TOWARD THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE QUR'ANIC CONCEPT OF SIN:

A PRELIMINARY STUDY IN SEMANTICS

A THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

The present study is by no means to be taken as a
complete survey of the Qur'anic concept of sin. Rather it
is a semantic monograph on ten major general words for sin
in order to try and determine the dominant conceptual frame-
work underlying their use. It is hoped that this approach,
like the similar one of Charles C. Torrey in his doctoral
dissertation at Strasburg,[1] may shed some additional light
on the religion of the Qur'an. Other terms will be analyzed
to the extent that they contribute to an understanding of
the primary words under consideration or to the major thesis
of the paper. But, because the central investigation is
limited to these ten general words, such important specific
words as كُفْرُ and شِرْكُ[2] will not receive exhaustive or
independent study but will only be mentioned as they con-
tribute to the primary purpose of the work. In like manner,
though such interesting problems as the relation of knowledge
and guilt will arise, the limited semantic scope of this

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[1]The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran (Leyden,
1892).

[2]Their independent study is also made unnecessary by
their extensive treatment in Toshihiko Izutsu, The Structure
of the Ethical Terms in the Koran (Tokyo, Keio Institute of
Philological Studies, 1959), pp. 113-167; and the former word
is given a more interpretive study in /Kenneth Cragg/, "The
Meaning of Kufr," The Muslim World, XLIX (1959), 315-322.

study prohibits their being given a comprehensive treatment.

The method of investigation for each word will be to try and discover first of all the etymology of the word to see if this sheds any light upon its Qur'anic usage. Then its meaning will be sought in the contemporary Arab sources to see what meanings were available to the writer of the Qur'an. But ultimately it is only as we study the writings of each author that we are able to define words as he uses them; therefore the major portion of each study will be in the Qur'anic text itself.

An illustration of the inadequacy of using standard Arabic dictionaries alone for determining Qur'anic usages is provided by 17:82 where المؤمنون (the believers) is contrasted with الظالمون (the wrongdoers) rather than الكافرون (the disbelievers) as might be expected on the basis of the literal meaning of the words.[1] Likewise Arabic dictionaries may be inadequate because they are based on the later meanings of words after they had been given a more precise definition in the fiqh books.[2]

Another danger in using sources later than the Qur'an is that translators may read meanings back into words on

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[1]For ease of reference for the English as well as the Arabic reader and because it corresponds rather closely to the official Egyptian text, the writer has used the versification found in Maulana Muhammad 'Ali, The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text, Translation and Commentary (4th ed., Lahore, Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1951).

[2]As will be seen, اظلم came to have a more precise definition in the post-Qur'anic period of legal development than forms from the same stem had in the Qur'an.

the basis of later theological development. By way of ex-
ample, the present investigation illustrates how M. M. 'Ali
describes ذنب as not meaning <u>sin</u> when it is used of the
Prophet.[1] However, by references to ancient Arab commen-
taries, the following analysis demonstrates that earlier the
word was believed to mean <u>sin</u> even when used of Muhammad.

The need for the present study also arises from the
fact that no scientific lexicon of Qur'anic words is in exist-
ence. Some words have been studied adequately by such men as
Charles C. Torrey in his previously-mentioned work and Arthur
Jefferey in <u>The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an</u>.[2] However,
no work applies the findings of Comparative Semitics to a
sufficient number of the Qur'anic words; but this is necessary,
particularly in the light of the scarcity of authentic Arabic
writing prior to the Qur'an.

John Penrice's <u>A Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran</u>,[3]
though convenient, is inadequate. By way of illustration,
he adds the meaning <u>sinful</u> to خاطئ , though this mean-
ing is not found in its Qur'anic occurrences (unless خاطئة
is regarded as the feminine of خاطئ in 96:16); while he
does not give an adjectival meaning to ضال , though it has
one in 6:78 and 23:106. And he gives a meaning for ضل
with ب , though this combination does not appear in the
Qur'an.

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[1]Page 968n.

[2](Baroda, 1938).

[3](London, 1873).

Individual words for sin are discussed in encyclopedias.[1]
However, these only discuss a few words and put much emphasis
on the later development of the words rather than concen-
trating on their Qur'anic meaning. Furthermore, they are
not altogether accurate. For example, Wensinck asserts that
one of the root meanings of خطئ is <u>stumbling</u>, and he
bases his assertion on the Hebrew of Proverbs 19:2.[2] But
neither the Hebrew nor the Arabic supports this view.

Besides the studies of individual words, there are
studies which treat a number of the Qur'anic words for sin
together. Two of these may be dismissed as too brief.
H. U. Weitbrecht Stanton devotes less than one page to the
topic in <u>The Teaching of the Qur'an</u>.[3] And J. Windrow
Sweetman devotes only nine pages to the subject in <u>Islam
and Christian Theology</u>.[4] Furthermore, as will be seen,
the present writer takes issue with the view of Stanton that
the word ذنب refers chiefly to ceremonial offences.

Of a more extended nature is the pamphlet of W. R. W.
Gardner, <u>The Qur'anic Doctrine of Sin</u>.[5] But even it is

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[1] E.g., Joseph Schacht, "Khata'," <u>Encyclopedia of Islam</u>
(Old ed.); and Arent Jan Wensinck, "Khati'a," <u>ibid</u>.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 925.

[3] (London, 1919), p. 56.

[4] (London, Lutterworth Press, 1945-), Part I, vol. 2,
pp. 194-203.

[5] (The Islam Series, Madras, 1914).

too brief -- for example, there is approximately a page on

إِعتَدَكَ[1] and none of any other forms of the root عدو .

Furthermore, Gardner makes little use of Comparative Semitics

and thus does not get beneath the idea of <u>misfortune</u> to that

of <u>unseemliness</u> in سوء .[2] Of more important consequence

in this writer's opinion is the fact that Gardner tends to

go beyond the text in making nicer distinctions than the

text warrants as, for example, with إِنَّمَ in 5:2.[3] One

of the conclusions of the present study is that the Qur'an

uses general words so flexibly that it is precarious to

define them very precisely.

Izutsu has made an even more extended analysis of some

of the words for sin in <u>The Structure of the Ethical Terms</u>

<u>in the Koran</u>. It was published after virtually all the

material for the present thesis was collected, and it con-

firms many of the methods and conclusions of this investi-

gation. However, he derives little benefit from the find-

ings of Comparative Semitics; and, because the scope of

his study is broader than the present one, he has been

forced to make a comparable reduction in intensity. Thus

he devotes less than a page to the various forms of غوى .[4]

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[1]pages 12-13.

[2]Page 2. On the basis of his virtual disregard of the etymology of ذنب (p. 4), however, it might be inferred that Gardner did not wish to penetrate beneath the surface concept of misfortune in سوء .

[3]Page. 7.

[4]pages 201-202.

Neither does he give all the forms of each radical group --
for example, though he refers to عُدْوانٌ, عادونَ, عَدَوتُ,
and عَداوَةٌ, عدا,[1] he does not mention مُعتَدٍ,
تَعَدَّى, عادى. Then there are other places where he
gives words a different flavor than the present writer does.
By way of illustration, in 5:62 (vs. 67 in Izutsu), he trans-
lates عُدْوانَ as <u>disobedience</u>;[2] while the present writer would
prefer <u>hostility</u> or <u>injustice</u>.

Despite these criticisms of the above works, they rep-
resent for the most part careful study and are very helpful
as a result. However, new tools for research are being made
increasingly available to researchers. These tools include
first of all the wealth of material made available in recent
years by the study of ancient Semitic languages. Secondly,
the Arabic poetry from pre-Islamic times down through the
Umayyad period had not been catalogued until the Concordance
of ancient Arabic poetry was recently started at the Hebrew
University in Jerusalem.[3] With the tools from these two
areas one is able, for example, to see the semantic relation-
ship between سَوءَةٌ and the other forms of سوء.

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[1]pages 111, 138-139, 145, 151, 161-164, 247.

[2]page 247.

[3]Relevant material from the Concordance (as far as it
was completed by January 20, 1959) was provided through the
courtesy of Na'im Shahrbani and M. M. Plessner, members of
the School of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University,
and Albert M. Franklin, American Consul General, Jerusalem.

The English ethical terms will be used in the following manner in this study. The word "sin" will be used as a general word for any non-conformity to or transgression of the revealed will of God -- be it cultic or ethical, intentional or unintentional. However a distinction will be made between the word "sin" and other ethical terms such as "evil," "wrong," "fault," "transgression," and even "guilt." "Sin" will be used exclusively in relation to the monotheistic faiths -- specifically Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the monotheism of Arabia with its affinities to these. In this context "sin" will be determined by the theological norm of the revealed will of a personal God. On the other hand, the other ethical terms may be determined by any norm of conduct or good. When this norm is the revealed will of the personal God of the monotheistic faiths, these words will involve sin, as defined here, but will not in other contexts.

Since all these words express negative concepts, their meaning can only be understood in terms of what they negate. The norm which they negate is in turn determined by the world view in which it is found. Hence, the reader must be aware of the world view and norm of conduct which determines each use of each word -- be that norm social mores or cultic taboo in polytheism or the revealed will of the personal God in monotheism. Below the relevant world views and norms of conduct will be developed.[1] There it will be argued that

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[1]The Qur'anic and Biblical views are developed in the section entitled Conceptual Framework and Conclusions, and the other relevant views are in the Appendix.

the Qur'anic norm of the revealed will of God is best understood in the Mosaic sense of a divinely revealed covenant. Because the covenant is the basis of law, sin becomes transgression of the law of God. But because the covenant is revealed by God, infractions of the law take on the character of disobedience or rebellion in relation to a personal God. The Qur'an may refer to this revealed will in less theological phrases such as "the way of God" (2:195) but the underlying conceptual framework will be seen to be the same. The content of this revealed will of God can be found in other studies,[1] and will be spelled out in more detail in the text of this study.

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[1]E.g., Robert Roberts, The Social Laws of the Qoran (London, 1925).

CHAPTER I

ضطئ

BACKGROUND[1]

Here, as in the subsequent words studied, an attempt
will be made to determine the idea underlying the root and
to what extent, if any, this idea affects the Qur'anic mean-
ings of the words derived from this root. Likewise an at-
tempt will be made to determine the extent to which the
underlying idea is the common property of other languages.
The pattern of the development of this root is so similar
in the various Semitic languages consulted that there

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[1]Except for hieroglyphics, which are omitted, the
original Semitic script and its lexical definition, when
foreign, are enclosed in brackets. Though slight differ-
ences may be noted between the various systems of translit-
eration, it seemed wise to follow some of the more standard
systems in each language. For Akkadian, Assyrian, and
Ugaritic, the transliteration found in the manuals or lexi-
cons referred to is used. For Ethiopic, Hebrew, South
Arabian and Syriac, the following tables of transliteration
equivalents are used:

Ethiopic: August Dillmann and Carl Bezold, Ethiopic Grammar,
           trans. James A. Crichton (London, 1907), table I.

Hebrew: William R. Harper, Elements of Hebrew (12th ed.,
         New York, 1890), pp. 13, 19.

Epigraphic South Arabic: Dillmann and Bezold, op. cit.,
         table I.

Syriac: Theodor Nöldeke, Compendious Syriac Grammar, trans.
         James A. Crichton (London, 1904), pp. 2, 8.

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is little need to analyze the precise relationship of the
various languages to each other or to the Qur'anic materials
in this case. The original meaning of the Semitic root
must have been to miss, and the other meanings are all
ultimately derived from it.

In the eastern branch of the Semitic family of lan-
guages, or what is known as Assyro-Babylonian or Akkadian,
the development of meaning is clear. The Akkadian verb
ḫaṭû means to sin or to trespass (pécher), and the noun
ḫîṭu in turn means sin, trespass, or transgression (péché).[1]
This verbal form ḫaṭû in the Assyrian starts with the mean-
ing to miss, make a mistake, fail, or neglect and then
acquires the meaning noted above, to commit an offence,
trespass, or sin.[2]

The south or south-western branch of the Semitic family
reveals a similar pattern of development. The Ethiopic
ḫaṭ'a (ሐ ጠ አ) has the basic meaning of to fail to find
(non reperire) and acquires a host of other meanings in its
various forms. Only some of the more pertinent ones will
be indicated here; the nominal form ḫaṭî' (ሐ ጢ እ)
includes the meaning of a want or need (inopia), a failing
(defectus) and in rare cases a mistake, transgression, or
sin (peccatum). The ethical, moral, or religious flavor

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[1]René Labat, Manuel d'Epigraphie Akkadienne (Paris,
Imprimerie Nationale, 1948), p. 303.

[2]Ignace J. Gelb, et al., eds., The Assyrian Dictionary
(Chicago, Oriental Institute, 1956), VI, 156-158.

completely overshadows the physical in the form ḥaṭī'at
(ኀ ጢ አ ት) meaning _fault_, _error_, _mistake_, _transgres-
sion_, or _sin_ [_peccatum_ (_delictum_, _crimen_)].[1]

In South Arabian ḫṭ't (𐩭 𐩷 𐩱 𐩩) means _it had_
missed or _erred_ (_sie hatte gefehlt_) in an inscription re-
corded by M. A. Levy.[2] Yet the root ḫṭ' (𐩷 𐩱 𐩩) goes
beyond the physical to the moral. As a verb it means _to_
make a mistake, _transgress_, or _sin_ (_peccare_) and as a noun
fault, _error_, _mistake_, _transgression_, or _sin_ (_peccatum_,
culpa).[3]

Again similar meanings are found in the north-western
branch of the Semitic family. In Ugaritic ḫṭ' is _to sin_.[4]
Biblical Hebrew reveals a highly developed use of the root.[5]
As a verb ḥṭ' (חטא) means _to miss_ (a goal or way),

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[1] August Dillmann, _Chrestomathia Aethiopica et Glossario_
Explanata (Leipzig, 1866), pp. 222, 223.

[2] "Neun himjarische Inschriften," _Zeitschrift der Deutschen_
Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, XXIV (1870), Plate I and pp.
195, 197.

[3] Karolus Conti Rossini, _Chrestomathia Arabica Meridio-_
nalis Epigraphica: Edita et Glossario Instructa (Rome, 1931),
p. 155. For further examples see: Nikolaus Rhodokanakis,
Studien zur Lexikographie und Grammatik des Altsudarabischen
(Vienna, 1915), p. 66, and _Katabanische Texte zur Bodenwirt-_
schaft (2nd ed., Vienna, 1922), pp. 5, 28.

[4] Cyrus H. Gordon, _Ugaritic Manual_ (Rome, Pontificium
Institutum Biblicum, 1955), p. 266. For illustrations of
its use in transliterated texts see p. 129.

[5] The following discussion on Hebrew is based on Francis
Brown, et al., eds., _A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old_
Testament (Oxford, 1907, 1955), pp. 306-310.

go wrong, sin. In the Qal form it can be used in the literal
sense of missing the mark -- e.g., "one hastening with his
feet misseth (the way or goal)" (Proverbs 19:2).[1] When the
goal or path missed is that of right·duty, it means sin
(Exodus 20:20). And it develops still further to emphasize
the guilt incurred (Genesis 43:9). The same pattern is
found in the Hiphil form where it can mean to miss the mark
literally: ". . . everyone could sling a stone at a hair,
and not miss" (Judges 20:16). And it can also mean to in-
duce or cause to sin (Exodus 23:33) or to bring into guilt,
condemnation, or punishment (Isaiah 29:21).

The masculine noun ḥēṭʾ (אֵ טְ) can mean sin (Isaiah
31:7), guilt of sin (Deuteronomy 15:9), or punishment for sin
(Leviticus 20:20). And the adjective and masculine noun
ḥaṭṭāʾ (אֵ טָ) means sinful (Numbers 32:14) and sinners
(Numbers 17:3). Sin is the governing meaning of the feminine
nouns ḥaṭṭāʾāh (הָ אֵ טָ), ḥᵉṭāʾāh (הָ אֵ טָ) and
ḥaṭṭāʾt (ת אֵ טָ), and the last word also includes the
aspects of guilt (Genesis 18:20) and punishment (Zechariah
14:19). Though the root idea of missing the mark becomes
overshadowed by the theological and religious usage, it is
frequently apparent that a legal or ethical norm is missed

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[1] It is suggested that the conclusion of Arent Jan
Wensinck, that the root meaning here is stumbling, is un-
necessary; for the concept of missing (the way or goal),
demanded by other passages, illustrated here, is adequate
to explain this occurrence also (see loc. cit.).

(as in Deuteronomy 19:15-21 and I Samuel 19:5 respectively).

Though Jessie Payne Smith[1] gives to miss as the root
idea behind the Syriac ḥᵉṭā' (‎), neither she nor
Robert Payne Smith[2] nor Carl Brockelmann[3] gives any Syriac
examples of this literal meaning in their Syriac lexicons.
However, the ethical meanings parallel those already given
in cognate languages so that its derivation by some means
from the Semitic root may be safely assumed. The simplest
form ḥᵉṭā' (‎) as a verb is to commit a fault or crime
or to sin (peccare) and as a noun is a fault, crime, or sin
(peccatum). As ḥaṭṭāyūtā' (‎) it acquires the
concept of crookedness, irregularity, or deformity which in
the realms of practice and morals becomes wickedness or per-
versity -- i.e., moral irregularity (pravitas). The idea of
sin is basic to all the other forms; hence they will not be
mentioned here except for ḥᵉṭīytā' (‎), which appears
to have a special relationship to Arabic. Like the simple
noun above it means a sin, crime, offence, or fault (peccatum).[4]

Alphonse Mingana claims that almost all the religious
terms found in the Qur'an are derived from the Syriac and
includes in this category خطئ from ḥṭ' (‎) he

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[1]A Compendious Syriac Dictionary: Founded upon the
Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith (Oxford, 1903), pp.
137, 138.

[2]Thesaurus Syriacus (2 vols., Oxford, 1879), I, pp.
1246, 1247.

[3]Lexicon Syriacum (Gottingen, 1928), p. 227.

[4]Ibid.

sinned and its derivative خَطِيئَة from ḥṭyt' (ܣܛܝܬܐ).[1]
But in order to save space and because he considers the
relationship self-evident, he does not give a direct proof
of the borrowing of these two words from the Syriac.[2] How-
ever his study has indirect force, for he indicates quite
conclusively the importance of Syriac sources on the vocabu-
lary of the Qur'an by such arguments as the Syriac form of
proper names and theological expressions.[3]

On the other hand Friedrich Schwally spells out in
detail his reasons for calling خَطِيئَة a Syriac loan word.
After indicating that ḥṭyt' (ܣܛܝܬܐ) is a فِعْلَة form,
he argues as follows:

> Im Arabischen entspricht خَطِيئَة dieses hat
> kein خَطِيءِ neben sich, sondern nur خِطَا und خَطَأ .
> Das beweist an sich natürlich gar nichts. Nimmt man
> aber den Umstand hinzu, das خَطِيئَة eine Form فَعِيلَة ist,
> während dem syrischen Äquivalente nur scheinbar das-
> selbe Paradigma, thatsächlich vielmehr ein aus فَعْلَة
> nach syrischen Lautgesetzen entwickeltes فَعِيلَة zu
> Grunde liegt, so wird man der Annahme zuneigen müssen,
> dass خَطِيئَة ein syrisches Lehnwort ist. Dasselbe gilt
> für äthiop ኀጢአት .[4]

If understood with the precaution that his wording suggests,
the argument is forceful. But words of this form can be

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[1] "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'an," The
Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, II (1927), 11-12.

[2] Ibid., p. 6.

[3] Ibid., pp. 7-12.

[4] "Lexikalische Studien," Zeitschrift der Deutschen Mor-
genländischen Gesellschaft, LII (1898), p. 132.

explained in other ways also.[1] For example, the present
writer has found no فعيل form for نقيصة nor an equivalent
form in Syriac; so some other explanation is suggested.[2]
Another difficulty with the theory that خطيئة is a Syriac
loan word is the fact that more primitive meanings are found
in Arabic, as will be noted below, than in any of the
Syriac sources noted above, though this does not negate the
possibility that such meanings exist nor that the form خطيئة
came from Syriac. On the contrary, Schwally's argument is
significant.

The above analysis of cognate languages has shown a
common pattern in words related to خطع : the root idea
to miss developing into sin with the root concept more or
less apparent or lost depending on the form and use. In
some cases words took on specific but related meanings.
Even where examples were not sufficient to trace the com-
plete development within a language or from one to another,
the patterns of each were similar enough so that the general
development could safely be implied.

The Syriac has been suggested as the final loaner of
the form and content of خطيئة , both because of its form

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[1]Perhaps it is better, therefore, not to go quite as
far as Arthur Jeffery, who refers to the above argument re-
garding its form as "proof conclusive that the borrowing
of this form is direct from the Syriac ܚܛܝܬܐ " (p. 124).

[2]This statement is based on a study of Edward William
Lane, ed., An Arabic-English Lexicon (8 vols., London, 1862);
Brockelmann; and J. P. Smith. Other forms unknown to the
writer may be extant.

and because of the important Syriac influence on the Qur'anic
vocabulary which has been shown by Mingana. In the event
that this is not the case, however, the Semitic materials
again are so common that there need be no doubt as to the
development of meaning of these words.

As we move to the Arabic materials, we note that هَفَا
means <u>to cast out froth</u> or <u>scum</u>,[1] a fact which, if taken
alone, might lead us to think that the root idea behind
these words was <u>abomination</u> as in the case of مخشى .
However the overwhelming evidence from Comparative Semitics,
as we have seen, indicates that <u>to miss</u> is the root idea.
Hence the meaning <u>to cast out froth</u> or <u>scum</u> is tropical --
perhaps deriving its significance from the separation which
such a process involves. This conclusion concerning the
root idea is corroborated by many Arabic examples. With
roughly the same sense as noted above in the South Arabian
and the <u>Hiph'il</u> form of Hebrew, اخطأ is used of marks-
manship -- for example, اخطأ الرّامى الغَرَضَ (<u>The archer,
or thrower, missed the mark</u>; or <u>failed to hit it</u>); and
اخطأَه السَّهمُ (<u>The arrow missed it</u>, or <u>him</u>; or <u>passed
beyond it</u>, or <u>him</u>). Then, as implied above in a Hebrew <u>Qal</u>
form, the word can be used of a way -- for example, اخطأ الطَّريقَ
(<u>He missed the way</u>; or <u>he deviated from the way</u>).

Other examples are more figurative but the underlying

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[1]This and the Arabic illustrations in the following
discussion are from Lane, p.761A, B.

concept of missing is still basic to the sense, as

اِلۡطَأَ نَوۡؤُهُ (His star, or asterism, missed), which is
said of one who sought an object but did not succeed in
obtaining it; or اِخۡطَأَهُ الۡحَقُّ (The right, or due, was,
or became out of his reach; or far from him).

