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**See also:** ALLIANCE AND TREATY; ANGELS; BROTHER AND BROTHERHOOD; CALENDAR; CALL TO PRAYER; COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET; FALSEHOOD; HIJRA; HYPOCRISY AND HYPOCRITES; INHERITANCE AND PATRIMONY; MADINA; MUḤĀJIRŪN; PLEDGE; QIBLA; YATHRIB.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL

## Ant

See ANIMALS

## Anti-Christ

See DAJJĀL

## Ape

See ANIMALS; CHILDREN OF ISRĀ’ĪL

## Apocalypse

See RESURRECTION

## APOSTASY

### RIDDA

This article comprises the following sections: i. Definition and Usage; ii. The Storied Apostate: Archetype or Historical Character; iii. The “Wars of Apostasy” and Early False Prophets; iv. Types of Apostasy and Status of the Apostate; v. Apostasy Literature; vi. Bibliography.

## Definition and Usage

The noun *ridda* denotes “the annulment of [one’s own] Islam by intention, speech, or deed” (al-Nawawī, *Taḥrīr*, p. 338) and constitutes disbelief (*q.v.*), while its synonym *irtidād* also means “retracing one’s steps” in the general sense (Rāghib, *sub r-d-d*) and connotes going back on one’s declaration of faith.

The Qurʾān mentions apostasy in four contexts:

- I. as the promotional agenda of the enemies of Muslims with the intensive form *radda* (Zabīdī), to repel, in reference to the incessant military and ideological efforts of non-Muslims to promote apostasy among Muslims: *Many of the people of the Scripture long to turn you back (yaruddūnakum) into unbelievers after your belief (Q 2:109); And they will not cease from fighting against you till they have made you renegades from your religion (yaruddūkum ‘an dīnikum), if they can (Q 2:217, cf. 17:73-75); O you who believe, if you obey a party from among those who have received Scripture, they will turn you back into unbelievers (yaruddūkum...kāfirīn) after you have believed (Q 3:100, cf. 3:149).* The infinitive nouns *radd* and *irtidād* have the sense of return (*rujūʿ*), while the latter also has the sense of apostasy and recanting, like the infinitive noun *ridda* (Ibn Durayd, *Jamhara* and Fayrūzābādī, *Qāmūs*). “The apostate (*murtadd*) was thus named because he repelled himself (*radda nafsahu*) to his unbelief” (Ibn Fāris);
- II. as a historical hypothesis on an individual and mass scale (Q 5:54, 6:89, see third section below);
- III. as consisting in a wilful act, except in case of actual coercion: *Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief—save him who is forced thereto and whose heart is still content with the Faith—but whoever finds ease in disbelief: on them is wrath from Allah. Theirs will be an awful doom (Q 16:106);*
- IV. and in the parable of a past apostate *to whom We sent Our signs, but he sloughed them off (ātaynāhu āyātīnā fansalakha minhā) (Q 7:175),* where the sloughing is conveyed by the reflexive verb *insalakha*, the trilateral transitive *salakha* (infinitive noun *salkh*) denoting flaying and skinning an animal hide as well as, figuratively, closure in time: “*Salkh* is the stripping of the hide from the body. *Salakhtu al-shahr* means ‘I am leaving the month behind,’ ‘I have reached the last day of the month’” (Farāhīdī, *sub s-l-kh*).

“The distinction between *salkh* and merely taking something out (*ikhrāj*) is that *salkh* means taking out an envelope or something serving the same purpose” (al-ʿAskarī, *Furūq*, p. 298).

Thus the reflexive sloughing off of religion points to the discarding of one’s existential envelope as a snake discards its entire skin, a “concomitant metaphor” (*istīʿāra makniyya*) that reduces the apostate’s act to that of a snake coming out of its skin, in the

process associating with the former the negative qualities of the latter and pointing to the erstwhile intimacy of the apostate’s connection with his former religion the way skin once adhered to flesh and bones (Ḥabannaka, *Maʿārij* 5:36).

### The Storied Apostate: Archetype or Historical Character

The exegetes differed over the identity of *him to whom We sent Our signs, but he sloughed them off (fa-nsalakha min-hā)* (Q 7:175), stating he was either the Israelite or Canaanite Balʿā/am b. Bāʿūr/Bāʿūrāʿ; or the jinn-familiar, Arab poet, and pseudo-prophet Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt al-Thaqafī (d. 5/626), who had read the Scriptures and who taught the Quraysh the expression *bismik Allāhumma* (“in Your Name, O Allah our Lord”); or a priest named Abū ʿĀmir (*Tafsīrs* of Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Ibn al-Jawzī, Qurṭubī, al-Balansī, al-Biqāʿī, *sub* Q 7:175). His identity, however, is of little consequence since he is an archetype of the onetime believer who recants (Rāzī) and, more specifically, of the rank and file of learned Christians and Jews—as shown by the context and chronology of the verses—who are individually responsible for lapsing from Divine election into worldliness and unbelief (Ḥabannaka, *Maʿārij*).

The passage on apostasy in Sūrat al-Aʿrāf is paradigmatic: it encapsulates the styles of the Qurʾān—narrative, sapiential, prescriptive, dialectic, and eschatological—and dramatically contrasts the Divine gifts with human defection followed by Satanic embroilment; uplifting guidance with self-abasing and suicidal misguidance (see GUIDANCE AND MISGUIDANCE); and humanity with animality:

*Recite unto them the tale of him to whom We sent Our signs, but who sloughed them off, so that Satan went after him and then he became one of the misguided. And had We willed We could have elevated him by their means, but he clung to the earth and followed his own lust. So his likeness is as that of a dog: if you attack him he lolls out his tongue, and if you leave him alone he [still] lolls out his tongue. That is the similitude of those who reject Our signs. So relate the story, so that perhaps they may reflect. Evil is the example of the folk who deny Our revelations and wrong their own souls. Whomever Allah guides is truly led aright; but whomever Allah sends astray, they indeed are the losers. Already have We urged unto Hell many of the jinn and humankind, having hearts wherewith they understand not, and having eyes wherewith they see not, and having ears*