharaoh said, ‘What riddle is this? Have you so few tricks?’

“Moses said, ‘Like the white hand, I became impure. But when the Lord hid me away from you, I became pure, for God leads aright whom He will. Like the water, you were pure. Upon you God conferred every advantage and looked after your every need and desire. Yet you are now cast down and made impure, for He leads astray whom He will.

“A coward and a murderer left your court; a prophet of God has returned. He exerts over everything complete control and you are not allowed to question Him. He cast me down that He might raise me up. He raised you up that He could cast you down.

“Over everything God has power and He has no associate with whom to share it, nor helpers to exert it, nor peers to approve it. He is all that is and there is nothing that is not His.

“Ahmad says, *we will all return unto Him*, yet I wonder who among us has ever left? What will we say that He did not hear before we spoke? What will we do that is hidden from Him, even as we hide it from ourselves? Where will we stand except beneath His shadow?’

“Pharaoh said, ‘I have earned my station. Through my power I raised myself up over all Egyptians and became your

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master. You're a coward and murderer—a fugitive from my court! Yet you condemn me and call yourself prophet. This is madness!

“Moses said, ‘What God gives no man earns, nor can any man claim a portion of His bounty by right. Graciously He gives life and strength for time allotted. Justly, He deprives you of both.’”

Bahira mocked Iblis, saying, “You are faultless; you claim you are pure as God Himself while declaring ‘any impurity in me is His doing!’ Which is it? You talk of God’s unity, but you conceal yourself within it as though you were absolved by it. When you speak of unity, I hear only the word ‘equivalence.’ But you are no extension of God, for He has no partners. The things of the world are not God, for God transcends these feeble worlds. In the Master’s house, all things are his possessions; but He is not to be confused with what belongs to Him.”

Stung by this, Iblis said, “Yet you would demand that I bow down to worship another than Him! You would have me crawl in the dust at the feet of the son of dust! What lover would seek to please his beloved by loving any other than Him?”

Bahira said, “It was His prerogative that you bow down before Adam! What lover would deny his beloved so small a favor?”

Iblis said, “Your Lord tests His servants.”

Bahira said, “If you passed this test, why are you cursed, despised and deformed?”

Iblis answered, “To this test there is no end. Why do you imagine the matter concluded? Why can’t you accept the end to which He purposed me? You say, ‘all things are His

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possessions,' and that, 'He is not to be confused with what belongs to Him.' But when His sword touches your neck, would you beg mercy from the sword?

"I will accept my faults and freely admit them. For 700,000 years among the angels my worship was best and I attained the paradise of His presence. But my worship was selfish. If a man wears a black coat and is spattered with blood at the slaughterhouse, it is nothing. If a man wears a white coat, a drop of blood from his nose is peril. I worshipped Him for my sake, for my delight at His pleasure. In the doorway to my salvation, I myself blocked the way. By His sanctity, I thought myself sanctified. By His purity, I thought myself purified. But the stain of my insolence, even measuring a thimbleful, corrupted me and He cast me out. He expelled me from the court of His nearness. Deprived of His beauty, my features became ugly. Deprived of His effulgence, my world became dark.

"Deformity was not a condition of my curse, but merely a symptom of my separation. I could take on my original form, the form in which I worshipped, but you could not bear the sight of it. You would die seeing Iblis at his prayers. His curse was my name. He stripped me of rank and called me *devil*.

"Nothing is possible except by His leave. But the matter of features and names is a slight one. The changing of my name was not the sign of sin, but the sin itself—that I ever took a name as my possession apart from Him, as though I could exist apart from Him. But my fall was my redemption. Did I not declare thereafter that my revenge was by His leave alone? In my worship I blasphemed; in my insolence I was redeemed. To all creation I declared, 'There is no power nor strength but in God,' and I was reprieved from punishment.

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“The meaning of His unity, which so perplexes you, is apparent; only through opposites do things become known. Thus, He cursed His most trusted angel and His curse became His blessing—that I might serve Him more selflessly by absence from Him. It is His test of me that I may be the first worthy of His presence. Before, I tasted the wine of His nearness because He is merciful and gracious. When I taste of it again, it will be because I am the only one worthy.”

Bahira said, “You are a monster, cursed until the Last Day. How can you speak of your redemption when your name is a byword for all perversity and depravity? That He permits you in His creation does not mean He approves nor, God forbid, blesses you! Remember, *God never enjoins a conduct that is shameful.*”

Iblis smiled and said, “You say the Lord enjoins nothing shameful? Therefore, what you call my disobedience cannot be shameful. Nothing is possible that He does not enjoin. That is the extent of His power. Didn’t you say it yourself? If it were less, He would not be worthy of the name God. His dominion is complete. He is Lord not merely of what is good. What you call evil is well within His power. By His power He calls evil into existence.

“He is the Author. What are we? Mere actors flitting briefly on His stage, mouthing the lines He penned for us in pre-eternity. In the words you use to condemn me, ‘He enjoins nothing shameful,’ I hear the sweet song of my absolution, piped on the instruments of His unity.

“Nothing is shameful to the initiated. The lover obeys the Beloved, whatever the outward appearance and regardless of the opinions of the rabble. So potent is His beauty that those who do not know that they love Him, still they obey Him and bend to His invisible hand.

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“He makes kings of devils and makes paupers of His saints. He punishes His prophets and tortures His devotees with the torments of Hell.

“I am not the monster you make of me. Fix your anger on your Lord who has purposed me thus. Is your Lord not all-powerful? *Hath not the potter power over the clay to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?*”