QUR'ANIC USAGE

In the Qur'an we find 21 occurrences of the words in
various forms which are related to both unintentional acts
(e.g., خَطَأً in 4:92) and to intentional ones (e.g., خَاطِئِينَ
in 12:91). خَطَأً (by mistake) occurs once (4:92) in refer-
ence to a believer killing another believer; and it is con-
trasted with مُتَعَمِّدٌ (intentionally) so the meaning is
definite. أَخۡطَأَ (to be in error or make a mistake)[1]
occurs twice and refers to unintentional acts in both cases
in keeping with the secular, more literal use of this form
described above. In 33:5 we read: ". . . there is no
blame (لَيۡسَ ... جُنَاحٌ) on you in that wherein you make
a mistake (أَخۡطَأۡتُم), but that which your hearts pur-
pose (تَعَمَّدَتۡ)." The contrast with تَعَمَّدَتۡ and the
lack of culpability indicated by لَيۡسَ ... جُنَاحٌ make the
unintentional nature of its use here conclusive. Its other
occurrence, 2:286, is a petition: "Our Lord, punish us
(تُؤَاخِذۡنَا) not if we forget (نَسِينَا) or make a mistake

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[1]Lane includes the meaning to miss the mark and Jeffery
and Penrice add to sin; but though their flavor is inherent
in the word, they are extra-Qur'anic meanings.

(أَخْطَأْنَا).” Its use with نسينا coupled with the implica-
tion that there are grounds for mercy in both cases indi-
cates that <u>make a mistake</u> is a satisfactory translation.
When we compare this interpretation with that of at-Tabari,
one of the greatest of the ancient commentators, we find
that he too stressed the unintentional aspect. He says
that this verse teaches the way we should pray for forgive-
ness when we have sinned (اخطانا), by doing something
forbidden us, without intending (غير قصد) to oppose God
and from ignorance (جهالة) on our part and error
(خطأ).[1]

خَاطِئٌ (part. act.: <u>One who sins</u> or <u>a sinner</u>)[2]
occurs five times and is used as a general word for any who
sin (e.g., 69:37). Those who commit ذنب (a general word
for sin) are خاطئين in 12:29, 97. From the logic of the
passage the ذنب -- hence indirectly the خاطئين --
in the former verse almost undoubtedly refers to the attempt
of a woman to seduce (راودت) Joseph and then blame him,
though it could apply to Joseph instead from the sentence
structure. Joseph's brothers use the plural form خاطئين
of themselves for their wrong against him; thus intention
is indicated (12:91). It is used of Pharaoh, Haman, and

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[1] ابو جعفر محمد بن جرير الطبري، تفسير الطبري
(القاهرة، دار المعارف، ١٩٥٤م. -)، ج ٣، ص ٩٥.

[2] <u>Sinful</u> is also given by Penrice, but this adjectival
use is not found in the Qur'an unless خاطئة is regarded
as the feminine of خاطئ in 96:16.

their hosts for their wrongdoing at the time of Moses (28:8).

خِطَأ (sin or error) occurs only once in 17:31:

". . . kill not your children for fear of being brought to
want; we will provide for them and for you. Surely the
killing of them is a great sin (خِطَأً كَبِيرًا)." Because
the most ancient Qur'anic texts did not include short vowels,
one might question whether the original meaning here was
sin (خِطْأ) or mistake (خَطَأ). If infanticide were
practiced out of ignorance of the fact that God would take
care of them, mistake (with a fatḥah) might be understood.
However, three of the most noted ancient authorities agree
with the present rendering of sin (with a kasrah). Aṭ-Ṭabarī
gives the position of ibn-'Abās, with apparent approval,
that the reference is to sin (الأثم وخطيئة) not a mis-
take (خَطَأ) because the people already knew that
infanticide was wrong.[1] Al-Baīḍāwī uses both خِطَأً كَبِيرًا
and ذنبًا كبيرًا (a great sin) in reference to infanticide
here and then gives a reason: it cuts the reproduction of
mankind.[2] The agreement of these ancient authorities sug-
gests the rendering خِطَأً in the absence of further evidence.

خطيئة (sin or error) and the plural خطايا [3]

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[1] ج ١١٥ ص ٥٤.

[2] ابو سعيد عبد الله بن عمر البيضاوي، انوار التنزيل واسرار
التأويل ،(2 vols., Leipzig, 1846-48)، ed. H. O. Fleischer،
س ١٧، ٣، ٣١.

[3]The final ي is changed to an ١ because preceded by
another ي [Silvestre de Sacy, Grammaire Arabe (3rd ed.,
2 vols., Tūnis, 1904-05), I, 111, 370].

occur ten times. They are general words -- for example, the
plural form is indirectly contrasted with a derivative of
the general word for good in 2:58: "We will forgive you
your wrongs (خَطَايَاكُم) and increase the reward of those
who do good (المُحْسِنِينَ)" (cf. 7:161). Likewise the singu-
lar form is used with another general word and the two con-
trasted with the general alternatives belief and good works
in 2:81, 82: "Whoever earns evil (كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً) and
his sin (خَطِيئَتُهُ) surrounds him, those are the companions
of the fire . . . and those who believe (آمَنوا) and do
good deeds (عَمِلوا الصَّالِحَاتِ), those are the companions
of the Garden . . . ."

As suggested by these verses (2:81, 82), unbelief is
associated with this noun. Disbelievers (كَافِرون) com-
mit خَطِيئَات (71:25, 26). However believers, and even
Abraham, have خَطَايا or خَطِيئَة also, though the text no-
where states that these were committed in a state of belief
(20:73; 26:82; 29:12). Rather belief is offered as a grounds
for the possibility of forgiveness (26:51).

Also, as suggested by the above verses (2:81, 82),
wrongdoers (ظَالِمون) commit خَطِيئَات (71:24, 25).
Some specific sins which occur in the context of خَطِيئَة
and its plural are: forging the Book for personal ends
(2:79, 81); disobeying Noah and following another, plotting
(against the right way), saying not to forsake the current
gods, and leading others astray (71:21-25).

Likewise, as implied by the above verses (2:81, 82), culpability may be ascribed to خطيئة , for divine punishment is the result (71:25). In 29:12, 13 the inference is that خطايا must be borne as burdens (أثقال). The culpability found in this noun form is in direct contrast to أخطأنا noted in 33:5 above where there is no blame (جناح).

In 4:12 the singular form is used with another general word, إثم : "Whoever commits a sin (خطيئة) or a crime (إثما), then accuses an innocent one of it, he indeed takes upon himself calumny (بهتانا) and manifest crime (إثما مبينا)." The aspect of culpability is very strong in إثم and, unlike خطئ , none of its forms mean mistake.[1] However this verse is not too helpful in differentiating between the two words, except that it uses إثم for the compounded wrong and therefore would seem to imply that it is the stronger word, though the use of the intensifying مبينا lessens the force of such reasoning.

خاطئة is considered a noun absolute (habitual sinfulness), though it may also be regarded as the feminine of خاطئ . The ة is sometimes added to the end of a word for intensity.[2] This form occurs twice. In 96:16 it is used in the adjectival sense of sinful and, together with كاذبة (lying), modifies a forelock which God will seize. In 69:9, 10 it is used of Pharaoh and those before him and

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[1] See analysis of word below.

[2] De Sacy, I, 322n; II, 279n.

the overthrown cities (probably those of Lot; cf. 11:82),

that brought sinfulness (جَاءَ ... بِالخَاطِئَةِ) and disobeyed

(عَصَوُا) the messenger of their Lord.[1]

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[1]The post-Qur'anic use of forms from the خطئ root not only confirm the Qur'anic interpretations above but show the more precise definition of words in the post-Qur'anic period of legal development. The general use of خطأ for any errors is brought out by the Semitic parallelism of Abū 'l-'Atāhiya (130/748-211/824) who counterbalances it with the general word ذنوب in the following poem

فَٱغْفِـرْ ذُنُوبِي اِنَّهَا جَمَّةٌ
وَٱسْتُرْ خَطَائِبِي اِنَّكَ ٱلسَّاتِرُ

/إسماعيل بن القاسم بن سويد بن كيسان ابو العتاهية، ديوان أبي العتاهية (بيروت، ١٨٨٦) ص ١٢٠./

Forgive my <u>sins</u> because they are too much,
And cover my <u>errors</u> because Thou art the Coverer.

Likewise the idea of mistake seen above in خَطَأً (4:92) and أَخْطَأْنَا (2:286; 33:5) is found in the fiqh books in their precise definition of الخطأ . Al-Jurjānī says that it refers to that which a person does unintentionally. /علي بن محمد الجرجاني، التعريفات، ed. Gustavus Flügel (Leipzig, 1845) ص ١٠٤./ Likewise al-Khuḍarī contrasts الخطأ with intentional wrong, which is a crime (جناية). And he gives two examples, that of a fasting man who accidentally lets some water down his throat (where it is forbidden), while rinsing his mouth and that of a hunter who accidentally hits a man while aiming at a bird. He adds, however, that in الخطأ there is the جناية of not being firm and in this respect the doer is to blame, but the punishment is not in proportion to the crime (الجريمة) itself. Rather it is in proportion to the lack of care which caused the deed to happen. /محمد الخضري، اصول الفقه (الطبعة الثانية، مصر، ١٩٣٣م/ ١٣٥٢هـ)، ص ١٣١./

Both writers refer to two technical types of الخطأ : "the rights of God" (حقوق الله) and "the rights of men" (حقوق العبد), which refer to divine and social responsibilities respectively. In the former the sinner (الخاطئ) does not really sin (يأثم); the lawgiver has made the act excusable so that the one who does wrong unintentionally (المخطئ) is not blamed (يُؤَاخَذ) or punished

for the crime (الجريمة) itself. In the latter, the
one who has destroyed (المتلف) is responsible for his
wrong and has to make social compensation. (الجرجاني، ص ٤٠١.
وآلنصري، ص ١٣١،١٣٢).

Three technical meanings come to be ascribed to الخطأ :
الإثم (sin or crime); the opposite of العمد (resolu-
tion); and the opposite of الصواب (right). محمد وحيد،
كشاف إصطلاحات الفنون (كلكته، ١٨٦٢)، ص ١٠٤، et al.
Its contrast with عمد is in keeping with the contrast
of مخطأ (by mistake) with منعمّد (intentionally)
noted above in 4:92, 93. It is unnecessary to describe further
the post-Qur'anic development of the various forms of مخطع
because the above examples illustrate that, although there was
restriction and more exact definition of meanings, they are
related to those noted in the Qr'an by a clearly discernible
chain of development.

CHAPTER II

ضَلَ

BACKGROUND

The use of Comparative Semitics is not nearly as helpful for the understanding of this root as was the case with ضلى .
In only the most conjectural way may one trace through the biliteral stem to ضلع (to decline or deviate), which is also used figuratively of deviating from what is right or true.[1]
The latter's nominal form ضِلَع (a curved thing of the side or a rib)[2] has a number of cognate words in other Semitic languages: the Hebrew çēlā' (צֵלָע) means rib and side;[3] the Akkadian ṣîlu rib and side (côte);[4] and the Syriac 'elā'ā' (ܥܠܥܐ) rib and side (costa) or flank and side (latus).[5]
However there is no need to belabor this questionable derivation in order to find the root sense of curving or deviating,

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[1]Lane, p. 1799C.

[2]Ibid., p. 1800A.

[3]Brown, et al., p. 854.

[4]Labat, p. 317.

[5]Brockelmann, p. 22.

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for the Qur'an will be seen to make the root meaning of
deviating clear by, for example, the contrast of ضَلّ with اهتداى .

QUR'ANIC USAGE

The various forms from this stem occur 192 times in the
Qur'an and may refer to intentional acts (e.g., لِيُضِلّوا ,
in 14:30) or unintentional ones (e.g., تَضِلّ in 2:282).
ضَلّ (to err or go astray from) occurs 52 times,
and its basic meaning can be seen from the words with which
it is used. It is used of erring or straying from the way
(السَّبيل) (4:44), the right way (سَوَآءَ السَّبيل)
(5:12), the way of God (سَبيل الله) (4:167), and His way
(سبيله) (16:125). Then it is defined by a similar clause
in 17:48: "And they have gone astray (ضَلّوا) and they
cannot /find/ a way لا يَستَطيعونَ سَبيلًا)." In various
grammatical structures it is contrasted with هُدًى (guid-
ance) (20:123), اهتداى (to be directed aright) (10:108),
and مُهتَدونَ (those who are guided aright) (6:56).
Further, it is used with بَعيد , a word of position, in
the construction ضَلّ ضَلالًا بَعيدًا (he erred a distant
erring) (4:116). Finally, it is used in a parallel con-
struction with غَوى (to deviate) in 53:2, thereby indicat-
ing a similar meaning.

Shades of meaning and derived meanings are brought out
by the use of prepositions or the case of the related noun.
ضَلّ means to wander away or go astray from with the

accusative or عن (4:44 and 16:125 respectively); to leave
in the lurch -- hence, to fail, also with عن (6:24); to
err against with على (10:108); and to be hidden or lost
with في (32:10).[1]

Penrice gives another derived meaning to go from the
thoughts or be forgotten and gives 17:67 as an illustration,
thereby agreeing with Sale's translation.[2] However, a more
probable translation of the verse is: ". . . when distress
afflicts you in the sea, away go (ضَلَّ) those whom you
call on except He, but when He brings you safe to land, you
turn away (أَعرَضتُم); and man is ever ungrateful." This
interpretation (indicating forsaking on the part of those
called upon rather than forgetting on the part of the
callers) is more probable because it is more in keeping with
the regular use of the word, is simpler, and explains all
parts of the verse. If forgotten were meant, it would seem
that a verb like نسي would be used with the second
(rather than the third) person form, as with أَعرَضتُم in
the latter part of the verse. Also, it is more logical that
all should forsake them except One rather than that they
should forget all but One, particularly in light of the
subsequent clause, ". . . and when He brings you safe to

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[1]Penrice also adds the meaning to err with ب , but
ضل is not used with ب in the Qur'an.

[2]George Sale, The Koran; with Explanatory Notes and Pre-
liminary Discourse (London, Orlando Hodgson, n.d.), p. 216.

land." The final clause (". . . and man is ever ungrate-
ful") would then explain the two previous clauses together.

This verb is used of disbelief (كفر) (2:108; 5:12)
and wrongdoing (ظلم) (7:148, 149). In the latter case
the wrongdoers were the people of Moses who set up a calf.
Other specific acts to which ضلّ is related are: killing
(قتل) children, forbidding (حرّم) what God has pro-
vided -- devising a lie (افترآء) against God (6:141);
coining epithets against the Prophet (17:48); showing
friendship to the enemy in secret (60:1); and following
lusts (الهواء) (6:56). The implication is that erring
can be from a lack of understanding (4:177) and forgetful-
ness (2:282). Finally, the one who errs does so to his
own detriment (39:41).

ضالّ (part. act.; <u>one who errs</u> or <u>goes astray</u>;
<u>erring</u>) occurs 14 times, being used as a noun (e.g., 26:86)
and an adjective (e.g., 6:78; 23:106).[1] That its under-
lying concept is the same as the definitely defined ضلّ
above is plain for it is also contrasted with forms of
هدى : هداكم (<u>He guided you</u>) in 2:198 and
يهدين (<u>He guides me</u>) in 6:78 (cf. 20:123 <u>et al.</u>).

Also, like ضلّ above (2:108; 5:12), it is used of
disbelief in 3:89: ". . . those who disbelieve (كفروا)
after their believing, then increase in disbelief (ازدادوا كفرا)",

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[1]Penrice does not give an adjectival meaning.

their repentance is not accepted and these are those who go

astray (الضَّالُّونَ)." It might be noted that those who

disbelieve after their believing are likewise called

القَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (unjust or wrongdoing people) (vs. 85),

though in this case they may be forgiven if they repent and

amend (vs. 88). However, a case cannot be made that ضالُون

is stronger than ظالِمون just because ازدادوا كُفْرًا is

added to it and because repentance is accepted with the

latter but not the former in the passage under discussion.

On the contrary their use here as elsewhere is too general

and inclusive; and, as already noted, ظالمون is associated

with the basic verb ضَلّ (7:148, 149). Another, more

specific word with which it becomes associated is مُكَذِّبونَ

(rejectors or deniers) (56:51, 92).

ضلال and ضَلالَة (error or mistake) occur 48

times and have the same basic meaning as the verb ضَلّ

as can be seen by their joint use in the cognate accusative

ضَلّ ضَلالًا (lit., he strayed a straying) (4:116, 136).

Also like ضَلّ , they are contrasted with forms of هدى :

with الهُدى (guidance) in 2:175 and with هَدَى (he

guided) in 7:30 (cf. 20:123 et al. above). Their use for

error in the moral and ideological realms is confirmed by

the comparison of ضَلال with طَغى (to transgress) in

50:27 and its contrast with الحَقّ (the truth) in 10:32.

This form is used in reference to some of the same sins

as the simple verb. In the cognate accusative it is used

of unbelief (كفر) (4:136, 167; cf. 2:108 and 5:12 above).
And it is used of شرك (association [of others with
God]) both directly (4:116) and indirectly: making one
equal with the Lord of the worlds (26:98); invoking besides
God that which neither harms nor benefits one (22:12); taking
besides Him gods (الهة) (36:23); taking idols
(أصناما) for gods (6:75); and worshipping (عابدين)
images (تماثيل) (21:52, 53) (cf. 7:148, 149 above). Also
it is used of disobeying (يعص) God and His Messenger
(33:36) and not accepting the Inviter to God (46:32) (cf.
17:48 above). Finally it refers to the time of ignorance
(3:163; cf. 4:177 above).

Likewise ضلال refers: to a wife who seeks to seduce
(تراود) her slave (12:30); to those who are [spiritu-
ally] blind (العمى) (30:53) or whose hearts are hardened
(القاسية قلوبهم) against the remembrance of God
(39:22); to those who dispute (يمارون) concerning the
Hour (42:18); and to those who love this world's life more
than the Hereafter, turn away (يصدون) from God's
path and would have it crooked (يبغونها عوجا) (14:3).

As to its form, ضلال is sometimes followed by بعيد
(far or distant) both as a cognate accusative (4:116, 136)
and alone (14:3; 22:12; 42:18). Other times it is followed
by مبين (manifest), as a cognate accusative once (33:36),
and otherwise alone (6:75; 12:30; 21:52). Also ضلال
is preceded by اشترى and thereby becomes to buy error

(2:175; 4:44).

أَضَلّ (2nd. declension comparative form; <u>to be more</u> <u>astray</u>) occurs nine times and has the same underlying concept as the simple verb, as is evident not only by their common root but also by its use, for it too is used of being astray from the way (سَبِيلاً) (17:72; cf. 4:44 above) or the right way (سَوَآءِ الشَّبِيلِ) (5:60; cf. 5:12 above). And it is described by بِغَيْرِ هُدًى (<u>without</u> <u>guidance</u>) (28:50; cf. 20:123 above where ضَلّ is contrasted with هُدَى).

Furthermore the sins with which it is associated are some already covered by other forms. It is used of dissenting widely (شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ) in a sentence describing unbelief (كفر) (41:52; cf. 2:108 under ضلّ ; 3:89 under ضال , and 4:136 under ضلال). And it is related to ظلم (<u>wrongdoing</u>) in 28:50 (cf. 7:148-149 under ضلّ). The specific sin here is following lust (هَوَى) (cf. 6:56 under ضلّ). And it is used of شرك (<u>association</u> [of others with God]) when it refers to those who invoke besides God such as answer Him not until the day of Resurrection (46:5; cf. 7:148, 149 under ضلّ and 4:116; 22:12, <u>et al</u>. under ضلال). It characterizes those who are blind (عمى) (17:72; cf. 30:53 under ضلال). This idea is amplified in 7:179 where it is used of those who understand not, see not, and hear not -- hence are more astray than cattle and are the heedless

ones (الغفلون ا).

تَضْلِيل (a second measure maṣdar; error) occurs
only in 105:2, where it refers to the end to which God
brought the plans of the instigators of the Elephant War.
Dictionaries translate the word by error,[1] an interpretation
confirmed by the other forms derived from the same root.
Some translators have tried, however, to give a more precise
rendering of this hapax legomenon based on the context.
Abdullah Yusuf Ali,[2] Arthur J. Arberry,[3] and George Sale
stay close to the original meaning, the first two giving
the translation go astray and the third error. Richard
Bell indicates that the literal translation is misguidance
but puts awry in his text,[4] while M. M. 'Ali and Mohammed
Marmaduke Pickthall[5] give confusion and to naught respectively.
However, these suggested meanings all rest on the basic idea
of error.

أَضَلَّ (to cause to err, seduce, lead astray from)

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[1]Lane, p. 1797A and Penrice.

[2]The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation and Commentary
(3rd ed., 2 vols., New York, Hafner Publ. Co., 1938).

[3]The Koran Interpreted (2 vols., London, George Allen
and Unwin Ltd., 1955).

[4]The Qur'an: Translated, with a Critical Re-arrange-
ment of the Surahs (2 vols., Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark,
1937).

[5]The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (New York, New
American Library of World Literature, 1953).

occurs 65 times and appears with the double accusative or
the accusative and عَن . Its meaning is quite plain.
First, we find it defined through synonymous clauses in
20:79: "Pharaoh led astray (أَضَلَّ) his people, and he
guided not aright (ما هَدَىٰ)." Secondly, it is used
with other forms of the root (which have been defined) with
the same essential meaning. Thus in 6:117-118 يَضِلُّ
(the first measure) is contrasted with بِالمُهْتَدِينَ (the
guided ones) so that its meaning is sure, and يُضِلُّونَ
(the fourth measure) is used of the same phenomenon (cf.
5:77). Likewise the fourth measure is shown to have the
same underlying meaning as ضَلال (which has been de-
fined) in أَن يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلالًا بَعيدًا (to cause them to
err a great erring (4:60; cf. ضَلَّ ضَلالًا بَعيدًا in 33:36).

Thirdly, the meaning of the causative form is shown by
its use with سَبيل (42:46) سَبيلِ اللَّهِ (6:117) and
سَبيلِهِم (14:30) (cf. the comparable occurrences with ضَلَّ
in 4:167 and 16:125 and أَضَلَّ in 17:72 and 5:60 above).
Fourthly, the meaning of the fourth measure is shown by the
words with which it is contrasted -- for example, various
verbal constructions of هَدَى (2:26; 4:88; 6:126; 7:178;
20:79; cf. similar contrasts in the other forms -- e.g.,
6:56, 78; 7:30; 28:50).

A number of specific sins are associated with أَضَلَّ ;
and, in keeping with the close relationship between the
forms of this root, some are the same as those noted above

under other forms. Lust (الهَوَى) can lead astray
(38:26), and people lead astray by their lusts (بِأَهوَائِهِم)
(6:120; cf. 5:77; 30:29; see also 6:56 under ضَلَّ and 28:50
under أَضَلَّ). Some even take lust (هَوَى) for their
god (45:23) and are led astray. Men set up equals (جَعَلوا
اندادًا . . .) with God to lead astray from His path
(14:30; cf. 7:148, 149 under ضَلَّ , 4:116 under مَنْكَلاًم ,
and 46:5 under أَضَلَّ).

Pride too causes one to lead astray, as the ʿUbād of
Aṣ-Ṣaghānī and the Qāmūs indicate when they give as a
translation of ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهِ (lit. twisting or bending his
side or neck) in 22:9 magnifying himself, or behaving
proudly, or turning away from al-Islam.[1] Frivolous dis-
course (لَهوَ الحَديثِ) can also lead astray (31:6). And
he who even becomes a friend of one, who disputes about God
without knowledge and follows every rebellious devil, will
be led astray (22:3, 4; cf. 60:1 under ضَلَّ). Some
forge a lie (افتَرَى . . . كَذِبًا) against God to
lead astray (6:145; cf. 6:141 under ضَلَّ and 56:51, 92
under ضَالُّ).

Those who are led astray are الظالِمون (the wrong-
doers or unjust ones) (14:27; 30:29; cf. 7:148-149 under

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[1]Lane, p. 2080C. Note that at this and subsequent
points in this study the writer had moved to California,
where many Arabic texts are not readily accessible. Hence
most Arabic sources quoted in Lane's Lexicon could not be
checked in the originals.

(‏أَضَلَّ‏ , 3:85 under ‏ضَالّ‏ , 28:50 under ‏أَضَلَّ‏ ‏الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا‏ (those who disbelieve) (9:37; 40:74; cf. 2:108 under ‏ضَلَّ‏ , 3:89 under ‏ضَالّ‏ , 4:136 under ‏المُنَافِقُونَ‏), and 41:52 under ‏أَضَلَّ‏), and ‏ضَلَالَ‏ , (the hypocrites) (4:88).

Three agents are described as leading astray -- man, Satan, and God. First, men lead astray (22:8; 31:6), and these men include most of those in the earth (6:117). They are ‏الظَّالِمُونَ‏ (wrongdoers) (26:99), ‏المُجْرِمُونَ‏ (sinners) (71:24; cf. 6:145), and ‏الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا‏ (those who disbelieve) (47:1, 8). Even a party of the People of the Book desire to lead astray, but they only lead themselves astray (3:68).

Along with these more immediate and secondary agents of error is the underlying operation of the spiritual world. Thus Satan desires to lead astray (4:60), and God is described as the subject of ‏أَضَلَّ‏ when men (e.g., 14:27) and their works (47:8) are the object.[1] This is a hard concept to reconcile with the justice of God (in some portions of the Bible as well as the Qur'an). Thus M. M. 'Ali regularly translates ‏أَضَلَّ‏ leaves in error when it applies to God, and A. Y. Ali uses leaves astray (e.g., 20:29). However Bell and Pickthall do not show as much hesitancy to apply the common translation of the word to God and render it sent astray in this passage (vs. 28 in

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[1]For a related discussion of God as a cause of sin see the analyses of ‏ظَلَم‏ , ‏مُعْتَدٍ‏ , ‏أَغْوَى‏ . and

Bell).

The present writer feels that the regular translation
led astray is the correct one when applied to God as well
as elsewhere. The reasons for this conclusion are first
that we have no linguistic basis for making this shift,
only a preconceived idea of what justice should be when
applied to God. Secondly, يَهْدِى (he leads aright) and
يُضِلّ are both used of God in parallel but contrasting
clauses (2:26; 4:88; 6:126), implying that the latter is
the opposite of the former. Thirdly, though this argument
is not conclusive in itself, the Qur'an spells out what it
means by the latter. Thus in 6:126 we read: ". . . whom-
soever God intends to guide (يَهْدِيَه) He expands his
breast for Islam and whomsoever He intends to يُضِلّه
he makes his breast straight, narrow." The sovereign action
of God associated with أَضَلَّ is brought out even more
strikingly in 45:23 where it is followed by "He seals his
hearing and his heart and puts a covering on his sight."
One might argue for M. M. 'Ali and A. Y. Ali's translations
that man is left in error by pointing out the Qur'anic
tendency to imply an antecedent action or decision on the
part of man here and elsewhere (e.g., 14:27). But never-
theless the Qur'an in 6:126 and 45:23 clearly teaches an
increase in error in which God is at least in collaboration.
Finally, the high Qur'anic view of the sovereignty of God
is too commonly recognized to need defense; and the present

argument conforms to this view.[1]

In a broader study concerning the justice of God in the Qur'an Daud Rahbar devotes a section to God's taḍlīl and concludes by saying: "None of the contexts of God's taḍlīl can safely be quoted to illustrate that in the Qur'an's view God is the author of evil dispositions, or that He arbitrarily leads men astray. His leading astray is retributive."[2] Because the scope of the present study is linguistic rather than theological or ethical, an extended discussion of Rahbar's conclusion would be out of place. For the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to note that even if God's taḍlīl were only retributive, it does not contradict the previous argument that أَضَلَّ means leads astray even when applied to God.

مُضِلّ (active participle; one who seduces) occurs three times. Like all the other forms except the hapax legomenon it is contrasted with a form of the root هدى (يَهْدِي in 39:37); so it clearly conveys the same basic idea of error. It is used of an enemy (عَدُوّ) Satan

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[1]It might be noted that the argument presented is in keeping with the interpretation of a man of such central significance in Muslim theology as al-Asharī who, after quoting a verse ascribing أضلّ to God, says, "God has the capacity to reform the disbelievers and favor them, so that they become believers; nevertheless He wills that they be disbelievers." [ابو الحسن علي الأشعري ، الابانة (حيدرآباد الدكن، مطبعة جمعية دائرة المعارف العثمانية) ، في كتاب الرسائل السبعة في العقائد (ص ٧ ا .]

[2]God of Justice (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 90.

(28:15) and by implication is equated with him (ابليس) and his offspring, enemies (عَدُوّه), and the unjust (الظلِمون)) (18:50, 51).

CHAPTER III

غوي

BACKGROUND

The root is related to the Ethiopic ʿayaya (ዐየየ),
which means err. And it is related to the Hebrew ʿwh (עוה),
from which develops the masculine noun ʿāwōn (עָוֹן) (in-
iquity, guilt -- e.g., Job 15:5 and Gen. 44:16 respectively)
and the verb ʿāwā (עָוָה) (to commit iniquity, do wrong --
e.g., Est. 1:16; Dan. 9:5). This verb is a cognate of the
Aramaic ʿwy (עוי) (commit sin) and ʿᵃwāyāʾ (עֲוָיָא) (sin).[1]

Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner translate the
Hebrew root act pervertedly and list the Judaeo-Aramaic
cognate ʿᵃwāʾ (עֲוָא) (deviate). The Hebrew comes to mean
to do wrong in the Qal, to sin (peccare) in the Niph'al,
and to pervert [the right] in the Hiph'il.[2] In a primarily
secular sense the Hebrew ʿāwā (עָוָה) means twist or bend,
both literally and metaphorically.[3] But these latter

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[1] Brown, et al., pp. 730B, 731.

[2] Lexicon in Veretis Testimenti Libros (Leiden, E. J.
Brill, 1953), p. 686B; Supplementum (1958), p. 176A.

[3] Brown, et al., p. 730B.

meanings appear to be more closely related to عَوَى (to twist,
etc.)[1] than غَوَى . Nevertheless we obtain a clear pattern
from the root. From the idea of bending away or erring
comes the ethical meaning to sin.

QUR'ANIC USAGE

The various forms of غوى occur 22 times in the Qur'an.

غَوَى (to wander, go astray, deviate from the right
way, err) occurs three times. Its meaning is quite clear,
for in 53:2 it is used in synonymous parallelism with ضَلَّ ,
which has already been defined as to err or go astray from.
In 20:121 it refers to the fall of Adam and Eve as follows:
"Adam disobeyed (عَصَى) and he erred (غَوَى)."

The Tāj al-'Arūs lists the interpretation of al-Azhari and
ar-Rāghib that the latter word here means and his life became
evil to him, or he was disappointed, or he acted ignorantly.[2]
These readings find acceptance in the modern translation of
M. M. 'Ali. The last rendering appears to be an interpreta-
tion not found in the text, and the former two reflect
the former part of the verse which reads: "So they both
ate of it; then their evil (سَوْءَاتُهُمَا) became manifest
to them, and they began to cover themselves with the
leaves of the garden." The latter two readings also

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[1] Lane, p. 2185 under عو .

[2] Ibid., p. 2304C.

follow renderings of غَوَى given by the Miṣbāḥ of al-Fayyūmī
and the Ṣiḥāḥ,[1] but these renderings may also be derived
from the words used in this verse.

In contrast to the above, the present writer holds to
the rendering erred because it is the simplest and by far
the most common rendering of the word, yet agrees with the
context. Secondly, it is the most natural counterpart to
عَطَّى in the parallelism at the end of the verse, which
shows that disobedience and erring are related in the Qur'an.
Thirdly, the other renderings can all be explained as
attempts to interpret the verse. Finally, like its synonym
ضَلّ, it is contrasted with هَدَى (he guided) in the
following verse; and it is in the same context as هَدَى, هُدَّى,
and يَضِلّ in the verse after that.

غَيّ (error, destruction) occurs four times. The
meaning is obvious for it is contrasted with الرَّشَدْ
(the way of rectitude) (2:256; 7:146). Its use with رَشَدْ
does not shed much new light on the meaning of the word,
however, for the forms of رَشَدْ are essentially synonymous
with those of هَدَى, which is contrasted with the first
measure of the verb above (20:121-122). To illustrate, the
Asās of az-Zamakhsharī uses forms of these roots synony-
mously as in the statement: هُوَ يَهْدِيكَ إِلَى المَرَاشِدِ
(He directs to the right places to which roads tend).[2]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 1089C.

Furthermore, both رشد and هدى have what in Western
terms we might call a 'secular' connotation, and also in
certain forms, they may have a 'religious' one. The
'secular' connotation is seen in رُشْدَه (the only form used
with غَيِّه), which means rectitude, maturity of intellect
and rectitude of actions and good management of affairs.[1]
The 'secular' flavor of هدى is seen in: هَدَاهُ (he
directed him, or guided him [to the way], or directed him
aright) and اِهْتَدَى (he continued to be rightly directed or
to follow the right direction) and هَدْيٌ (a way, course
method or manner of acting, or conduct).[2] The more
'religious' significance of words derived from the two
roots is seen in رُشْدُ and some of its other forms which
develop the idea of orthodoxy[3] and المُهْتَدِب , which means
the directed [by God to the truth].[4]

Penrice adds the meaning destruction, which may derive
its meaning from that which characterizes the end of error,
or the way of error or from a fusion (as in the Hebrew עוה)
or confusion of غوى and عوى . And the Exposition of the
Hamāsah (Hamasae Carmina)[5] by at-Tabrīzī also gives غَيِّه
the significance of a state of perdition, which probably

[1]Ibid., p. 1089A, B.
[2]Ibid., p. 3042B, C.
[3]Ibid., p. 1089A.
[4]Ibid., p. 3042B, C.
[5]Page 643 copied in ibid., p. 2305B.

derives its meaning from the fact that it represents a deviation from the way of Paradise or rectitude. These readings fit the context of 19:59 and possibly -- though not probably -- 7:202.

The specific types of sinners with which غَيٌّ is associated are: those who are <u>unjustly</u> <u>proud</u> (يَتَكَبَّرُونَ), <u>do</u> <u>not</u> <u>believe</u> (لا يُؤْمِنوا), <u>falsely</u> <u>reject</u> (كَذَّبوا) the divine messages and <u>are</u> <u>heedless</u> <u>of</u> <u>them</u> (كَانوا عَنْها غافِلِينَ) (7:146); <u>neglect</u> <u>prayers</u> (أَضاعوا الصَّلٰوةَ), and <u>follow</u> <u>lusts</u> (اتَّبَعوا الشَّهَواتِ) (19:59).

غَوِيٌّ (<u>one</u> <u>who</u> <u>is</u> <u>in</u> <u>the</u> <u>wrong</u>) occurs only in 28:18, where Moses uses it to refer to a man who had cried the day before for help from oppression, but now wanted help to oppress another.

غاوٍ (active participle; plural غَاوونَ <u>one</u> <u>who</u> <u>goes</u> <u>astray</u>) occurs six times and only in the plural. The meaning is plain, for it is used in the same context as ضَلالٌ and أَضَلَّ . But a new flavor is introduced, for it is contrasted with المُتَّقِينَ (<u>the</u> <u>dutiful</u>, <u>godfearing</u>) (26:90-99). It is used of Satan (7:175), those who follow him (15:42) and the devils (26:224), those who worship others besides God (26:91-93), those who follow their own lust (هوى) (7:175-176), and those who lead others astray (أَغوَى) (37:32). And hell is their end (15:42; 26:91, 94).

أَغْوَى (to lead astray) occurs eight times. Its
meaning is clear, for it is used with غَوَى (which has
already been defined) in the same sense except that it is
causative (28:63; 37:32). And it is contrasted with the
word أَنْصَح (to give good counsel) (11:34) and used in
agreement with the clause, "I shall certainly make [evil]
fair-seeming to them" (15:39).

As with أَضَلَّ , the agents responsible for leading
astray are three-fold: First, they are those who them-
selves erred (28:63) or were erring ones (غَاوُونَ) (37:32).
We then move from the secondary cause to a primary cause
and find that Iblis leads astray (15:39).

Finally, Iblis charges God with leading him astray
(7:16; 15:39); and Noah implies that God may lead men astray,
although the implication is made uncertain because it is in
the protasis of a conditional sentence (11:34). As with
أَضَلَّ above, some appear hesitant to call God responsible
for leading others astray. Thus M. M. 'Ali translates the
word in the first two verses above judged or adjudged
erring. And in 7:16 A. Y. Ali uses thrown . . . out (only
using misled in a footnote where he says that Iblis is
lying), and in 15:39 he uses put . . . in the wrong (adding
thrown . . . out of the way in a footnote). In 11:34 M. M.
'Ali uses destroy, but A. Y. Ali returns to lead . . .
astray (perhaps because the conditional nature of the sen-
tence does not require the conclusion that God does lead

astray). Although the Tāj-al-ʾArūs gives <u>caused</u> . . . <u>to</u>
<u>err</u> as a rendering of 7:16, it indicates that in 11:34 some
give the rendering <u>punish</u> . . . <u>for</u> <u>erring</u> or <u>decree</u> . . .
<u>erring</u>.[1]

One might argue for these or similar translations by
showing that 15:26-39 describes God's curse upon Iblis
because of his disobedience; hence the context suggests
that أَغْوَى be translated <u>judged</u> . . . <u>erring</u>. The changes
deemed necessary here would then naturally apply to the
parallel passage (7:16) and could also suggest a change in
the other passage where أَغْوَى is used of God (11:34) --
particularly when divine retribution is spoken of in the
verses immediately preceding.

Nevertheless, the present writer will argue that <u>led</u>
<u>astray</u> is the preferred reading throughout. This is, first,
because there is no linguistic basis for changing from the
regular meaning -- unless in 11:34, for example, we have a
phenomenon such as the fusion (as in the Hebrew עורה) or
confusion of غوى and عوى . Secondly, the other inter-
pretations can be explained as attempts to avoid calling
God a cause of error. Thirdly, as we have noted, أَغْوَى
is contrasted with أَنْصَح (<u>to</u> <u>give</u> <u>good</u> <u>counsel</u>) in parallel
clauses of 11:34, thus implying that the former is related
to guidance rather than to destruction. Fourthly, the

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[1]Lane, p. 2305A.

interpretation of this paper is in keeping with the recognized Qur'anic emphasis on the sovereignty of God. Finally, it has been demonstrated by a more conclusive chain of arguments that the preferred rendering of أَضَلَّ when it refers to God is <u>led</u> <u>astray</u>; hence it is logical that its <u>synonym</u> أَغْوَى should mean the same thing in similar contexts.

Though this writer considers the above arguments sufficient to retain the normal translation of أَغْوَى when it applies to God, it should be noted that these three verses alone are insufficient to develop a doctrine of a divine cause for evil; for the first two are in the mouth of Satan and might be a lie, and the third is in a conditional clause so is not conclusive. Also we should notice, when we seek to determine levels of causation, that Iblis makes the fact that God led him astray the basis for his leading others astray (15:39; 38:82). However the text makes God's act subsequent to, or at least contemporaneous with, the error of Iblis in such a way that Iblis is culpable (cf. 15:26-39).

CHAPTER IV

طغى

BACKGROUND

The root idea is that of water rising so high that
it exceeds the bounds and overflows. Thus in 69:11, in
what is undoubtedly a reference to Noah's ark, it has a
purely secular connotation, referring to the water which
rose high, and the idea of going beyond a limit is shown in
53:17 where it is used of one's eye in synonymous parallelism
with زاغ (to turn aside).

The fact that the secular pictographic element is re-
tained even in developed forms of this word is illustrated
by the use of طاغية in 69:5 to describe some enormous
phenomenon that destroyed Thamud. However there is some
disagreement concerning the precise rendering in this con-
text. Translators render it a Screamer (Arberry), a terrible
noise (Sale), a terrible storm of thunder and lightning
(A. Y. Ali), the lightning (Pickthall), the Outburst (Bell),
and a severe punishment (M. M. 'Ali). Penrice lists only
a severe storm. The Ṣiḥāḥ and the Qāmūs give a thunderbolt

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as a meaning; but in this specific context the Ṣiḥāḥ and the Tāj al-'Arūs list cry of punishment, thereby combining the ideas of noise and punishment expressed by various translators above.[1] The actual event described involved an earthquake (cf. 7:78; 27:52) and a cry or shout (cf. 54:31) and a thunderbolt (cf. 51:44). As this is not an ethical use of the word, there is no need to decide which rendering is most accurate. We only need to note that even in a developed form the root idea of being excessive or passing beyond the limit is not lost.

QUR'ANIC USAGE

Various forms from this stem occur 39 times in the Qur'an. The only occurrence of one of these forms, طَاغِيَة , has already been discussed and will not be considered further for, though it has ethical and religious meanings,[2] they are not used in the Qur'an. Another form, طَاغُوت , occurs eight times but will also not be considered here because it does not help us understand the essence of sin in the Qur'an. Instead it is used of the devil or a seducer or false deities such as idols, all of which are only applicable to a more comprehensive study.

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[1]Ibid., p. 1857A.

[2]A. De Biberstein Kazimirski, Dictionnaire Arabe-Francais (2 vols., Paris, Editions G. P. Maisonneuve, 1960); and Lane, p. 1857A.

طَغَى (to transgress, exceed all bounds, wander from its orbit, overflow) occurs 12 times. The meaning is quite clear as we have already seen from the examples of this form which were used to illustrate the root meaning. From the metaphorical idea of rising (cf. 69:11) and going beyond the bounds (cf. 53:17 where it is defined by زَاغَ), it develops a flavor of inordinacy and self-sufficient pride. Thus in 96:6-7 we read: ". . . man is surely in-ordinate (or acts presumptuously -- لَيَطْغَى), because he looks upon himself as self-sufficient (or sees that he has become rich -- استَغْنَى ا)." The idea of inordinacy can be seen in the character of Pharaoh, of whom it is used a number of times (20:24, 43; 79:17; 89:11).

Those who طَغَى are associated with those who prefer the life of this world in contrast to those who fear (خَافَ) the Lord and restrain their souls from lust (الهَوَى) (79:37-41). Likewise طَغَى is contrasted with زَكَّى (to purify) and خَشِيَ (to fear), and indicates a state of separation from the Lord (79:15-19).

طُغْيَانٌ (transgression, exceeding wickedness, obstinacy) occurs nine times. The idea of deviating or going beyond bounds is clearly shown by its use in the same context as عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَاكِبُونَ (deviating from the way) and يَعْمَهُونَ (blindly wandering astray) (23:74-76). In fact it forms the idiomatic union طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ with the latter word of blind straying (2:15; 6:110; 7:186;

10:11; 23:75). The continuous nature of this state is emphasized by means of its introduction by the word اكبّوا (they persist) (23:75). This continuous nature of the word and the element of independent pride already found in the simple verb (96:6-7) lead us to suggest <u>obstinacy</u> as one of the best English renderings of طُغيان , even though Penrice does not list it.

We then find the word used in combination with كفر (5:64, 68; 18:80), thereby witnessing the close relationship between transgression and unbelief. This conclusion is confirmed by verses which charge those who disbelieve with طُغيان (6:111; 23:74), and those who increase in طُغياناً وَكُفراً الكافرين are put under the one category of (<u>disbelievers</u>) (5:68). So serious is it to involve one in طُغياناً وكُفراً that even killing one who threatens to lead others into this state appears justified (cf. 18:74-80).

As طَغَى is contrasted with خاف (79:37-41) and تَخويفاً (79:15-19), so طُغياناً is contrasted with فَننِّى (to cause fear) (17:59-60). It is used of those who are pleased with this earthly life and are heedless (غَافِلون) of the divine revelations (10:7, 11), do not submit (استكانوا) to their Lord nor humble themselves (يَتَضَرَّعون) (23:75-76), and are hypocritical by mocking (مُستَهزِءُون) (2:13-15).

طاغٍ (for طاغي ; active participle, <u>one who is</u>

excessively impious or obstinate, a transgressor) occurs six times and only in the plural. As the previous forms are contrasted with تَخْوِيفًا , خَاتَ , فَمَنِيسَى , and so the same idea of awe or dread is carried on by الطَّاغِينَ , which is contrasted with المُتَّقِينَ (the godfearing) (38:49-51, 55-57). Others are to turn away from them (51:53).

أَطْغَى [elative form for أَطْغَى (second declension); most extravagant in wickedness or inordinate] occurs only in 53:52. Here it is used together with أَظْلَم (most unjust or sinful) of the people of Noah.

طَغْوَى (excess of obstinacy or impiety) is another hapax legomenon, occurring only in 91:11. The element of inordinacy is brought out, for it describes the underlying attitude of the Thamūd when they rejected (كَذَّبَتْ) the truth.

أَطْغَى (to cause to transgress, to make one a transgressor) occurs only in 50:27. The root idea of going beyond a limit, which is basic to these cognate words (cf. 53:17 above), finds expression here for أَطْغَى is used synonymously with فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ (in wide error).

CHAPTER V

عدو

BACKGROUND

On the basis of Comparative Semitics the root idea is
to pass by. The Ethiopic ʿadawa (ዐ ደ ወ) means pass by,
the Hebrew ʿādā (עָ דָ ה) pass on or advance, the Biblical-
Aramaic ʿʿdā' (עֲ דָ א) and ʿʿdā (עֲ דָ ה) pass on or
away, and the Aramaic ʿdy (עדי) go along or go by, and
the Syriac ʿʿdā' (ܥܕܐ) pass by or go on or come. Like-
wise the Arabic ¹عدا can mean pass by.[1] From this secular
meaning it develops the ethical one of passing beyond a
limit set by one such as God -- hence to transgress.

QUR'ANIC USAGE

The various forms from this stem occur 106 times in the
Qur'an.

عدا (to transgress with في , to pass by or away from
with accusative and عَن) is used three times. With عَن

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[1]Brown, et al., pp. 723B, 1105A; Koehler and Baumgartner,
p. 682.

it has a secular meaning in 18:28: "Let not thine eyes
pass from them (عَنْهُمْ . . . وَلَا تَعْدُ)." Penrice indicates
that the meaning to pass by is not found in the Qur'an and
gives to turn aside for this form instead. But the root
and the context clarify the underlying idea -- the passing
of the eyes by, hence away from them. In the other two
cases it is used with فِي in the ethical sense of violating
or transgressing the Sabbath (4:154; 7:163). In these cases
the Sabbath is one of the divine limits which should not be
passed by or transgressed. The meaning of transgression is
confirmed by the synonymous use of يَفْسُقُونَ (they trans-
gressed [divine commandments]) in the latter verse.

عَدْوٌ (malice, wickedness) occurs twice. In 10:90
it is used together with بَغْيًا (injustice, wrong) to describe
the way Pharaoh and his hosts followed the Children of Israel
(cf. 6:146 where عَادٍ and بَاغٍ are also used together).
Its use in 6:109 suggests the underlying concept of exceed-
ing the limit more clearly, for it is used of reviling
(يَسُبُّوا) God. The verse also brings out that one can
commit عَدْوًا without knowledge (بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ).

عَادٍ (for عَادِوٌ, active participle, a runner, trans-
gressor, exceeding the limit) occurs seven times. الْعَادِيَاتِ ,
the feminine plural form, is found only once (100:1), where
it means the runners.[1] This translation, which is supported

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[1]Lane, pp. 1980C-1981A. Penrice does not list this
meaning.

by the context, would appear to be a primitive meaning derived from the root concept of passing by.

The rest of the occurrences have the more fully developed ethical connotation of transgression or exceeding the limit. They suggest that there is what we might call a "scale" from what is right to what is wrong, and on this "scale" there is a limit established by God. To go beyond this limit is sin. Thus we have the "scale" of sexual passions which may be exercised with mates and those whom their right hands possess; but those who seek to go beyond this are عادون (23:5-7; 70:30-31), among whom are those who practice sodomy (26:165-166).

Likewise there is the "scale" of foods, and the limit of God extends even into the area of forbidden (مُحَرَّم) foods if one is driven by necessity, not lusting or desiring (باغٍ). In this extended area God is forgiving (6:146; 16:115), and no sin (إثم) is upon one (2:173).

عَدَاوَة (enmity) occurs six times. Its meaning is clear for it is contrasted with مَوَدَّة (friendship) (5:182) and وَلِيٌّ حَمِيم (a warm friend) (41:34) and is coupled with البَغْضَاء (hatred) (5:14, 91). It is used of the Jews and idolaters; also pride (cf. يَسْتَكْبِرُون in 5:82), wine (الخَمْر), and games of chance (المَيْسِر) (5:91) appear to contribute to it.

عُدْوَان (hostility, injustice) occurs ten times. In

5:2 it seems to have a general sense, for it and the general
word الإِثم (sin, guilt) are contrasted with the general
words البِرّ (righteousness) and التَّقوى (piety). In
2:193 it suggests hostility or aggression, without any refer-
ence to the absolute rightness or wrongness of the act; for
it is used of rightful retaliation. However, the context
requires the meaning of injustice in 28:28: ". . . which-
ever of the two terms I fulfill there will be no injustice
to me."

On the basis of the root concept and these meanings,
this writer concludes that the idea of transgressing an
agreement or relationship by, for example, a hostile act is
the more primitive meaning. It later develops the idea of
injustice as this breach becomes related to the moral law.
The less specific use in 5:2 is merely an example of the
somewhat free use of terms which is often made in the Qur'an
and which will be illustrated in the Concluding Synthesis.

Not only is the word used of retaliation, but it is
also used with ظُلم (also injustice, or wrongdoing) to
describe the type of killing which is one of the great
things (كَبائِر) forbidden (نهى) (4:29-31). Like-
wise it is combined with الإِثم (sin) and مَعصِيَت
(disobedience) to describe the secret counsels which are
forbidden (58:8-9). With الإِثم and أَكلِهِم'السُّحت
(their devouring the illegal gain) it is characterized as
evil (بِئس) (5:62).[1]

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[1]The translation disobedience which Izutsu (p. 247)

عَدُوّ (an enemy) occurs 50 times. The meaning is confirmed by 43:67, where it is contrasted with الأَخِلّآءُ (friends) and 18:50, where it is contrasted with أَوْلِيَآءُ (patrons). Those described as having enemies are: man (12:5), the prophets (6:113; 25:31), and God, His angels, His messengers, Gabriel, and Michael (2:98).

The enemies mentioned are: Satan (most frequently -- e.g., 12:5) or Iblis and his offspring (18:50), the devils (شَيَاطِين) from among men and jinn (6:113), some from the guilty (المُجْرِمِينَ) (25:31), those to whom a portion of the Book was given (4:44-45), and the disbelievers (الكَافِرِين) (4:101). Conversely it is also used of God to describe his relationship to the disbelievers (2:98), which points out that there is nothing inherently evil in the word. Some of the devils inspire others with gilded speech deceitfully (غُرُورًا) (6:113), and those to whom a portion of the Book was given buy error (الضَّلَلَة) and desire that others err (تَضِلُّوا) from the way (4:44-45). Thus the enemies should not be taken for friends (cf. 60:1).

عَادَى (to be at enmity with) is only found in 60:7. However, the meaning is clear; for, like عَدَاوَة above (5:82), it is contrasted with مَوَدَّة (friendship).

تَعَدَّى (to transgress, exceed the limit) occurs

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gives عُدْوَان in this verse does not seem warranted.

three times. The meaning is plain for all are used with

حُدود (limits). After a statement of the laws of inherit-

ance, 4:14 reads: ". . . whoever disobeys (يَعصِ) God

and goes beyond His limits (يَتَعَدَّ حُدودَهُ), He will

make him enter fire." The other two refer to God's limits

on divorce, which show the same flexibility as those on

forbidden foods (cf. 2:173; 6:146 above). Thus 2:229 sets

up the limits and then states that it is not lawful (لا يَحِلُّ)

for the man to take part of the dowry. However, if they fear

they cannot keep within the limits, the women may relinquish

part of the dowry to be free without blame (جُناح). But

those who exceed the limits are the wrongdoers (الظَّالِمونَ)

(2:229), and wrong (ظَلَمَ) themselves (cf. 65:1). Here

we see that as law develops, the root idea takes on a legal

flavor.

إِعتَدَى [to be wicked, to transgress (with accusative

or فِي or with عَلَى of persons)] is used 15 times. It has

the same essential meaning of exceeding the limits as the

previous words from this root, for it too is used with

حُدود اللہ (2:229). And it is used with عُدوٌن 2:193-

194) and تَعَدَّ (2:229) in the same sense.

Like عُدوٌن it cannot convey absolute wrongness in

2:193-194, for it is used of rightful retaliation. However,

إِعتَدَى is wrong if it is in a form other than divinely-

regulated retaliation, for we read in verse 190: ". . .

fight in the way of God against those who fight against you,

but do not exceed the limit (لا تَعْتَدُوا)." Here اعتَدَى
would seem to imply aggression or over-vindictiveness. It
is evident from 2:193-194 that the word can be applied to
transgression against both men and God.

Besides its use with the law of retaliation, it is also
used of the laws of inheritance (4:13-14), the Sabbath (2:65),
and divorce -- of retaining women by violence (ضِرَارًا)
(2:231). Likewise it is used of making unlawful (حَرَّمَ)
what God has made lawful (اَحَلَّ) (5:87). Hatred (شَنَآن)
can be a cause of it (5:2), and it is associated with dis-
obedience (عَصَى) (e.g., 3:111). Those who disbelieve
(كَفَرُوا) do it (5:78) -- hence are unjust or wrongdoers
(الظَّالِمُونَ) (5:107).

مُعْتَدٍ (active participle; wicked, a transgressor) is
found nine times. It is the participial form of the eighth
measure and thus has the same essential meaning -- a con-
clusion confirmed by 2:190 where both words are used in the
same context. It is used specifically of those who do not
respect ties of relationship or covenants with believers
(9:10), do not believe (مَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا) (10:74), and reject
(كَذَّبَ) the day of Judgment (83:12). In the last case
one is characterized as a مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ (a transgressor,
a sinful one), thereby showing the close relationship of
these terms in the Qur'an (cf. also 68:12). As we noted
under اَضَلَّ and اَغْوَى , so here, God's will is in-
volved with sinful man's. Thus we read that He seals the

hearts of the مُعتَدونَ (10:74).

CHAPTER VI

سوء

BACKGROUND

When we look for the etymology of سوء , we find what
on the surface look like different concepts. The Hebrew
has a somewhat similar word in šw² (שׁ ו א), which in
its nominal form šāw² (שָׁ ו א) means _emptiness_ or _vanity_
or _worthlessness_ (e.g., Ps. 60:13; Is. 59:4; Ps. 26:4).
However the Ethiopic saye² (ለደአ) meaning _baseness_ is
more helpful,[1] being more in keeping with some of the mean-
ings Lane gives to سَاء : _it was_, or _became_, _abominable_,
foul, _unseemly_, _unsightly_ or _ugly_.[2] On the other hand Gard-
ner[3] says the idea underlying the word appears to be that of
misfortune or _calamity_, an element which we shall see does
develop in the word.

When we look for a connection between the root idea of

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[1]Brown, _et al._, p. 996; Koehler and Baumgartner, p.
951.

[2]Page 1457A.

[3]Page 2.

being base or unseemly or unsightly and the idea of harming
anyone or anything, it seems logical that a transition could
take place in the idea of treating one basely -- hence harming
him. Such a development might be similar to that of שׁ ד אֶ
above, which as a noun can mean a bad, or evil, thing and as
a verb to treat badly (Ps. 89:23)[1] -- hence to harm. Or the
transition could take place through the development of the
positive element of that which causes baseness or unseemli-
ness -- hence harms.

In order to test this theory one may turn to the an-
cient Arabic poetry where a similar development of meaning
is found. The primitive meaning of unsightliness, which
may be related to baseness, is seen in the saying: يزيد
القُرْطُ سُوءَ قَذالِها ("The earrings increase the unsight-
liness of the back of her head.").[2] The secular meaning
becomes even more general when a form is used of enduring
a bad night (بيتة سُوءٍ) which was like perishing (هالكا).[3]
The same sense is seen in the report that certain news
gave birth to a bad day (يوم سَوءٍ) for Abdul Qais.[4]
Related to these usages is the passive element of mis-
fortune which may be observed in the description

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[1]Koehler and Baumgartner, p. 951.

[2] ابو الفضل محمد بن مكرم بن منظور ، لسان العرب ،
(القاهرة ، ١٣٠٠-١٣٠٧ هـ) ج٢، ص ٤٥٢، ط ٥.

[3] Ibid. ، ج٢، ص٣٢١، ط ١٧.

[4] Ibid. ، ج١، ص ٨٢، ط ١٦.

"the poor mother of evil (السوء)," which is used of an old woman who was forced to commit adultery (زنى).[1]

Likewise the more active element of harmfulness, or that which causes misfortune, develops. This is brought out by the use of سوء for the harmfulness of poison.[2] And it is seen in the following clause: فان تصرميني أو تسيئ جَنابَتي ("If you cut me off or do harm to my side .... ").[3] Even as forms from this stem develop a more general meaning, they still can convey the flavor of harm. Thus, when someone's brother wronged a jester, the exclamation is made: "O . . . for the evil evil (لِلسُّوْآَة الشَّوْآء)."[4] A similar sense is seen when مُسيئًا is used almost synonymously with ظالِمًا in the following poem:

فقد أصبح اليوم عن ذاك سالي   وكان الفؤاد بها معجبًا

ولكن شَمدا سَلْوةٌ في جمال   [5]مما لا مُسيئًا ولا ظالِمًا

> And the heart was admiring her;
> And indeed today he began to forget that,
> It awoke not doing evil or wrong,
> But forgetting itself in beauty.

In the illustrations above moral undertones have gradually been added to the secular meanings as the element of harm became prominent. Now the moral sense becomes predominant as a form is applied to the condition or state

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[1] Ibid. ج، ٤، ص، ٤٨٣ ط، ٧.

[2] Ibid. ج ٦، ص ١٧٩ ط، ١.

[3] Ibid. ج ٥، ص ١٩٤ ط، ١٨.

[4] Ibid. ج ١، ص ٩٠ ط، ١٤.

[5] ابو الفرج الاصبهاني، كتاب الاغاني (القاهرة١٢٧٨)، ج ٦، ص ٥١ ط١٦.

of a man in the following: لكانَ جميل أَسْوَا الناسِ زِلَّةً

(Jamil was the most evil of men in respect to condition.").[1]
The emergence of the sense of general moral evil is con-
firmed by the use of forms of سوء as antonyms of إحسانًا
and الصالحات . In one case an old woman sees her evil

(سَيِّئَها) as good (إحسانا).[2] And in the other refer-

ence the good deeds (الصالحات) of a man are contrasted

with what he does of evil (أَساءَ ، يسيئ).[3]

<div align="center">QUR'ANIC USAGE</div>

The various forms of سوء occur 167 times in the

Qur'an and generally correspond with the meanings given

above except for the most primitive meaning of ugliness.

Perhaps the nearest English equivalent is evil, for it like-

wise can have both physical and moral connotations.

سَاءَ /to be evil, wretched or grievous; to grieve,
afflict (with accusative)/ and the passive سِيئَ or يسيئ
(for سُوءَ) /to be made sad; to be vexed for (with ب)_/

are found 30 times. Its meaning to be evil, wretched, or

grievous is illustrated by the clause سَاءَ سَبيلاً (It is

evil as to its way) (4:22); while its meaning to grieve or

afflict is found in ليَسُوءُوا وجوهَكُم (to vex, or afflict,

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[1] ابن منظور، ج٦، ص١٩٤، ط، ٢٠.
[2] ابو زيد الأنصاري، كتاب النوادر في اللغة (بيروت، ١٨٩٤م)، ص٥، ط، ١١.
[3] ابن منظور، ج١، ص٤٣١، ط، ١٥.

your <u>faces</u>) (17:7). Its passive use appears in 11:77 and
29:33, where it describes the grief Lot had for the divine
messengers when they came to him. Sometimes a secular mean-
ing prevails as in 5:101: ". . . do not ask about things
which if made known to you would <u>grieve</u>, or <u>afflict</u>, <u>you</u>
(تَسُؤْكُم)." At other times the moral significance is
dominant as above in سَاءَ سَبِيلًا , which refers to the sin
of marrying a woman who was married to one's father.

That the word is used in a general sense for <u>evil</u> is
brought out by its contrast with حَسُنَت and virtually
synonymous use with بِئْسَ in 18:29 and 31, where Hell
and Heaven are contrasted thus:

<u>Evil</u> (بِئْسَ) is the drink! And <u>ill</u> (سَاءَت)
is the resting-place!

<u>Excellent</u> (نِعمَ) is the recompense! And
<u>goodly</u> (حَسُنَت) is the resting-place!

Its antonym حَسُنَت is a general verb meaning <u>to be good</u>.
And its synonym بِئْسَ is one of the "verbs of praise and
blame" (أَفعالُ المدح والذَّمِّ) meaning <u>to be bad</u>.[1] The
context brings out a physical rather than a spiritual qual-
ity to سَاءَ , for verse 29 describes the سَاءَت مُرتَفَقًا
as a place of fire where men are given water like molten
brass which scalds their faces.

The word is used both of the wrongness of men and their
actions and of the severity of their punishment. In the

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[1] W. Wright, <u>A Grammar of the Arabic Language</u> (3rd ed.,
Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1955), I, 97.

former sense it describes a companion (4:38), an example
(7:177), the way of sinners (4:22), what they do (9:9), and
what they judge (6:137). In the latter sense it describes
the sinners' burden (20:101) and their final resort (4:97)
and abode and resting-place (25:66). This last verse brings
out the element of punishment in سَاءَ , for it is used
almost synonymously with غَرَامٌ (affliction) in verse 65.
The verb refers to both Satan (4:38) and Hell (جَهَنَّم)
(4:115). Finally it refers to the sins of those who:
reject (كَذَّبوا) the divine signs (7:177), sell the signs
of God for a small price and thus hinder from His way (9:9),
commit fornication (الزِّنَى) (17:32), marry a woman
that one's father married (4:22), and set apart a portion
of tilth and cattle for God and a portion for associate-
gods (لِشُرَكَآءِ) (6:137).

    سَوْءٌ (infinitive noun of سَاءَ ; evil) may be applied
to a man or to an action and occurs nine times in the Qur'an.
Thus رَجُلٌ سَوْءٍ (a man of evil nature or doings) would mean
a man who does what is evil, displeasing, grievous, or vex-
atious.[1] The idea of baseness, noted in the discussion of
the root meaning, is brought out by the contrast of السَّوْءِ
with the divine الأَعْلَى (the highest) (16:60).

    The word can be used without moral connotations, for
it refers to an evil rain upon a city (undoubtedly Sodom)

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[1]Lane, p. 1457C.

(25:40) and an evil turn [of fortune] (9:98; 48:6). The
Qāmūs and the Tāj al-'Arūs recognize the non-moral nature
of الشَّوْء in these last two verses and thus give it the
following interpretations: defeat and evil, trial or
affliction or torment, and perdition and destruction or
corruption.[1]

It is used of those who rejected (كَذَّبوا) the
divine messages (21:77), believed not (لا يُؤْمِنونَ) in
the Hereafter (16:60), and wrought abomination (الخَبَائِثَ)
(21:74). And the context of 19:28 suggests that it refers
to unchastity, for it is used with بَغِيّاً (harlot) and
after what appears to be an implication of adultery.
Finally, it refers to the evil thought (ظَنَّ السَّوْء) of
some of the men who did not take part in the Hudaybiyyah
expedition because they thought the believers would not re-
turn, and that appeared fine to them (48:12; cf. 48:6).

سُوْءٌ (evil) occurs 51 times in the Qur'an. It is
considered the substantive from سَاءَ by the Siḥāḥ,
Muhkam, and Qāmūs. But it is classified as an infinitive
noun of سَيِّئ by the Kashshāf of az-Zamakhsharī, of
سَاء by the Exposition of the Qur'an of al-Bayḍāwī, and of
سَاءَة by the Tāj al-'Arūs.[2] Penrice merely lists it as an
abstract noun. It means evilness, badness, abominableness,

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[1]Ibid., p. 1458A, B.

[2]Ibid., p. 1458A.

or unseemliness; and displeasingness, grievousness, or vex-
atiousness; and immoral, unrighteous, sinful, or wicked
conduct.[1]

Penrice lists سَوْءٌ and سُوءٌ together as both
meaning evil. Likewise Izutsu finds difficulty distinguish-
ing between the meanings of the two, though he differentiates
between ظَنَّ السَّوْء and ظَنَّ السُّوء in 48:12 on the basis
of grammatical syntax. In the former, he says, سَوْء acts
like an epithet of the analytic type and is literally
thought of evilness, meaning an evil thought. However, in
the latter, he continues, سُوء acts as the object of
ظَنَّ , which itself assumes a more verbal nature than in
the former case. The translation thus becomes the thinking
of evilness.[2]

On the other hand, the Qāmūs and the Tāj al-'Arūs
differentiate between the meanings of the two words in 25:42.
They say السُّوء means harm, injury, hurt, mischief, or
damage and evilness of state or condition; while السَّوْء
means corruption or destruction or perdition.[3]

However it is the view of this writer that for a number
of reasons it is not fruitful to draw such fine distinctions.
First, as will be demonstrated in the concluding section,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Pages 238-239.

[3] Lane, p. 1458B.

the Qur'an does not as a rule choose words this precisely.
Secondly, in ancient writing without vowel points it would
be difficult to determine which word was intended. Thirdly,
ancient scholars do not even agree among themselves as to
which word is being used in some cases. Thus az-Zajjaj says
that السَّوْء may be read السُّوْء in 48:6.[1]

When we return to the ancient Arabic poetry to shed
light on this form, we have difficulty distinguishing be-
tween سَوْءٌ and سُوءٌ because of the lack of vowel point-
ing. However, the four illustrations of سوء we listed all
brought out secular meanings.

Likewise the Qur'an sometimes uses سُوءٌ in a secular
sense. In 20:22 it refers to a physical malady such as
leprosy and in 16:58 to the bad news of the birth of a
daughter. The context suggests misery as its meaning in
16:27. Harm or affliction is the obvious meaning in 3:173:
"They returned [from Uhud] with favor (بِنِعْمَةٍ) from
God and grace (فَضْلٍ); no evil (سُوءٌ) touched them."
In 4:148 we read: "God loves not the public utterance of harmful
(السُّوْء) speech except by one who has been wronged
(ظُلِمَ)." This verse points out that even when the word
has a slight moral flavor it is not necessarily conveying
intrinsic or absolute sin, for here it can refer to rightful
retaliation.

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[1] Ibid.

The words with which it is contrasted further clarify
the meaning. First, it is used in opposition to رَحْمَة
(mercy) with the sense of _harm_ (33:17). Then it is con-
trasted with خَيْر (good) in 7:188 and 3:29. In the former
the flavor of _harm_ is brought out, for the words are used of
benefits and ills. Likewise the latter brings out _harmful-_
ness but also shows an ethical element, for it speaks of the
day "when every soul will find present what it has done of
good (خَيْر) and what it has done of evil (سُوْء)."

In a similar, and obviously ethical, way it is con-
trasted with الصَّلِحَت (good works) in 4:123-124 and
أَصْلَح (to act aright) in 6:54 and 16:119. In a con-
text similar to that of the poem above about an old woman
who saw her _evil_ (سَيِّئَها) as though it were good
(إِحْسانا),[1] it is contrasted with حسن in 35:8:
". . . the evil (سُوْء) of his work has been so adorned
that he thinks it good (حَسَنا)."

The same contrast is seen in 27:11: ". . . he who _does_
wrong (ظَلَم) and then does _good_ (حَسَنا) instead
after his _evil_ (سُوْء) [fears not]. . . ." However we
must guard against formulating too nice a definition from
such contrasts; for in 18:86 حَسَنا is also contrasted
with نُعَذِّب (_punish_), a word with a related but slightly
different meaning than سُوْء . Nevertheless we are safe

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[1] الانصاري، ص،١٥ ط،١١.

in drawing a general definition from 27:11, particularly as
this verse also uses ظَلَمَ (do wrong) in a synonymous way.
Also it is used in a way similar to يَظْلِمْ in 4:110 [cf.
7:165 where it is associated with ظَلَموا and يَفْسُقونَ
(they transgressed)].

Other words with which سُوء is compared bring out
its more secular side. Thus it is used almost synonymously
with ضَرّاء (harm) in 7:188, with عَذابٌ عَظيمٌ (grievous
chastisement) in 16:94, and بِئْسَ (evil) in 13:18 (cf.
4:115 where it was used with سَيِّئات). Az-Zajjāj ex-
plains سُوءُ الحِساب (the evilness of the reckoning) here in
13:18 as meaning a reckoning in which no good work will be
accepted and no evil work passed over because the former
will have been made of no avail by infidelity. Others
interpret the phrase as meaning a reckoning that is pursued
to the utmost extent and in which no evil work will be
passed over.[1] But, however we interpret the phrase, the
meaning of سُوء here is clear. It is evil in the sense
of that which causes harm or misery.

As سُوء was used of those who did not believe
(16:60; 21:77) so سُوء is used of disbelievers (الكافِرينَ)
(9:37) and those who do not respond (لَم يَسْتَجيبوا) to their
Lord (13:18). The evidence of disbelief in the former is the
changing of a sacred month which thus makes lawful what God

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[1]Lane, p. 1485A.

has forbidden (حَرَّمَ). Another specific sin described
by سُوءه is the deed, which the Qur'an ascribes to Pharaoh,
of having Haman build a tower to reach the God of Moses, who
Pharaoh thought was a liar (40:36-37).

Like السّوء in the poem of the woman who committed
adultery (زنَّى)[1] and like سَوْءه in 19:28, سُوءه may
refer to sexual license. Thus, when the wife of the Egyptian
sought to seduce (راوَدَت) Joseph, the act is called
السّوء (evil) and الفَحشاء (indecency) (12:23-25).
In verse 24 az-Zajjaj interprets the words as unfaithfulness
to his master and adultery.[2] However, it is not warranted
to ascribe the meaning unfaithfulness to his master to
السّوء , for in the following verse the word is used of
adultery alone.

Finally, the word is used by Joseph in the sequel of
the story: "I call not myself free from guilt (أُبَرّئ);
surely the soul incites to evil (السّوء), except those
on whom my Lord has mercy (12:53)." Obviously the meaning
here is moral, and the context suggests that السّوء
refers to licentiousness. The last part of 12:53 resurrects
the problem of the involvement of God in human evil, for it
suggests that God is able to alleviate evil.

Part of the solution is found in 13:11 which states,

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[1] ابن منظور، ج٤، ص٢٨٣، ط، ٧
[2] Lane, p. 1458A.

"God changes not the condition of a people until they change their own condition." But God remains sovereign, for it continues, ". . . when God intends evil (سُوۡءًا) to a people, there is no averting it." However, سُوۡء here refers more to punishment than to morality; so it is not very helpful. Much more light is shed by 35:8 which states: ". . . the evil (سُوۡءُ) of his work has been so adorned that he thinks it good (حَسَنًا). God leadeth astray (يُضِلُّ) whom He will and guideth (يَهۡدِي) whom He will." Not only does سُوۡء have a moral sense here, but the final statement explains the first by showing that God is involved in some way.

Another problem which the word raises for us is the relation between knowledge and culpability. A number of verses indicate that سُوۡء can be committed in ignorance (بِجَهَالَةٍ) (4:17; 6:54; 16:119), and to be forgiven one must turn and act aright (أَصۡلَحَ). As the element of harm is so prominent in this word, one can readily see how one can be guilty of سُوۡء without conscious disobedience or rebellion.

سَيِّئٌ (bad, wicked, or evil) is used both as a substantive and an adjective and occurs four times in the Qur'an. Lane also adds the following meanings: abominable, foul, unseemly, unsightly, or ugly;[1] but the Qur'anic words,

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[1] Page 1458B.

though flavored by these meanings, are used in a more ethical
sense. In the poem about the old woman, the contracted form
of the word (سَىءٌ)is contrasted with إِحْسَان (good), thus
bringing out its general use for evil or bad.[1] This use carries
into the Qur'an where it is contrasted with صَالِح (9:102) --
a word which Penrice defines as good, sound, free from blemish,
perfect, upright, righteous.

In 17:31-38 the sins of which it is used are: killing
children for fear of poverty (which is a great wrong, or
mistake -- خِطْأً كَبِيرًا); killing the soul which God has
forbidden (حَرَّمَ), except for a just cause, or exceeding
(سرف) the limit in slaying; embezzling orphan's property;
being dishonest in business; following that of which one has
no knowledge; and going about in an insolent manner (مَرَحًا).

سَيِّئَة (evil, a sin, evil action) is found 58 times
in the Qur'an. Lane includes the element of intentional dis-
obedience among his definitions.[2] In this connection we
might note that in 4:17-18 سَوْء is used for evil com-
mitted in ignorance (بِجَهَالَةٍ) but soon repented of (so
also in 6:54 and 16:19), while سَيِّئَات is used of
evil deeds committed until death. In view of the close
etymological relation between these words it would be
perilous to draw much significance from the verses other
than to note the frequency with which سَوْء is used with

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[1] سَىءٌ is a contraction of سَيِّئ , Lane, p. 1458C.

[2] Page 1459A.

رِبَّهَا لَكَرَ and the way the plural form of سَيِّئَاتَتَ

lends itself to describe repeated action.

The latter is closely related to the simple verb سَاءَ
as is seen by their use together in 29:4. And we notice the
same development in the meaning of the substantive seen
earlier in the verb. Thus سَيِّئَة can mean a disagreeable
or harmful state of affairs or a wrong state or action. We
notice the former meaning in 11:10 where the word is used
as a synonym of ضَرَّآء (distress).

Gradually we get a transition from physical evil to
the moral evil which causes it. A step in this direction is
seen in the words كَسَبَ سَيِّئَة (he earned evil) (2:81; 10:27).[1]
The moral element dominates in the similar saying عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ
(they worked evil) (7:153). In this verse the working of
evil is associated with a state of unbelief. Likewise the
full moral meaning is obvious in 2:271: "If you manifest
almsgiving, it is well. And if you hide it and give to the
poor, it is good for you; and it will atone for your evil
deeds (سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ)."

To develop a more precise understanding of the word it
would be helpful for us to see other ones with which it is
contrasted or associated. First, like سُوء it is con-
trasted with رَحْمَة (mercy) in 30:36, thus bringing out
the element of harm or affliction. Its most common antonym,

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[1] For the significance of كَسَبَ see Torrey, pp. 27-29.

however, is حسن . In 7:95 we read: "We changed the evil
(السَّيِّئَة) for good (الحَسَنَة), till they became
affluent and said: Distress (الضَّرَّاءُ) and happiness
(السَّرَّاءُ) did indeed touch our fathers." Here we not
only see the general nature of السَّيِّئَة by its contrast
with الحَسَنَة , but it is defined by being equated with
الضَّرَّاءُ (cf. 11:10 above).

Another instructive example is 7:131: ". . . when
good (الحَسَنَة) befell them, they said: This is due to
us; and, when evil (سَيِّئَة) afflicted them, they drew
bad omens (يَطَّيَّروا) from Moses. Is not their bad omen
(طَائِرُهُم) God?" Here again the context proves that the
word means distress or harm; for, not only is it contrasted
with الحَسَنَة , but it is connected with يَطَّيَّروا [to
augur evil, draw an evil augury from (with ب)] and
(a flying thing, an omen -- especially an evil one).

Though other secular examples of سَيِّئَة and حسنة
might be given (e.g., 3:119; 4:78; 7:168), we shall turn to
an example where the words share in both moral and secular
connotations: ". . . whoever intercedes in a good (حَسَنَة),
cause has a share of it, and whoever intercedes in an evil
(سَيِّئَة) cause has a portion of it" (4:85; cf. 10:27).
Likewise other examples of these words are clearly moral --
for instance, 11:114: ". . . keep up prayer. . . . Surely
good deeds (الحَسَنَاتِ) take away evil deeds (السَّيِّئَاتِ)"
(cf. 25:70).

In 40:40 صَالِحٌ , a different word for ethical good,
is made the antonym of السَّيِّئَاتُ . But in 45:21
is contrasted with اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ (believe and do
good works), which suggests that the Qur'anic use of سَيِّئَات
has an additional element of unbelief -- a factor already
noted in سَوْءٌ (16:60; 21:77) and سُوءٌ (9:37). A new
word is added in 2:81-82 where خَطِيئَةٌ (sin) as well as
سَيِّئَة اٰمَنُوا عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ are contrasted with .
Lane makes خَطِيئَةٌ a synonym of سَيِّئَةٌ .[1] This is
correct whenever the latter is used as just a general word
for evil in the sense of sin; but as we have seen سَيِّئَة
often conveys a sense of harm quite foreign to خَطِيئَةٌ .

Another word associated with سَيِّئَةٌ is ذُنُوبٌ
in 3:192: "O Lord, grant us protection from our sins
(سَيِّئَاتِنَا) and remove our evils (ذُنُوبَنَا
) " One
might draw the conclusion that ذُنُوب here referred to
great sins and سَيِّئَات to little sins on the basis of 4:31:
"If you shun the great things (كَبَائِر) which you are for-
bidden (تُنْهَوْنَ), we shall do away with your evil deeds
(سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ)."

However this is a dangerous conclusion. First, it is
not likely that ذُنُوب would be used to express only
great sins when it was used of Muhammad himself (40:57;
27:21; 48:2). Secondly, though a definite distinction is

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[1]Page 1459A.

made between كَبَائِر and سَيِّئَات in 4:31, various forms of
the root سوء , which are closely related in meaning, are
used for great sins. These include the sins of those who
falsely reject (كَذَّبُوا) the divine signs (7:177),
setting aside portions of produce for associate-gods
(لِلنُّشَرَكَاءِ) (6:137), and believe not (لا يُؤْمِنونَ) in
the Hereafter (16:60). Nevertheless, the various forms of
سوء with their flavor of harm sometimes tend to be lower
on the scale of culpability than some of those which express
ideas such as rebellion to the divine will (cf. 4:148).

سَوْءَة (shame, secret parts) occurs seven times in
the Qur'an. In 7:20 and 20:121 it refers to the secret
parts or shame of Adam and Eve. As the word does not make
a significant contribution to our understanding of the
Qur'anic concept of sin, we need not pursue it further other
than to note that it is closer to the suggested root meaning
of سوء than any of the other forms in the Qur'an. Were
we just to look at the Qur'an or such secondary sources as
Gardner and Izutsu, with their emphasis on the element of
harm and evil, we might not understand how the meaning of
سَوْءَة was related to that of the other forms of سوء .
However, Comparative Semitics and the ancient poem on the
unsightly woman[1] suggest that a primitive meaning of the
root is unsightliness, and the other meanings develop from
this.

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[1]. ابن منظور ، ج ١ ، ص ٨٢ ، ط ١٦ .

أَسْوَأُ (elative form, _worse_, _worst_) occurs twice in the Qur'an. The meaning is certain, for it is contrasted with أَحْسَن (the elative adjective meaning _best_) (39:35). The ancient Arabic poetry showed its use for the _most_ _evil_ of men in respect to condition.[1] In its second Qur'anic usage it refers to the _worst_ of the actions of those who disbelieve (كَفَرُوا) (41:27).

أَسَاءَ (_to_ _do_ _evil_) is found five times in the Qur'an. The meaning is obvious. As it was contrasted with الصالحات (_good_ _things_) in the Arabic poem,[2] so it is contrasted with عَمِلَ صَالِحًا (_does_ _good_) in 41:46 and 45:15. Likewise it is contrasted with أَحْسَن (the causative form of another word for _good_) (17:7; 53:31). In 30:10 أَسَاءَ is particularly used of the sin of those who rejected (يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ) the signs of God and mocked (كَذَّبُوا) at them.

مُسِيءٌ (_an_ _evildoer_) occurs only in 40:58, which reads: ". . . the _blind_ (الْأَعْمَى) and the _seeing_ (الْبَصِيرُ) are not alike nor those who _believe_ _and_ _do_ _good_ (آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ) and the _evildoer_ (الْمُسِيءُ). The double contrast is set up with the balance of a mathematical ratio, making the meaning certain. And the addition

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1. Ibid.، ج ٦، ص ١٩٤، ط ١٠.
2. Ibid.، ج ١١، ص ٤٣٧، ط ١٥.

of اَمَنوا to الصَّلِحَت suggests that an element of un-belief is associated with the Qur'anic use of مُسِیئَة , as we have noticed with other words from the same root (سَیِّئَات in 16:60 and 12:77; سُوْء in 9:37; سُوْء in 45:21).

CHAPTER VII

دنب

BACKGROUND

Sweetman says that the root gives no clue concerning
the meaning of the word.[1] However Comparative Semitics
make it possible to suggest the development of thought.
The root means <u>tail</u> or <u>end</u> according to the Hebrew z̄anāb
(זָנָב), the Akkadian <u>zabbatu</u> and <u>zimbatu</u>, the Assyrian
<u>zibbatu</u>, the Aramaic <u>danbā'</u> (דַּנְבָּא) and <u>dunbā'</u> (ܘܿܕܢܒܐ),
and the Ethiopic <u>zanab</u> (ዘነብ ፡).[2]

Al-Iṣfahānī traces the development of the word from the
idea of <u>taking the tail of a thing to every act of which the</u>
<u>consequence is disagreeable or unwholesome.</u>[3] In this case
<u>abomination</u> or <u>unseemliness</u> would be the underlying idea.
Sweetman suggests another tack: "It may have the significance

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[1]Part I, vol. II, p. 195.

[2]Koehler and Baumgartner, p. 260B; Brown, <u>et al</u>., p.
275A.

[3]Quoted in M. M. 'Ali, pp. 131, 132, but the original
text not available to the writer.

of being overtaken by a fault or rather that which overtakes
man, in somewhat the same way as the idiom is used, 'If any-
one be overtaken in a fault,'"[1] This view, that to be over-
taken is the primitive idea, may receive some support from
the simple verb ذنب , which is not found in the Qur'an but
means to follow closely.

However, the use of zinnēb (זִנֵּב) (the Piel form of
the Hebrew verb) suggests a third approach. It means to cut
off or smite the tail or rear. Thus in Joshua 10:19 and
Deuteronomy 25:18 it is used of attacking or smiting in the
rear.[2] Though this usage lends some support to Sweetman's
suggestion, it seems to favor the view that the underlying
idea is the guilt which arises from harming someone as in a
rear attack.

But, whatever the correct etymology may be, the ancient
Arabic poetry indicates that the root idea had been replaced
by a new general concept prior to the first period of Islam,
for it uses ذنب as a general word for sin.[3]

QUR'ANIC USAGE

The root idea is lost in the Qur'an where ذنب is a
general word for sin. It occurs 37 times in the sense of

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[1]Part I, vol. II, p. 195.

[2]Koehler and Baumgartner, p. 260B; Brown, et al., p.
275B.

[3] الانصاريّ، ص ١٠، ط ٨ .

sin, the two uses of دَنُوبُ in 51:59 not being relevant to
our discussion.

دَنبُ (plural دَنُوبُ ; a crime, fault, sin) is
the only form other than دَنُوبُ . Lane also gives the mean-
ings: a misdemeanor, a misdeed, an unlawful deed, an offence,
a transgression, or an act of disobedience.[1] Stanton says
that the word "refers chiefly to ceremonial offences";[2] but,
as we shall see, this statement is not correct. For example,
it is used of those who disbelieve the signs of God (8:52)
and falsely reject His messages (3:10). That it is a general
word and that it conveys a sense of moral guilt are patent
(cf. 39:53). The regular sense of guilt makes it a more
ethically advanced term than some occurrences of سوء ,
which often do not convey guilt.

We have previously noted the use of دَنُوبُ with
سَيِّأت in 3:193. At that time the writer explained
that it was dangerous to differentiate between the two as
large sins and small sins respectively, even though the
latter is contrasted with كَبَّر in 4:31. However the prob-
lem is not so great with other general words for it is made
synonymous with فِسق or نُسوق (transgression) by its
use with فَسِيقون (transgressors) in 5:49. And it is
equated with خَطِيئَة (sin) by its use with خَطِئِين

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[1]Page 979.
[2]Page 56.

(sinners) in 12:29 and 97. The latter identification, as has been noted, finds support in the parallelism of Abū'l-'Atāhiya:

> Forgive my <u>sins</u> (ذُنُوبِي) because they are too much,
> And cover my <u>errors</u> (خَطَايَاي) because Thou art the Coverer.[1]

Likewise it is used to refer to the sin of those who commit indecency (فَاحِشَة) or wrong (ظَلَمُوا) themselves (3:134). In keeping with the former it is used of the sin of the woman who tried to seduce (رَاوَدَ) Joseph and then blamed him (12:23-29). In the following verse ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (<u>manifest</u> <u>error</u>) is used of the same act, hence indirectly associated with ذَنْب . Also associated with ذَنْب are the sins of those who have low desires (أَهْوَاء), seduce you (يَفْتِنُوكَ) from part of what God has revealed, and turn away (تَوَلَّوْا) (5:49).

It is used to describe the sins of those who disbelieved (كَفَرُوا) after they had received clear arguments (40:21-22) and denied (كَذَّبُوا) the divine messages (3:10; 8:54) and messenger (9:13-14). Related to the above is a passage where it is used of the sin of Korah, Pharaoh, and Haman, who behaved haughtily (اسْتَكْبَرُوا) (29:39-40). On the other hand it is used of men who are not totally evil, for it refers to the sins of those who mixed a good deed (صَالِحًا) with another that was evil (سَيِّئًا) (9:102). And it is used

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[1] ابو العتاهية ، ص ١٢٠
* Arabic text on page 22.

of the <u>crime</u> (ذَنب) that the people of Pharaoh charged
against Moses for the man he had killed (26:14).

Finally, it is used of the Prophet himself, thus rais-
ing the problem of whether or not he sinned -- a problem
about which there is considerable difference of opinion.
This divergence is particularly found among more recent
commentators. Thus E. M. Wherry does not hesitate to speak
of "the sins of the Prophet" in 48:1-2.[1] M. M. 'Ali, on
the other hand, says of the same reference, "the Prophet
never committed a sin."[2] There are three references where
ذنب is used of the Prophet: 40:55; 47:19; 48:1-2. These
will be considered first and then two more (4:105; 9:43)
will be discussed which, although they do not use ذنب,
yet seem to ascribe a sin or fault to the Prophet. Then all
the verses will be evaluated together.

In 40:55 we read: ". . . ask pardon for thy ذنب,
and give glory with praise of the Lord in the morning and in
the evening." M. M. 'Ali (a contemporary exegete) agrees
that this clause refers to the Prophet but says:

> The words . . . do not negative the claim made
> repeatedly that the Prophet was sinless. . . .
> the Holy Prophet is described . . . as being one who
> purified others from sin, in 2:129, 151; 3:163; 9:
> 103; and 62:3. How can a sinful man purify others
> from sin? . . . Again, the Holy Prophet is repeatedly

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[1]A Comprehensive Commentary on the Qur'an (London,
1882-86), IV, 59.

[2]Page 968n.

spoken of in the Holy Qur'an as walking in the way of[1] perfect righteousness and entire submission to Allah.[1] Then he goes on to add some lesser arguments.

When we return to the most ancient commentators, however, we do not see them explaining away the clause. In fact they do not even pause to give it extra consideration but treat it as a very understandable statement. At-Tabarī (d. 922 A.D.)[2] paraphrases God's statement to Muhammad as follows: "Ask God forgiveness for your ذنب , and ask him for forgiveness."[3] It is interesting that at-Tabarī goes to greater length explaining the latter part of the verse than the former, for he continues, "and pray thankfully in the evening (from sunset until night) and in the morning (from dawn until sunrise)."[4]

Al-Baidāwī (d. 1286 A.D.)[5] likewise uses the singular in his commentary -- hence refers the clause to Muhammad. He writes:

> Ask protection for your ذنب and follow the orders of your religion. If you have made any mistakes, take care of them from the start and very quickly. Keep on asking for forgiveness. He [God] will be beside you.[6]

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[1]Page 90ln.

[2]Reynold A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (New York, 1907), p. 145.

[3] الطبري ،ج ٢٤ ،ص ٤٥.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Nicholson, p. 145.

[6] البيضاوي، س ٤، آ ٥٥.

We find a similar clause in 47:19 which reads: ". . .
seek pardon for thy ذنب ; and for the believers, male and
female." Al-Mahallī and al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505 A.D.)[1] record
the tradition that the Prophet said, "I ask forgiveness from
God a hundred times a day."[2] But some commentators believe
that he was commanded to ask forgiveness, not because he
wanted it, but in order to be an example to the Muslims;
hence he made the above statement.[3] It should be noted,
however, that these commentators are later than Aṭ-Ṭabarī
and al-Baīḍāwī.

Al-Baīḍāwī amplifies the same passage as follows:

> You must know there is not but one God, and you must
> keep asking for God's forgiveness and protection.
> And, when you understand the happiness of believers
> and the misery of unbelievers, this is done by . . .
> improving your situation and deeds. And keep on
> asking protection from God for your ذنب
> and those of the believers.[4]

The final passage in which ذنب is used of the Prophet
is 48:1-2: "Surely we have given thee a manifest victory,
that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter ذنب ."
Once again M. M. 'Ali defends his thesis by writing:

> The word dhanbi-ka . . . has been misunderstood as
> meaning thy sin. In the first place dhanb means
> any shortcoming, not necessarily a sin. . . . Secondly,
> the Prophet never committed a sin and his istighfar

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[1]Nicholson, pp. 454-455.

[2] جلال الدين المحلّي وجلال الدين السيوطي ، تفسير الجلالين
(مصر، ١٨٨٤م.) ١ ص ١٧٩.

[3]Sale, p. 378n.

[4] البيضاوي ، س ، ٤٧ آ ، ١٩.

meant the asking of Divine protection against the
commission of sins. . . . <u>Dhanbi-ka</u> . . . . here means
not the sin committed by thee but the sin committed
against thee or the shortcomings attributed to thee
. . . .

For the converse view we have ancient and more modern
exegetes. Of the latter, Wherry says that the victory at
Khaibar was "the earnest of the pardon of the sins of the
Prophet."[1] Sale interprets "that God may forgive thee" as
meaning: "That God may give thee an opportunity of deserv-
ing forgiveness by eradicating of idolatry and exalting his
true religion, and the delivering of the weak from the hands
of the ungodly. . . . "[2]

Zamakhsharī (d. 1143 A.D.)[3] spells out the ذنب in
more detail saying, "It means all that you have done and
the fights that were in the Jahiliyyah and what has taken
place later."[4] He even goes so far as to indicate that it
had been said that the "former" ذنب refers to Maria [with
whom he is reported to have lain] and the "latter" ذنب
to Zeid's wife [whom he married].[5] But Wherry counters:
"It is hardly possible that the allusion here should be to

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[1]<u>Loc</u>. <u>cit</u>.

[2]Page 379n.

[3]Nicholson, p. 145.

[4] ابو القاسم محمود بن عمر الزمخشري ، كشّاف عن هقائق
التنزيل القرآن (صححه وليم ناسو ليس ، كلكتة،١٨٥٦-٥٩)،ج٢،ص٧٢ .١٣

[5]<u>Ibid</u>.

the affairs of Zainab and Mary, for in these he professed
to have the sanction of Divinity."[1] It is not necessary
for us to solve this disagreement but just to note that
these writers both ascribe sin to the Prophet.

Al-Baiḍāwī has a very instructive interpretation of the
ذنب in the passage. First, he indicates that verse one
refers to the opening of the way to Mecca through such raids
as those of Khaybar and Hudaybiyah. Then he replaces ذنب
in verse two by علّة , which in this context would refer to
a mental _illness_. The verse thus reads, "May God forgive
your illness." The reason given is that it is caused by
worthy efforts (to make religion higher, remove المشرك ,
and complete the souls that are lacking), but these efforts
have become bad because force was used.[2]

If al-Baiḍāwī's use of علّة is correct, ذنب might
better be translated as _fault_ rather than _sin_ in this con-
text; and its meaning would be similar to that of 9:102
where it is used to describe the mixing of a good deed
(عملًا صالحًا) with another that is evil (سيّئًا).
Obviously, however, ذنب and علّة are not exact
equivalents; but a fuller treatment of ذنب will be re-
served until two other verses are considered which seem to
attribute a fault or sin to Muhammad -- hence throw indirect

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[1]Vol. IV, p. 60n.

[2]. البيضاوي، س ٤٨، ١-٢.

light on the possible meanings of ذنب .

The first of these is 4:105 which reads: "Ask forgiveness (استغفر) of God." The word استغفر is the same word used above; hence we conclude that the verse has essentially the same meaning though the details may be different. M. M. 'Ali says that the injunction is meant "for every Muslim who is called upon to act as a judge."[1] However, the context is in the singular, and the previous verse reads: ". . . We have revealed the book to thee . . . that thou mayest judge between people by means of what God has taught thee." These imply that the Prophet is being addressed.

At-Tabarī even supplies the word ذنب and mentions the Prophet by name. He writes, "O Muhammad, ask Him to forgive you your ذنب in your not breaking relations with the traitor who has betrayed some money belonging to another." In his comment on the next clause he again supplies ذنب and names the Prophet. Thus it reads:

> God still forgives the ذنب of His worshipers; and He does this by not punishing them if they have asked for His forgiveness. . . . Do this also, Muhammad; God will forgive you what has been shown you concerning your attitude about the traitor.

He also records this slightly different tradition: "It was said that the Prophet . . . had not really done this [taken the side of the traitor], but he had intended to do that, and God had ordered him to ask forgiveness for what he had intended

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[1]Page 220n.

to do."[1]

Al-Baidawi records a humorous story which is more in keeping with the latter account. It seems a certain طعمة from the tribe of ظفر had stolen a coat of mail from قتادة and put it in a sack of flour, which left a stream of flour all the way to the house of زيد , a Jew. طعمة was investigated, but he swore he had not taken the coat and did not know anything about it; so they left and followed the line of flour to the Jew's house, where they found the coat. The Jew said that طعمة had given it to him and produced witnesses from among his people. Therefore the Muslim tribe of ظفر went to the Prophet to induce him to take their side; so the Jew would not be declared innocent and طعمة destroyed. The Prophet was on the point of doing this, but followed the guidance of God. Thus he was to ask forgiveness for what he was on the point of doing.[2]

The final verse to be considered is 9:43: "God forgive thee (عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْكَ)! Why didst thou permit them until it was clear to thee who spoke truly, and thou didst know who were the ones who were lying?" M. M. 'Ali asserts: "ʿAfā-llāhu ʿan-ka . . . does not convey the significance of pardon of sins; it is rather the equivalent of Allah bless thee! or may Allah set thy affairs aright!"[3]

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[1] الطبري، ج٥، ص١٦٩.

[2] البيضاوي، ص٢٢٩.

[3] Page 396n.

However, al-Baiḍāwī, who was closer to the original usage of the saying, does not explain them in this way. He even uses the word خطيئة to describe a permission which Muḥammad had granted, and he amplifies the verse so it reads: "For what reason did you permit them to rest when they asked you for permission, giving false excuses? You have not stopped or waited to know who they were that had not lied and who they were that were liars." Then he concludes by reporting: "It was said that the Prophet had done two things that he had not been ordered to do -- his taking the ransom and his giving the permission to the liars. Hence God has blamed him for them."[1]

On the basis of all these verses this writer is of the opinion that when ذنب is applied to the Prophet it can mean sin, as defined above.[2] First, ذنب is applied to the Prophet as even M. M. 'Ali assumes,[3] and as the separate reference to the believers in 47:19 proves. Elsewhere it has always indicated sin. Why then should it mean anything different here, unless one can find statements to the contrary?

M. M. 'Ali lists no direct negations, only Qur'anic statements which he believes are inconsistent with a sinful Prophet. On the other hand, this writer feels that the

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[1] البيضاوي، س ٩، ٤٣٧.

[2] Pages 7 and 8.

[3] Pages 901n. and 964n.

demand for a sinless Prophet is inconsistent with Muhammad's
view of himself and the Qur'anic view of revelation. In the
former Muhammad claims that he is only a messenger (72:21-
23). And in the latter, the Qur'an states that it is the
verbatim Word of God (cf. 2:97; 26:192-194; 43:40; 85:21-22).
Why then must the Prophet be sinless as he is not part of
the revelation but only a channel?

Secondly, both the use of استغفر in 40:55 and 47:19
and the use of ليغفر in 48:2 suggest that ذنب refers
to a sin that must be forgiven or covered. Thirdly, M. M.
'Ali's contention, that ذنبك in 48:2 means the sin com-
mitted against thee or the shortcomings attributed to thee,
is artificial and certainly not the plain or simplest mean-
ing of ذنبك .

Fourthly, we have seen that early commentators attributed
faults or sins to Muhammad. It was only later that the doc-
trine of a sinless Prophet arose -- perhaps through the
influence of Christians with their claim to a sinless Christ.
We conclude, therefore, that we can retain the normal mean-
ing of ذنب (as fault, sin, or crime) even when it refers
to Muhammad. We must bear in mind, however, that the pres-
ent study has shown ذنب to be such a general word that
it can refer to small faults as well as great sins, and in-
tention need not always be implied.

CHAPTER VIII

أَنِمَ

BACKGROUND

Etymologically أَنِمَ seems to be related to the Hebrew
'āšam (אָשַׂם), though the thā and the shīn do not make a
normal correspondence. Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Gesenius
considered the first meaning of this word to fail in duty or
to become guilty. He supports his argument by reference to
the Ethiopic ḥesham (ሐወም) meaning fault and 'aḥshama
(እሐወወ:) meaning to do amiss. He says that the primary
idea is to be sought in that of negligence, especially in
going or in gait. Thus أَرْنَمَ is used of a slow-paced
camel who is faltering and weary.[1] This sense is likewise
found in a use of أَنِمَ in the Muḥkam, where it refers to
a slow she-camel. And aṣ-Ṣaghanī uses مُوَّأَرْنَمَ of that
which is slack or slow in pace or going.[2]

However, the Ethiopic to which Gesenius refers seems

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[1]Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament
Scriptures, tr. Samuel Prideaux Trigelles (New York, 1895),
p. 86A.

[2]Lane, p. 22A, C.

to have another underlying idea. The word ḥashama (ሐ ሠ መ)
can mean foul, filthy, abominable, detestable, ugly, or un-
sightly (foedus, turpis); and thence convey the idea of to be
displeasing (displicere) or to be physically, intellectually,
or morally bad (malus esse). Likewise the form ḥesham (ሐ ሠ ም)
can convey a sense of unsightliness and foulness or deformity
(turpitudo, deformitas). Or it can convey the idea of a
hurting, injury or calamity (laesio, malum). Finally, along
with the idea of foulness and deformity (foeditas) or harm
(malefactum), it develops the idea of disgrace, dishonesty,
infamy, or shame (dedecus).[1]

Not only is the meaning of the Ethiopic somewhat differ-
ent, but it is difficult to account for the ḥā in Ethiopic
when there is an alif in Arabic and Hebrew. Nevertheless,
even the revised and enlarged edition of Gesenius's lexicon
by Brown, Driver, and Briggs, mentions the same Ethiopic
root as having a possible relation to □ ש א and اثم .
But they omit Gesenius's statement that negligence is the
primary idea of □ ש א . Rather they just develop the idea
of offence and guilt.[2]

This writer concludes that اثم and □ ש א are probably
related etymologically because their meanings are similar, and
only the thā and shīn correspondence is not a normal one. How-

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[1]Dillmann, Chrestomathia Aethiopica, p. 168.

[2]Pages 79B-80A.

ever, because the Ethiopic also has the ḥa, there is little
likelihood that it is related. Hence the most that may valid-
ly be said for the Arabic root is that it has developed the
meaning of offence or guilt. This might have evolved from the
idea of failure to perform duty, seen in the Arabic references
to slow camels; but one may not project further back on the
basis of the Ethiopic to suggest that displeasure or physical
badness is more primitive. However, such projection is un-
necessary, for by the time of the Qur'an the idea of guilt or sin
has become the overwhelming one of this root. Thus أَثِمَ means
to sin, commit a sin or crime, or do what is unlawful; and
أَثَّمَ means to pronounce guilty.[1]

QUR'ANIC USAGE

The various forms of أَثِمَ occur 48 times in the Qur'an
but without any remnant of their primitive root meaning.
However, they carry on the very fully developed concept of
guilt.

إِثْم (a sin, guilt, iniquity) is found 35 times.
Some consider it an infinitive noun and others a simple
substantive. To the above meanings Lane also adds a fault,
an offence, or an act of disobedience.[2] Its general nature
is implied by the fact that it and العُدْوان (malice) are

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[1]Lane, pp. 21C-22A, and Penrice.

[2]pages 21C-22A.

contrasted with the general words البِرّ (<u>righteousness</u>) and التَّقْوَى (<u>piety</u>)(5:2).[1]

Likewise light is shed on the word by those with which it is associated. In 5:62 إِنَّم is called بِئْسَ (<u>evil</u>). It is associated with اِعْتَدَى (<u>to exceed the limit</u>), and those who are thus described are wrongdoers (الظَّالِمِينَ) and transgressing people (القَومُ الفَاسِقِينَ) (5:107; cf. 4:110-112; 5:3, 28). And in 4:112 it is related to بُهْتَانًا (<u>calumny</u>). All these words, with which it is used in a some-what synonymous way, are general terms for sin.

Though the above words show its general nature, إِنَّم is a word which particularly stresses culpability or guilt. In 4:112 we read: ". . . whoever commits a خَطِيئَةً or an إِنَّمًا, then accuses an innocent one of it, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a بُهْتَانًا and a manifest إِنَّمًا ." Of this additional crime إِنَّمٌ and بُهْتَانٌ are used, thus evidencing the culpability inherent in them. Furthermore, in 49:12 we read that الظَّنَّ (<u>suspicion</u>) sometimes (بَعْضَ) is إِنَّمٌ. This quality which makes it إِنَّم would seem to be guilt.

Many passages illustrate the guilt found in the word. Thus, if someone does a permitted thing, there is no إِنَّم

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[1] It seems that Gardner is going beyond the text when he makes this verse support his opinion that the word expressed "the action done to another in revenge or in requital for supposed injury or evil done by that person, but of which he is innocent" (p. 9).

on him (2:203). Even if one does a forbidden thing there is
no اِنْم on him if he does it through necessity, without
lusting (باغٍ) or exceeding the limit (عادٍ) (2:173).
And in 5:107 we read: "If it be discovered that they [the
witnesses] are guilty of (lit. deserving of -- اِسْتَحَقّا)
اِنْماً , two others shall stand up. . . ." Here the use of
اسْتَحَقّ points out the culpability. Finally, in places
such as 2:203 above we find it used in the same way as
جُناح (blame) and in similar contexts (e.g., 2:158). The
obvious conclusion is that it means the same thing.

Lane says that, though اِنْم and ذَنْبٌ are synonyms,
the former is intentional; while the latter is both inten-
tional and unintentional.[1] We have seen in 5:3 and 2:173
that intention is involved in اِنْم . Further we have seen,
by its use with الظَّنّ (suspicion) in 49:12, that even
the attitude without the outward act may constitute اِنْم .
In this same vein is 6:121 which enjoins: ". . . avoid the
open sins (or the outside of sin -- ظاهِرَ الاِنْم) and the
secret ones (or the inside thereof -- باطِنَهُ)." Al-Baidawi
gives two possible interpretations for this. The first is
that it refers to what is announced and what is secret --
for example, open or secret prostitution. The second inter-
pretation is that it refers to sins of action or sins of the
heart.[2] The latter interpretation seems like the more

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[1] Page 22A.

[2] البيضاوي، س٦، آ١٢١

probable injunction; and, if so, it combines with the other verses to suggest the inwardness of sin.

Besides referring to inward intention, it can refer to harm (as did the Ethiopic word above). This harm can be merely false charges against a person.[1] Such is the case in 24:11 where it refers to the charges against 'Ayisha. Or it can refer to the sin of those who undeservedly affront believers (33:58). Or it can be used of overt acts such as killing (5:28) or combining to expel people from their homes (2:85). Likewise the idea of harm is suggested by its contrast with مَنَافِع (advantage) in 2:219: "In both [wine and gambling] is اِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ and مَنَافِع for men, and their اِثْم is greater than their نَفْع."

In its use for harm it is associated with the Qur'anic social legislation. Thus it is used of the guilt of those who change a will (2:181), of a sinful course on the part of a testator (2:182), and of false testimony (5:107). Likewise it can refer to social legislation outside of court such as the swallowing up of other men's property (2:188). In a statement of what we might term the "Moral Law," اِثْم is forbidden (حَرَّمَ) (7:33).

On the other hand, اِثْم is also used to describe violation of taboo in its more "ceremonial" manifestations.

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[1] However we cannot use 4:20 to support this, as Gardner does (p. 9); for بُهْتَان (slander) and اِثْم are only words used of the same action and are not necessarily equivalent as a result.

Thus we see its use for willful eating of forbidden food
(2:173; 5:3). In fact Stanton claims that it is used largely
of ceremonial offences.[1] But the verses above plus the ones
we shall now consider show this to be an overstatement. It
is used of the greatest of moral sins. Thus اِنَّمَا مُبِينًا
(manifest sin) is used of the act of those who forge the
lie (الكَذِبَ . . . يَفْتَرُونَ) against God (4:50). And
the word is used of the actions of those who disbelieve and
buy disbelief (3:176-177). Finally, it is used of the un-
forgivable sin شِرك , which is called اِثْمًا عَظِيمًا a)
great sin) (4:48).

In this latter category, of its use for great sins, is
53:32 where it is used in كَبَآئِرَ الإِثمِ and contrasted with
اللَّمَمِ . The latter word means literally that which is
near. It then comes to be applied to what is near being a
sin -- hence small faults. Thus we see the breadth of the
Qur'anic use of الإِثمِ . On the one hand it can refer to
sins such as suspicion (الظَّنِّ) in 49:12; and, on the
other, it can refer to the great sins we have just considered.
The unifying element it bears in all is that of guilt.

أَثَامًا (punishment for wickedness) shows a still
further development in meaning. It is only found in 25:68
where it refers to the requital of sin which those who commit
fornication (يَزْنُونَ) will meet.

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[1]Page 56.

آثِم (active participle; <u>one who sins</u>, <u>an evildoer</u>)
appears only three times. Twice it describes those who con-
ceal testimony (2:283; 5:106); and in 76:24 such a person is
combined with the كَفُور (<u>disbelieving</u> or <u>ungrateful</u> <u>one</u>),
and neither are to be obeyed.

أَثِيم (<u>a</u> <u>wicked</u> <u>person</u>) occurs seven times. The
meaning is clear, for it is contrasted with المُتَّقِين
(<u>those</u> <u>who</u> <u>keep</u> <u>their</u> <u>duty</u>) in 44:44 and 51. The latter
word is also contrasted with الظَّالِمِين (<u>wrongdoers</u>) in
45:19. We may then conclude that, as أَثِيم and ظَالِم
are antonyms of the same word, they are synonyms of each
other. This suggests not only that the Qur'an makes a free
use of words but that it assumes an essential relation be-
tween the nature of the individual (his sinfulness) and his
actions (his wrongdoing).

The word is combined with another synonym مُعْتَد (trans-
gressor) and used of those who reject (يُكَذِّبُونَ) the day
of Judgment (83:11-12). Likewise it is combined with كَفَّار
(<u>unbelieving</u> or <u>ungrateful</u>) and associated with usury
(الرِّبُوا) (2:276). Finally it is combined with أَفَّاك
(<u>lying</u>) and used of those who persist in haughtiness
(مُسْتَكْبِرًا) and make a jest (هُزُوًا) of the divine
messages (45:7-9), and upon whom the devils (الشَّيَاطِين)
descend (26:222).

تَأْثِيم (second declension; <u>inciting</u> <u>to</u> <u>sin</u>) occurs

twice. Penrice lists the meaning as <u>accusation of crime</u>.
However the <u>Qāmūs</u> makes it a synonym of آثِم .[1] Kazimirski
refers to it as <u>that which incites one to sin</u>. This definition
seems most probable for it is in keeping with the common sig-
nificance of the second form verbal noun. Both occurrences
of the form are linked with لغو (<u>foolishness, vain talk</u>).
Thus we read concerning Paradise: "They hear therein neither
لغوًا nor تَأْثِيمًا " (56:25); and, "They pass therein a
cup wherein is neither لغوٌ nor تَأْثِيمٌ " (52:23).

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[1]Lane, p. 22A.

CHAPTER IX

حرم

BACKGROUND

The root grew from the primitive Semitic system of
taboo with its idea of the numenous and inviolable. Under
this system there was as yet no differentiation between
what was inviolable because it was sacred and what was pro-
hibited because it was abominable or wrong. But these two
concepts gradually began to develop as we can see from the
various Semitic languages.

In the North-West Semitic branch we see the Hebrew
ḥāram (חֶרֶם) which in the Hiph'il form means ban, de-
vote, exterminate. With the first two meanings it particu-
larly had a religious connotation but later came to be used
of things hostile to the theocracy. Thus, it is used of
not permitting (Hoph'al form) a sorceress to live [Exodus
22:18 (19 in Hebrew)]. In the Syriac 'aḥrem (ܐܚܪܡ)
the sense of sacred prohibition remains strong for the word
means anathematize or excommunicate. Likewise the religious
sense is strong in the Palmyrene ḥrm (חרם) which means

consecrated (consacré). The South or South-West Semitic
branch also has a strong sense of the sacred. We see this
as well as the development of a legal strain in the Ethiopic
ḥarama (ᕼ ᕱ ᗐ:) which means prohibit from common use, con-
secrate to God, and esteem unlawful.[1]

Some South Arabian inscriptions contain the word mhrm,[2]
which indicates that the concept of the holy was associated
with places, for the word means sanctuary.[3] In the Hebrew
ḥermōn (חֶרְמוֹן), meaning sacred, the concept is asso-
ciated with a particular mountain. Also it can refer to
things as in the Hebrew noun ḥērem (חֵרֶם) which may mean
devoted thing. Furthermore the concept is attributed to
people as in the proper noun ḥārim (חָרִם).[4] We may then
conclude that the root of حرم is an integral part of the
ancient system of taboo, that it was early tied up with a
sense of the numenous and the sacred, and that it later
began to add a legal element.

Parallel development is seen in the Arabic. The first
measure حَرُمَ , which is related to חָרַם above, means it
was, or became, forbidden, prohibited, or unlawful.[5] Likewise

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[1]Brown, et al., p. 355B.

[2]Levy, p. 199.

[3]Brown, et al., p. 355B.

[4]Ibid., p. 356.

[5]Lane, p. 553C.

حُرْمَة is related to חֶרְמוֹן above, and it begins to
show a polarity between what Westerners would call a legal
and a sacred emphasis, though the Semite of the time would
not see this as a divergence. It means the state of being
forbidden, prohibited, or unlawful and the state of being
sacred or inviolable, sacredness, or inviolability; and it
means the state of being revered, respected, or honored.[1]

QUR'ANIC USAGE

By the time of the Qur'an there is a clear polarity
between what is forbidden because sacred and what is for-
bidden because abominable or wrong. The clarity of this
polarity, however, varies in different words and different
contexts. Some retain a unified concept as under the pagan
system of taboo; while others develop in one or the other
direction.

The sacred element alone is found in حَرَم (a holy
place, asylum), which appears in 28:57 and 29:67, and
الحُرُمَات (the Sacred Ordinances of God), which appears
in 2:194 and 22:30. As these only cast indirect light on
the problem of sin, we will not treat them further here.
Likewise كَرُوم need not be developed in this section on
sin; for, though it retains the sense of forbidden or de-
prived, it is not in the religious sphere of taboo. It

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 555A.

rather refers to one who, together with the beggar, is a
worthy recipient of alms (70:25). He is one suffering
privation (cf. 51:19; 56:67; 68:27), perhaps through shame
or a sense of decorum.

In the Qur'an there are 75 occurrences of the remaining
forms. But before investigating these the obvious observation
should be made that, though the underlying idea of هرم is
of pagan origin, it now comes to be associated with the
divine will of God as revealed through the Prophet. Hence
there is a change from what was considered permitted (حلال)
and what was considered forbidden (حرام) by both the
pagans (6:139; 16:116) and the Jews (6:146-147).

حَرَامٌ (plural هُرُمٌ ; prohibited, unlawful, sacred,
sanctified) is found 31 times. The meaning is clear because
it is contrasted with حَلالٌ (permitted, lawful) in 10:59
and 16:116. The element of taboo is evident when it is used
of the state of sanctity of one on pilgrimage; for such a
one is not allowed to kill game -- a ceremonial restriction
not applicable at other times (5:96). Frequently the mean-
ing of this word is restricted to the inviolableness of what
is holy rather than what is polluted. Thus in the sense of
sacred it modifies a house (5:2), a monument (2:198), a
mosque (2:144), and a month (2:217). To violate this
sacredness is a great [offence] (كَبِيرٌ) (2:117).

هَرَّمَ [to make sacred,[1] forbid, make or declare

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[1]Penrice does not include this meaning, but see 9:37.

unlawful (with accusative of things and على of persons)]
occurs 39 times. Again the meaning is clear for in 4:19-24
it is contrasted with أُحِلَّ (was permitted) and is used
synonymously with لا يَحِلُّ (is not lawful). Another helpful
verse in this connection is 7:157:

> He enjoins on them (يَأْمُرُهُمْ) the right (بِالْمَعْرُوفِ)
> And forbids them (يَنْهَاهُمْ) the evil (الْمُنْكَرِ)
>
> And permits (يُحِلُّ) to them the good things (الطَّيِّبَاتِ) : }
> And prohibits (يُحَرِّمُ) for them impure things (الْخَبَائِثَ) : }

The parallel couplets make it quite plain that حَرَّمَ is an
antonym of أَحَلَّ and a synonym of نَهَى , a conclusion
supported by 4:160-161 where the three words again appear.
Likewise the word is defined by the context of 24:3, where a
divine prohibition is made and then referred to by حَرَّمَ .

As we noted under حَرَام , the system of taboo still
clings to certain usages; thus game of the land is forbidden
(حُرِّمَ) as long as one is on pilgrimage (lit., in a state
of sanctity -- حُرُمًا). Yet from taboo three qualities of
prohibition develop within this word. First, some have a
strong element of inviolability because of holiness or
sacredness. We see this in 9:37: ". . . they allow it [the
Sacred Month] one year and forbid it (يُحَرِّمُونَكُهُ) [an-
other] year, that they may agree on the number which God has
made sacred (حَرَّمَ) and thus permit what God has forbidden
(حَرَّمَ)." The context almost forces the meaning sacred
or hallowed upon the second occurrence of حَرَّمَ in this
verse and allows it in the other two occurrences.

The second quality of prohibition is inviolability because of pollution. In this category would come the flesh of swine (رِجْس) which is حَرَّمَ in 2:173 and (unclean) in 6:146. The third quality is void of any concept of holiness or pollution, but just the idea of prohibition remains. Of this category is 5:72: "Surely whoever associates [others] (يُشْرِك) with God, God has forbidden (حَرَّمَ) to him the Garden."

We have seen in general that God forbids (حَرَّمَ) impure things (الْخَبَائِث) (7:157). We shall now see what they are specifically, starting with the more ceremonial and working up to the increasingly moral sins. They are: game (صَيْد) of the land while one is on pilgrimage (5:96); what dies of itself (الْمَيْتَة), blood (الدَّم), the flesh of swine (لَحْم الْخِنْزِير), that over which any other than God has been invoked (أُهِلَّ) (2:173); the strangled (الْمُنْخَنِقَة), that beaten to death (الْمَوْقُوذَة), that killed by a fall (الْمُتَرَدِّيَة), that killed by goring with the horn (النَّطِيحَة), that which the wild beasts have eaten (أَكَلَ السَّبُع) -- except what you slaughter (ذَكَّيْتُم), that which is sacrificed on stones set up [for idols] (ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُب), and that which one seeks to divide by arrows (اسْتَقْسَمُ بِالأَزْلاَم) (5:3).

Also حَرَّمَ is applied to usury (الرِّبَوا) (2:275) and the marriage of close relatives (4:23) and (for believers) the marriage of an adulterer (الزَّانِي), an adulteress

(زَنِيَة), (مُشْرِكٌ), an idolater (مُشْرِكٌ), or an idolatress (مُشْرِكَة) (24:3). We see a still higher ethical level in 6:152:

> I will recite what your Lord has forbidden (حَرَّمَ)
> to you: Associate naught (أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا) with Him . . .
> slay not (لا تَقْتُلُوا) your children for poverty
> . . . and draw not nigh unto heinous crimes (الفَوَاحِشَ),
> open or secret, and slay not (لا تَقْتُلُوا) the soul
> which God has forbidden (or made sacred -- حَرَّمَ)
> . . . .

Added to this list are sin (الإِثم); unjust rebellion (البَغْيَ بِغَيرِ الحَقِّ), and saying about God what one does not know (7:33).

Other prohibitions were made as a form of punishment. Thus for their injustice (بِظُلمِهِم) (4:160) and their iniquity (يَبغُونَهُم) (6:147) they were forbidden good things which had been made lawful for them. However Muslims are told not to forbid the good things which God has made lawful (5:87). Those who did this, forging a lie (افتِرَاءً), went astray (ضَلُّوا) and lost (خَسِرَ) (6:141). However, according to 66:1, even the Prophet forbade what God made lawful -- though in this context it refers to personal denial.

On the other hand, it is wrong to make lawful what God has forbidden (9:37), for things so prohibited are transgression (فِسقٌ) (5:3) and sin (الإِثم) (7:33) and likewise involve one who does them in sin (الإِثم) (cf. 2:173) and blame (جُنَاحٌ) (cf. 4:23). And those who do not forbid them are with those who do not believe (لا يُؤمِنُونَ)

in God nor the Last Day and are to be fought by the believers (9:29).

Concerning the prohibitions, however, we might note that they may be violated for a just cause (17:33) or when one is driven by necessity, not desiring (باغٍ) nor exceeding the limit (عادٍ) (2:173; cf. 6:120). Also, although there are many ceremonial laws of a rather external nature, we have seen that the Qur'an stresses that true, inner piety is more important.

مُحَرَّم (passive participle; that which is forbidden or unlawful; or declared sacred) appears five times.[1] The underlying meaning of this word is obviously the same as حُرِّم with which it is used synonymously in 6:139-140. In these same verses it is used in the same sense as حِجْر (prohibited) and contrasted with خَالِصَةٌ لِ (reserved for). Likewise the word is defined by the context of 2:84-85 where, after God says that the Israelites should not expel their people from their cities, the act is called مُحَرَّم .

We also note three qualities of inviolability. First is that of holiness; for it is used in بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ , meaning Thy Holy House (14:37). The second, that of pollution, is found in 6:146, where the flesh of swine is مُحَرَّم because it is رِجْسٌ (unclean). The third just expresses

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[1] Prior to this word Penrice lists تَحْرِيم (prohibition), but this form is not found in the Qur'an.

inviolability, without any sense of holiness or pollution, and is found in 5:26, where the Promised Land is forbidden مُحَرَّمَةٌ to the Children of Israel.

CHAPTER X

ظلم

BACKGROUND

A root meaning of ظلم is <u>to be dark</u>. This is seen
in certain forms of the Arabic where أظلم means <u>grew</u>
<u>dark</u> and ظُلْمَة means <u>darkness</u>. A similar sense is found
in the Akkadian <u>ṣalāmu</u> which means <u>grow black</u>.[1] Through
the biliteral stem ظل a number of words with similar
meanings are found in other Semitic languages,[2] but bicon-
sonantalism is too uncertain to be made the basis for an
etymological argument.

Whatever the correct etymology might be, the moral use
of the forms from this stem is seen to be well developed
in the Arabic poetry by the first century of Islam. Al-
A'shā, who lived in the last half of the century before
Islam,[3] uses ظالم in the following poem:

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[1]Koehler and Baumgartner, p. 804.

[2]Brown, <u>et al.</u>, p. 853A.

[3]Nicholson, pp. 121, 123.

وكان الفؤاد بها معجبًا   فقد أصبح اليوم عن ذاك سالى

مما لا مسيئًا ولا ظالمًا   ولكن شُلد سَلوةً في جمال

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And the heart was admiring her;
And indeed today he began to forget that,
It awoke not doing evil or wrong,
But forgetting itself in beauty.¹
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Its use with مُسيئًا suggests that it is likewise a general

word for wrong. Another form is used with a flavor of in-

justice in the phrase "the deaths of the wronged (مظلوم)."²

Still another form is seen in the following poem:

نصيب نصيبين من ربها   ولاية كل ظلوم غشوم

نباطنها منهم في لظى   وظاهرها من جنان النعيم

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The destiny of Nasibin from her Lord,
    Is to be governed only by a tyrannical oppressor.
The internal part of her because of them is in Hell;
    And its external part is in Paradise.³
```

Here use of ظلوم with غشوم gives it the additional

flavor of tyranny.

The problems which now present themselves are, first,

how the word group developed its moral character and, second-

ly, whether this development gives any clue toward a more

precise definition of the Qur'anic usage. The Qur'an shows

us a transition between the physical idea of darkness and

the moral one of sin in the idea of spiritual lack of

الاصبهاني ، ج ٦ ، ص١٥ ،ط،١٦ - ص٥٣،ط،٥٣ ¹

ابن عطاء الله ، تاج العروس (مصر،١٩٢٧) ، ج ١ ، ص٢٧١، ط.١. ²

Ibid. ، ج ١ ، ص٤٨٧،ط،٢١. ³

perception. We see this in 5:16 which reads, "God . . .
brings them out of darkness (الظُّلُمَاتِ) into light
(النُّورِ) . . . and guides them into a straight path."

However, al-Aṣmaʾī, al-Azharī in the Tahdhīb, the Ṣiḥāḥ, ✗
al-Fayyumī in the Miṣbāḥ, and others suggest another under-
lying idea. They say الظُّلْم signifies the putting of a
thing in a place not its own, putting it in a wrong place
or misplacing it; and this is by exceeding or falling short
or by deviating from the proper time and place and the trans-
gressing of the proper time and place. The Tāj al-ʾArūs
adds the meaning the transgressing of the proper limit.
This interpretation is illustrated in the Tāj al-ʾArūs by
the sentence: مَنِ اسْتَرْعَى الذِّئْبَ فَقَد ظَلَمَ -- which
is interpreted as meaning, He who asks (or desires) the wolf
to keep guard surely does wrong (or puts a thing in a wrong
place).[1]

Likewise Ibn as-Sikkit interprets اليَومُ ظَلَمَ as mean-
ing the day has put the affair in a wrong place in ِانَّ الفِرَاقَ
اليَومُ وَاليَومُ ظَلَمَ (Verily separation is to-day, and the
day has wronged [us]).[2]

Reasons could be found for dismissing these interpreta-
tions. First, there is not unanimous agreement about the
meaning of the above illustrations, and they may be translated

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[1]Lane, p. 1920A.

[2]Ibid., p. 1921A.

equally well without the introduction of the spatial element.
Secondly, with the strong Semitic evidence for darkness as
the root meaning of these cognate words, it is difficult to
see how the spatial element became so prominent in its ethical
development -- unless it was transposed from the more common
Qur'anic concept of sin as separation from the Way of God.
Furthermore, the likelihood that the spatial element was
introduced would seem to be lessened by the fact that we
have already noted a transitional step between the physical
and moral meaning of forms from this stem in 5:16.

However, we cannot dismiss this spatial theory quite so
easily. First, we must adequately explain its origin when
the transition from physical to spiritual darkness would
seem so easy to people who used the forms ظُلْمَة for
darkness and أَظْلَمَ for grow dark. Secondly, if we dis-
card the spatial theory, we do not have an adequate explana-
tion for the form ظَلَمَ found in 18:33. Here we read,
"Both these gardens yielded their fruits, and لَمْ تَظْلِمْ
مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ." Though Bell (vs. 31) translates the words
did wrong in no part thereof, the context suggests a trans-
lation such as they did not fail (or were not wanting) in
any of it.

Thus we are faced with the dilemma of having some forms
which are obviously related to the root idea of darkness and
this occurrence which suggests an underlying meaning to be
wanting or to be less than a standard. However, we find a

possible solution to our dilemma in the Hebrew root çlm

(□ ﭏ ﻉ), which is actually composed of two roots. The one

we have already noted in such forms as the Akkadian ṣalāmu.

It means grow black and appears in the Arabic in such forms

as أَظْلَمَ (grew dark) and ظُلْمَة (darkness).[1]

The primitive meaning of the other root is to cut off.

It appears in the Hebrew çelem (צֶלֶם), which means image

and comes from the idea of something cut out or chiseled.

This root is found with similar meanings in the Assyrian

ṣalmu, the Sabean çlm (□ ﭏ ﻉ), the Aramaic çalmāʾ (צַלְמָא)

and the Syriac çalmāʾ (ܨܰܠܡܳܐ).

The latter root makes its way into Arabic as ظَلَمَ (cut

off).[2] The lexicon of Brown, Driver, and Briggs does not

list ظلم as a possible cognate word of □ ﭏ ﻉ , nor does

it identify the former root of □ ﭏ ﻉ . Though Koehler and

Baumgartner's work identifies the two roots, it does not

associate ظلم with the latter one. Nevertheless, the

present writer suggests that certain forms of ظلم may be

related to the second root, just as other forms of ظلم are

obviously related to the first.

There are a number of reasons for this conclusion.

First, morphologically the second root could have developed

into ظلم as well as into صلم , for this root contains

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[1]Koehler and Baumgartner, p. 804B.

[2]Ibid.; Brown, et al., p. 853B.

the same three radicals as the first. Secondly, the root
idea of to cut off explains the origin of the meaning to be
wanting found for ظَلَمَ in 18:33. Thirdly, this underlying
idea can explain why certain Arabic lexicographers above
interpreted forms from this stem as meaning to be, or put a
thing, in the wrong place. For from the idea of to cut off,
thence to be wanting, can be found the idea of being short
of a standard, thence in the wrong place. Fourthly, the
derived meaning of being short of a standard explains the
meaning injustice, which we have noted in the ancient poetry
and which comes to dominate the ethical use of the forms
from this stem in the Qur'an. For injustice is being short
of the standard of justice, as revealed in the divine will.

QUR'ANIC USAGE

When we come to the Qur'an, we notice that the primitive
meaning of the first root remains in the ظُلْمَة form. At
times this has a physical flavor which approaches the idea
of calamities. We see this in 6:63, which reads: "Who is
it that delivers you from the darkness (ظُلُمَاتِ) of the
land and sea?" Again we see this meaning in 21:87 which
says: ". . . he [Jonah] called out in the darkness
(الظُّلُمَاتِ), There is no God but Thou . . . !" As we
have noticed, at other times the Qur'an uses the primitive
meaning of the first root in the metaphorical sense of
spiritual lack of perception. Thus we read in 2:256: "God

is the friend of those who believe; He brings them out of
darkness (الظُّلُمَاتِ) into light (النّورِ). And those who
disbelieve, their friends are the false deities (الطَّاغوتُ),
who take them out of light (النّورِ) into darkness (الظُّلُمَاتِ)."
These verses explain the following Qur'anic forms: the noun
ظُلُمَةٌ above; the active participle مُظْلِمٌ (in 10:27 and
36:36), which means darkness or one who is in darkness; and
أَظْلَمَ with عَلَى (in 2:20), which means to be dark.

However, it is the other forms that are more helpful for
our study of sin. The writer has already suggested that they
are related to the second root of ז ל ם . In these forms
we find a strong flavor of injustice -- for example, 21:47
states, "We will place the balances [with] justice on the
day of resurrection, and no one will be wronged (or treated
unjustly -- تُظْلَمُ)." When we look at the words with
which the various forms are contrasted, we also see the
stress on injustice. Thus the passive participle مَظْلُومٌ
is contrasted with بِالحَقِّ (with justice) (17:33).

Other antonyms bring out a more general use of the
forms -- particularly the verb ظَلَمَ and the active parti-
ciple ظَالِمٌ . For example, 27:11 speaks of one "who does
wrong (ظَلَمَ), then does good (حُسْناً) instead after
evil (سُوءٍ)." The contrasting of both ظَلَمَ and
سُوءٍ with حُسْناً suggests that they are roughly equiva-
lent. The form ظَالِمٌ is used antithetically with اتَّقوا
(19:72) and المُتَّقينَ (45:19) -- verbal and participial

forms describing those who <u>guard</u> <u>themselves</u> or are <u>dutiful</u>
and <u>pious</u>.

Other verses suggest that an element of unbelief may
also be associated with this word, for it is contrasted with
those who <u>believe</u> <u>and</u> <u>do</u> <u>good</u> <u>works</u> (' امَنوا وَعَمِلوا الصَّلِحـٰتِ)
(3:56). Furthermore, it is contrasted with المؤمنين (the
<u>believers</u>) alone in 17:82. These two verses suggest two
conclusions. First, ظالمون is used rather flexibly.
Secondly, the Qur'an makes such a close association between
<u>unbelief</u> and <u>wrongdoing</u> that the two may be used almost
interchangeably. This close association is demonstrated
both positively and negatively. On the one hand, امَنوا
وَعَمِلوا الصَّلِحـٰتِ is a common Qur'anic saying (e.g., 3:56 above).
On the other hand there are numerous verses which use
ظالمون and كافرون interchangeably of the same people
(e.g., 29:47, 49; 5:44-45). Other verses equate the two --
for example, 2:254: ". . . the <u>disbelievers</u> (الكـٰفِرون),
they are the <u>wrongdoers</u> (الظـٰلِمون)."

A man can commit ظلم in his relationship with God,
man, and himself. First, regarding man's relationship to
God, we read: "Surely, ascribing partners (الشِّرك)
[to God] is a <u>grievous</u> <u>wrong</u> (لَظُلمٌ عَظيمٌ)" (31:13).
Thus ظالمون is ظلم . Stated otherwise, the ظالمون
are those who: serve (يَعبُدون) besides God that which
He has not authorized (22:71), call (دعا) besides God
what can neither benefit nor harm one (10:106), or say they

are also gods (21:29). Likewise we read in 6:21: ". . .
who is <u>more</u> <u>unjust</u> (اَظْلَمُ) than he who forges (افْتَرَىٰ)
a lie (كَذِبًا) against God or falsely rejects (كَذَّبَ) His
signs. Surely the <u>wrongdoers</u> (الظَّالِمُونَ) will not be suc-
cessful." Secondly, regarding man's relationship to other
men we read: "Surely he has wronged thee (ظَلَمَكَ) in
demanding thy ewe [to add] to his own; and surely many part-
ners wrong (يَبْغِى) one another. . . ." (38:24).

We may conclude from these verses that ظلم in re-
lation to God and man is <u>withholding</u> or <u>being</u> <u>wanting</u> <u>in</u>
what justly belongs to them. Thus, though its meaning is
somewhat more general here, ظلم retains the flavor of
the secular use we noted in 18:33 where it is used of gardens
which did not <u>withhold</u> or <u>were</u> <u>not</u> <u>wanting</u> <u>in</u> anything.
However, whether one does ظلم in his relationship with
God or man, ultimately he does it against himself. Hence
we read in 7:177: "Evil (سَاءَ) as an example are the
people who reject (كَذَّبُوا) Our signs and <u>wrong</u> <u>them-</u>
<u>selves</u> (أَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ)." And concerning social
regulations about divorce we read: ". . . whoever goes
beyond the limits (يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ) of God, he indeed <u>wrongs</u>
<u>himself</u> (ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ)" (65:1; cf. 2:231).

Because of the importance of ظُلْم in the Qur'an a
number of studies have been made of its use. These include
a semantic study by Izutsu[1] and a more interpretive study

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[1]Pages 152-161.

he likewise will be one of the ظالمين (5:28-29). Thus to fight or kill in some situations is right (cf. 4:76, 89) but in other situations is wrong (cf. 4:76, 93).

Thirdly, we again see that certain types of retaliation are permitted, for the fact that one has been <u>wronged</u> (ظُلِمَ) is considered sufficient grounds for hurtful (بالسّوء) speech (cf. 4:148). Fourthly, knowledge leads to culpability, for 2:145 says: "If thou shouldst follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou wouldst indeed be of the ظالمين ." Finally, we receive further light on the problem of how a sovereign God is related to the sin of mankind. We read God not only does not guide (لا يَهدى) the ظالمين (6:145) but even leads them astray (يُضِلّ) (4:27). Yet, as the Sovereign God, He remains just. The Qur'an may ascribe أَمَكَرَ to Him but never ظَلَمَ . Further-more it expressly teaches that He does not <u>wrong</u> (ظَلَمَ) people (3:116, 160) and that, if one who <u>wrongs himself</u> (يَظلِمُ نَفسَه) asks forgiveness, he will find God forgiving, merciful (4:110).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the Introduction the present study is not
an attempt to present the total Qur'anic understanding of sin.
Nevertheless even the general words studied cannot be under-
stood in their real significance unless some consideration
is given to the context of sin in the Qur'anic Weltanschauung
or world view. A number of factors lead to this conclusion.
First, sin is a negative concept - hence can best be under-
stood in terms of what is negated. Secondly, the background
study of these words has shown that most of them are held in
common with other religions and languages; so their special
meaning in the Qur'an can only be discovered by understanding
its world view. Thirdly, the background study of the words
has also shown their great age and the resultant fact that
some of them have lost their root significance. Although
this conclusion is not surprising because of the fact that
the words were chosen for their general nature, it neverthe-
less further emphasizes the need to understand their conceptual
context in order to grasp their current usage. Fourthly,
(although the Qur'an uses sufficient precision in the choice
of words to warrant the arguments presented in this study)

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the general nature of the words studied leads to a somewhat
flexible usage and to an interrelation of concepts as will
be shown. Hence an understanding of the Qur'anic world view
is necessary for one to understand their significance.

This flexible use of words is illustrated by 27:11,
which contains the words: " . . . he who <u>does wrong</u> (ظَلَمَ)
then does <u>good</u> (حُسْنًا) instead of <u>evil</u> (سُوْءٍ) . . . ."
In this verse ظَلَمَ and سُوْءٍ are both contrasted with
حُسْنًا -- hence should be equivalent to each other. In
a general sense they are, but the preceding study has shown
that they emphasize different aspects of sin. Similarly
المُتَّقِينَ (the <u>dutiful</u> or <u>God-fearing</u>) is contrasted with
الغَوِينَ (the <u>deviators</u>) (26:90-91), الأَثِيم (the <u>sinful</u>
or <u>guilty</u>) (44:44,51), and الظَّالِمِينَ (the <u>wrongdoers</u> or
<u>unjust</u>) (45:19). Of still more significance is the contrast
between الظَّالِمُونَ (the <u>wrongdoers</u>) and المُؤْمِنُونَ (the <u>be</u>-
<u>lievers</u>) (17:82).[1] The interrelation of concepts, also
referred to in the fourth argument above, is illustrated by
اعْتَدَى (to <u>exceed the limit</u>). This word is associated with
the diverse concepts behind taboo or unlawfulness (حَرَّمَ)
(5:87), injustice or wrongdoing (ظلم) (5:107), guilt or
sin (إثم) (5:107), and sodomy (26:165-166) -- which is
described as filthiness or abomination (فَاحِشَة)(7:80).

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[1]Despite revealing a certain flexibility in the use
of words, these contrasts also suggest that the Qur'an does
not make a clear differentiation between the nature of sinners
and their actions or between faith and works.

In like manner اثم is related to لبئس (evil) (5:62)
and بهتانا (calumny) (4:112).

The arguments, which have been presented to show the need
for understanding sin in the context of a total world view,
are not intended to imply that Muhammad had consciously reasoned
out or analyzed his world view. He was a prophet not a system-
atic theologian, as the flexibility of his words and the inter-
relation of his concepts clearly show. However his use of the
words studied presupposes that he had at least a rough world
view (perhaps partly unconsciously). But, as has been shown,
it is necessary to grasp at least the salient features of this
to understand the meaning and significance of the words studied.[1]

When one turns to the Qur'anic world view as with the
Biblical,[2] he is struck by the essential contrast with the
ancient Near Eastern religions - though elements from the
latter may be seen from time to time. A cosmological order
is observed in the ancient religions where man, under a king,
sought to become integrated into the eternal cosmic cycle.
Furthermore, in Arabian polytheism, as in the ancient Canaanite
religions, man had to come to terms with all the spiritual
powers behind the universe. Conversely, in the Qur'an and in

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[1]The discussion of the pre-Islamic views of the world
and wrong, found in the Appendix, fits logically here. It is
an attempt to provide historical and theological focus for
the following Qur'anic analysis. Any references or allusions
in the Qur'anic analysis to non-Biblical pre-Islamic views are
documented in the Appendix.

[2]For reasons noted in the Appendix, the Biblical views
of the world and sin are developed here, along with the some-
what similar Qur'anic concepts, rather than there with the
other pre-Islamic views.

the Bible there is one sovereign God who will not share his
glory with any other. A king does not take part in a
periodic recreation of the world. Demons, and also _jinn_ in
the Qur'an, still find a small place; but the sovereign God
is in complete control. Man, rather than being integrated
with the cosmic order as in ancient religions, is fallen --
though in a somewhat different way in the Qur'an than in the
Bible.[1]

In this context of alienation from God, man is related
to God through a covenant, not a king as in the Ancient Near
East.[2] This covenant is not an agreement between two parties
on equal terms. Rather, it has the form of the Hittite
suzerainty treaties where, on the basis of the benevolent
deeds and care of the Hittite ruler, the vassal pledges

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[1]In contrast to the Biblical account, Adam in the Qur'an
merely "forgot" (نَسِيَ) God's command, and there was no in-
tention (عَزْمًا) to disobey (20:115). This difference might
be accounted for by the fact that Muhammad considered Adam a
prophet and felt as a result that he would not intentionally
disobey. A concomitant of the fall in the Bible is the fact
that man possesses an innate bias toward sin and thus needs
an inward transformation of his nature (e.g., Genesis 8:21;
Romans 1:18-32; 7:5-25; 12:2). In the Qur'an, 12:53 might
be interpreted as expressing this viewpoint; but the Qur'an
as a whole does not develop this doctrine.

[2]The relationship between the Biblical and Qur'anic
covenants has been noted by Arthur Jeffery, The Qur'an as
Scripture (New York, Russell F. Moore, 1952), pp. 39-41, and
by Robert Neelly Bellah, "Islamic Institutions," Lectures:
History of Religions 131 (Harvard U., Fall, 1961). The latter
emphasizes the primary importance of the Mosaic covenant in
the Qur'anic world view.

obedience to a list of stipulations set down by the superior.[1]
This structure is clearly seen in the most formative covenant
of the Old Testament - that made through Moses (Exodus 20).
Here, on the basis of God's care for Israel (vs. 2), she is
called upon to obey the stipulations of the Decalogue. Other
covenants are mentioned such as those with Noah (Genesis 9),
Abraham (Genesis 15:18), and David (Psalm 89:20-28, 34); but
in these God swears to keep certain promises. On the contrary,
the Mosaic covenant only imposes stipulations on man.

In the Qur'an a covenant (ميثاق) is made at the time
of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (33:7); but, unlike the
comparable Biblical accounts, the Qur'anic references do not
make a clear differentiation of form in the various occurrences.
Rather the Mosaic type appears to be found throughout. Not
only is Moses mentioned more than any other previous messenger;
but, more important, the descriptions of the covenant bear out
this conclusion. Where the contents are given, they include
a list of stipulations. In 2:83 specific reference is made
to the "covenant with the Children of Israel," and two command-
ments similar to those of the Decalogue are given: "You shall
serve none but God, and do good to parents." Like Exodus 20,
the Qur'an associates the covenant with God's favor (نعمة)
and man's obedience (أطاع) (5:7). Though perhaps forgotten

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[1]George E. Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and
the Ancient Near East /Reprinted from The Biblical Archaeolo-
gist, XVII (1954), pp. 26-46, 49-76)/ (Pittsburgh, The Biblical
Colloquium, 1955), pp. 32-34.

at times by adherents, the covenant in both the Bible (cf.
Exodus 20:1-2) and the Qur'an (cf. 5:7) is based on a personal
relationship, not an impersonal law. Unlike the Code of
Hamurabi where the king was commissioned by the god to prepare
a code, the covenant in the Bible and the Qur'an is described
as revealed, and a recipient such as Moses was merely a
messenger (رَسول) (3:80-83; 5:70).

The essential nature of sin in this world view of man
estranged from God but related through a covenant - will soon
be evident. But one should first note that the Qur'an, like
the Bible, does not have one comprehensive idea of sin. In
fact Muhammad, like Christ in the Synoptic Gospels, is not
quoted in the Qur'an as discussing sin in the abstract. The
emphasis is on sinners and specific sins. As has been ob-
served in the preceding word studies, the more general
words express various concepts. The cultic is seen as well
as the ethical and the revelational as well as the ethnic.
Nevertheless, the world view, as it has been discussed, allows
one to distinguish the basic orientation of the Qur'an.

The idea of a fall, or man estranged from God, gives a
new depth to the Biblical and Qur'anic views of sin. Men
were not judged now by such human values as brave and generous
action as in the "tribal humanism" of Arabia. Rather they were
judged by their relation to a holy God. Unlike the Egyptian

gods, who were little more than enlarged men and subject to
shortcomings, the God described by the Bible and the Qur'an
is transcendent. Thus the great confession of the Old Testa-
ment is "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 7:4),
and the first two commandments of the Mosaic covenant show
the violation of this to be sin. In like manner the Qur'an
states, "God bears witness that there is no god but He" (3:17),
and the unforgivable sin is شرك (4:48). The higher God
is elevated, the deeper sin is lowered.

However, the idea of the covenant, as it has been dis-
cussed above, brings out the most important understanding of
sin. In 2:83-84 and 3:80 the covenant is mentioned and its
contents elaborated. Then the following words, describing
man's relationship to the covenant, are used: تَوَلَّى (he
turns back), مُعرِضونَ (transgressors), فَيسقونَ (were
averse), عُدوان (exceeding the limits), إِنّم (sin),
تَكفُرونَ (you disbelieve). The implications of this
covenantal understanding of sin will now be developed. First,
as has been noted, the covenant in the Qur'an, as in the Bible,
asserts that it is revealed (3:80-83; 5:47). Thus the concept
of sin as disbelief (كفر) becomes prominent (e.g., 3:85).
In contrast to ancient Mesopotamian religion where this
revelational element of law is not found, the Qur'an, like
the Bible, develops a new aspect of sin. In 7:27 there is
a suggestion that the pagan Arabs believed their practices

divinely commanded, for they are portrayed as saying: "We found our fathers doing this and God (or the god) has so commanded us." However, this verse might rather show an attempt on the part of the pagans to give their traditions the status of revealed commands in opposition to the claim of revelation by Muhammad. In any event, the vagueness of religious ideas in pre-Islamic Arabia, particularly in the northern and central parts, was a contrast to the clear idea of revelation in the Qur'anic utterances. Thus sin as unbelief took on a new clarity.

A second implication of the covenantal idea was that there was a personal element behind the moral law. God had given the covenantal commands in the Bible (Exodus 20:1-2) and the Qur'an (5:7). Thus sin was not aberration from cosmic harmony as in ancient Egyptian religion but was the breaking of a relationship and disobedience or rebellion against God (e.g., 7:77; 10:15; 50:24; Isaiah 59:2, 13; Nehemiah 9:26). The Qur'an does not have a highly personal confession like Psalm 51:4: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." Nor does it develop the personal element to the extent found in Hosea (where sin against God is compared to marital unfaithfulness) or in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). But, through the covenant, the personal element still forms the basis of the law. Behind this opposition to God is proud self-assertion on the part of man

(e.g., 25:21; 38:74-75; 96:6-7; Psalm 10:2-6; 1 Timothy 3:6).
Man becomes anthropocentric, as in the "tribal humanism" of
pre-Islamic Arabia, rather than theocentric. And this is sin.

The third and most prominent implication of the covenant
is that it forms the basis of law, and sin then is transgression
or disobedience of that law (e.g., 2:229; 23:5; 66:6; Joshua
7:11; 1 Samuel 15:24; Nehemiah 9:26; 1 Timothy 1:9). This
development of divinely revealed law in the Qur'an is in sharp
contrast to the paganism of Arabia where men's actions were
based on common practice, not law. However, before one can
understand the nature of sin in relation to the law, it is
necessary to understand the nature of law in the Qur'an. Like
law in the Bible, it is not based on the Ideal or an abstract
idea of law as in ancient Greece. Rather, as has been noted
above, it is based on a relationship with God. His revealed
will as expressed in commands is the norm of action. Though
the preserved tablet (لَوحٍ مَحفوظٍ) in 85:22 (cf. 43:4) might
be interpreted as referring to a static conception of revela-
tion, and hence law, the progressive nature of the revealed
commands to meet new situations gives a more dynamic con-
ception of law in the Qur'an. One should also note that
though the Qur'an develops law rather than theology, it does
not make a clear differentiation between faith and works as
the Protestant Reformers did. The Qur'an constantly relates

the two (e.g., 18:88). In the covenant the two are joined.
Its nature as divine revelation calls forth faith, and its
content of commands calls forth obedient works. Thus in
the Qur'an "the disbelievers (الكفرون) are the wrongdoers
(الظلمون)" (2:254).

The emphasis that has been placed on the personal element
behind the law is not to deny that the increased legal influ-
ence would lead the Muslims to think of sin only in terms of
the breaking of a catalogue of laws. This process was repeat-
edly found among the Israelites and was fought by the prophets.
The ideal of the community in the Qur'an, as in the Old Testa-
ment, was a theocracy. Hence laws came to cover every area
of life. But, because all were believed divinely instituted,
there was not a clear distinction between ethical and cultic
transgressions. Both were a breach of God's law. Though
the concept of taboo found in paganism is significant enough
to warrant a separate discussion below, it might be noted at
this point that some of the old taboos (though partly re-
interpreted) became integrated with the all-inclusive legal
structure (e.g., 2:222, Leviticus 5:2-3). However, instead
of the divine wrath which broke forth automatically when
something taboo was violated in South Arabian religion,
guilt in the Qur'an came to be determined more by intention
than specific act (e.g., 2:173; 6:120; 17:33).

Nevertheless the Qur'an never spiritualizes the law to the extent of some of the Biblical writers -- particularly in the New Testament. Thus Christ considered the Pharisees as sinful because of their pride even though they strictly observed the external ordinances of the Jewish Law (Matthew 12:34; Luke 18:11-14). The New Testament writers did not consider the law unimportant (Matthew 5:17; John 14:15; Romans 7:7, 20). They rather considered it insufficient by itself (Matthew 5:20; Romans 3:20). It points out the sin, but man cannot meet its standards, for he has an innate bias toward sin which can only be corrected by a divine transformation of the life (cf. Genesis 8:21; Romans 1:18-32; 3:20; 17:14-25; 12:2). Thus when one seeks to determine the nature of sin by analyzing its relation to the law, he is led to a contrast between the Qur'anic view and the view which is increasingly developed in the Bible. Sin for both is transgression of the divine law. But in the Bible sin is increasingly interpreted more spiritually and less legally as the nature of the heart is given priority over the observance of law. Likewise the nature of sin is seen as irremediable (without a divine transformation of the inner life) as the Biblical doctrine is developed that law cannot control man's innate bias toward sin. The Qur'an has elements of both doctrines, Intent is more important than act (cf. 2:173), and 12:53[1]

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[1]"The soul is an inciter (لَأَمَّارَةٌ) to evil."

might be interpreted as teaching that man has a bias toward
sin. But the Qur'an does not develop these doctrines in the
way the Bible does. Thus law keeps its prominence with the
resultant implications for the nature of sin.

The significance of the analysis above for the preceding
word studies should now be evident. When the words were shown
to have lost enough of their root meaning to be just general
words for sin, they express the understanding of sin outlined
here. That is, they express that which is contrary to the
revealed will of God, which is seen most clearly in the
covenant with its various implications. In most cases the
idea of a violated law is prominent, but the personal element
lies behind this. Some aspect of non-conformity was seen to
underlie the first five root ideas considered: to miss the
mark in خطئ , to deviate in ضلّ and غوى , to pass beyond
the limit in طغى , and to pass by in عدو . Wherever this
root idea was still seen to be prominent, it referred to some
aspect of non-conformity to or transgression of the revealed
will of God with its covenantal implications. Verses which
have been discussed have shown that this revealed will is
seen in different forms. It is either seen in general terms
such as the "Way of God" or the "Way of Rectitude," or it is
thought of specifically as the signs or message of God, the
message of Muhammad, or the life of the Muslim community.
Thus, whenever any of the ideas of non-conformity or transgression

were seen to be prominent, they referred either to this
revealed will in general or to one of these elements of it.
Even the latter five groups of words, where the root idea of
non-conformity was not prominent, find their unity in the
covenantal view of the world. Thus the more general words
like ذنب and اثم refer to sin as outlined above. Even
the more specific حرم, despite its roots in the pagan system
of taboo, becomes integrated with the structure of covenantal
law, for it is used of whatever is prohibited -- even شرك
(7:32-33).

The use of حرم , however, does raise the problem of
the extent to which pagan ideas of taboo entered the Qur'an.
As has been noted, the concept of ḥrm in polytheism was more
concerned with the violation of what was unclean or sacred
than with a high moral or spiritual standard of conduct. On
the contrary the Qur'an is concerned with raising the standard
of conduct with its many laws. It even speaks against certain
pagan taboos concerning food (6:144-146). Nevertheless, as
in the Bible (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 11:1-12:8; 18:19; 20:18),
certain elements with their roots in the old taboo system are
carried on in the Qur'an. It likewise has its forbidden foods
(2:172; 5:3; 6:146; 16:115) and restrictions such as not
approaching women during menstruation (2:222). The Qur'an
here tends to parallel the Mosaic framework of thought, even
where its restrictions are different (e.g., 6:146-147), for

it has the same type of restrictions. Despite the fact that
the simplified restrictions of the Qur'an are similar to
those suggested by some of the early church leaders (Acts 15:
28-29), their emphasis in the Qur'an remains more important
(cf. Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 5:2-8, 15; Acts 10:9-18).

One should note, however, that these survivals from the
old taboo system are almost always transformed. Instead of
the emphasis being on some resident spiritual power, it is
now on the divine law of God. In like manner though the Ka'bah
was retained as a sacred place, it was by divine command (2:125),
and most other pagan places were not retained. Likewise the
belief in _jinn_ was retained; but, as noted by Ignaz Goldziher,
they were no longer a major element of the _Weltanschauung._[1]
The study of حرم has revealed a similar evolution in its
use. It has been traced back into the old taboo system. In
the Qur'an it is still used of that which was considered
unclean (2:173; 5:3), though, as noted, these unclean items
were now determined by the divinely revealed law. But the
use of حرم is not confined to survivals from the taboo
system, it is used of any prohibitions including نشرلع
(6:152; 7:32-33).

So far the main thrust of the argument has centered on
sin as volitional -- or sin thought of in terms of man willfully

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[1]_Abhandlungen_ zur _Arabischen_ _Philologie_ (Leiden, 1896),
p. 107.

violating covenantal law. Some words, however, treat sin as
an objective quantity. A factor involved is that these words
do not make a clear distinction between sin and guilt. Thus
5:29 uses اِثْم (the word with the strongest sense of guilt
of those studied) as follows: "I desire that you return /laden/
with my sin (i.e., your sin against me) and your sin (تَبُوءَ
بِإِثْمِى وَإِثْمِكَ)." The same conception of sin and guilt as an
objective quantity is seen in Isaiah 53:12 ("He bore the sin ....").
Likewise a similar view is expressed in 3:194: " . . . conceal
our evils (كَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا)" (cf. Psalm 32:1). Sin or guilt
as thus conceived harms the individual. In 2:219 اِثْم   is
used of wine and gambling and is contrasted with مَنَافِع
(benefit), thus implying the element of harm. Similarly 3:134
speaks of those who wrong themselves (ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ). Despite
these other aspects of sin, the volitional aspect remains the
dominant one of the Qur'an. Even the forms of سوء where
harm or the material effects of wrong are most evident (e.g.,
4:85) include such volitional elements as the rejection of the
divine revelation (cf. 30:10).

The argument so far has shown that the Qur'an did not add
new words for sin to the Arabian scene. What it did add to
paganism was a covenantal world view similar to that of the
Mosaic period (except for such elements as the need of a sacri-
fice for the atonement of sins).[1] This world view gave a new

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[1]Hence the concept of sin was not further deepened by a
belief that sin could only be atoned for by death.

significance to the familiar words. Instead of wrongdoing
in the social realm being associated with unwritten mores,
it was now associated with divinely revealed law. Where the
old social mores were still operative, their frame of refer-
ence was increasingly the divinely-guided community based on
faith rather than the old clan based on blood. Instead of
cultic wrongdoing being the violation of something mysteriously
taboo or sacred with automatic punishment, it now was associated
with a personal God. The conception of this God and the moral-
ity required by His law were both elevated with the resultant
deepening of the sense of sin expressed by the familiar words.
Yet there was another new element which affected the words.
It was the sense of urgency created by a belief in impending
judgment and doom. The backdrop for this awareness may have
been the social crises facing Arabia at the time, but Muhammad
saw in these what the Old Testament prophets had seen in their
time -- the judgment of God. And he called men to a new
awareness of sin that they might repent and submit to the
revealed will of God.

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The major results achieved by the word studies have been
incorporated into the preceding discussion of the context of
these words in the Qur'anic view of the world and sin. Here

an attempt will be made merely to list some of the results
achieved and to mention the extent of their originality.
First, there are the results which are only incidental to
the main thrust of the study but arose because they bore
upon the interpretation of certain words in specific contexts.
Of such a nature were the discussions on the involvement of
God in human sin which arose in connection with the analyses
of أَضَلَّ , أَغـوَى , مُعتَدِ , سُوْءٌ , and ظالِم .
The conclusion reached was that words for <u>leading astray</u> or
<u>causing to err</u> have the same meaning when God is the agent,
for God is involved in leading men astray and sealing hearts.
However they are generally portrayed as retributive acts,
and it is claimed that God does not wrong (ظلم) men.[1]
Furthermore this interpretation, that God leads astray, was
shown to be in keeping with that of as significant a theologian
as al-Ashari. Rahbar was cited as stressing the retributive
nature of أضل when used with God as the agent, but no pre-
vious study had treated and synthesized the results from the
other relevant words. And such modern Qur'anic translators
as M. M. 'Ali and A. Y. Ali still translate أضل as <u>leaves</u>
<u>in error</u> or <u>leaves astray</u> when God is the agent. Another con-
clusion of only incidental significance to the main thrust of
the study was that ذنب still meant <u>sin</u> when used of an

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[1]Pages 36-37, 44-46, 58-59, 71-72, 121.

action of Muhammad despite the contrary view of such modern
Muslims as M. M. 'Ali that Muhammad was sinless.[1] The conclu-
sion of the writer was also shown to be in agreement with
the interpretations of early commentators.

There are also some results which, while only incidental
to the main thrust of the study, have some implications for
the understanding of Qur'anic theology. These include the
observed inseparability of faith and works,[2] a fusion more
characteristic of James and Roman Catholic theology than
Paul and Protestant theology. As a result disbelief (كفر)
and wrongdoing (ظلم) have been seen as inseparable.
Another observation is that proud self-sufficiency on man's
part is seen to underly transgression.[3] This element of pride
is important in the Qur'an as in the Old Testament though not
central. Still another observation is that, unlike the reli-
gions of ancient Mesopotamia and Arabia where divine retribu-
tion was automatic following violations, the Qur'an makes a
relation between guilt and knowledge or intention.[4] However
one can commit wickedness (عدوه) and evil (سّوء)
without knowledge and can stray (ضَلّ) as a result of

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[1] pages 84-92.

[2] pages 2, 118.

[3] E.g., see طغى , p. 49.

[4] page 121; cf. 5:94; 20:115.

lack of understanding and forgetfulness.[1] Certain ones of
these theological observations have been made before,[2] but
their implications have not previously been integrated with
both philological study and the world view together.

Other results of the study, which are also secondary in
nature, pertain to the development and use of the words in
the Qur'an.[3] The first concerns the evolution of the meanings
of words from those that are physical to those that are moral.
It is natural that such a progression would be found in the
forms of عدو because evil is thought of both in physical
and moral terms.[4] However evidence of similar development
has been noted in other words, not only in their pre-Qur'anic
development, but also in the Qur'an itself. For example,
forms of عدو , طغى and هرم have been noted with secular
and religious connotations.[5] The evolution of thought is
quite clear in forms of عدو . The form عدا with the

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[1]Pages 27, 53, 72.

[2]E.g., on the association of disbelief and wrongdoing
see Izutsu, pp. 152-161; and on the association of faith and
works see Tor Andrae, Les Origines de l'Islam et le Christianisme,
trans. Jules Roche (Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955), p. 180.

[3]The analysis of فظّ has shown how the Qur'an not only
developed the meanings of words but in turn formed the back-
ground for their more precise definition in the post-Qur'anic
period (see p. 22n).

[4]Pages 64-66, 70, 74-75.

[5]Pages 47, 49, 52-53, 104-105.

accusative and عن means <u>to pass</u> <u>by</u> or <u>away</u> <u>from</u>.[1] The
root idea develops an ethical character in عُدوان which is
used of the <u>transgression</u> of an agreement or relationship by,
for example, a hostile act. As the breach becomes related to
the moral law, it develops the idea of <u>injustice</u>.[2] As the
Qur'anic law developed in Medina, words not only took on an
ethical character but also a legal one. Thus نَعَدّى was
used of <u>exceeding</u> <u>the</u> <u>limits</u> of what was <u>lawful</u> (يَحِلّ)
concerning divorce.[3] Likewise حَرّم develops from the
idea of taboo until it becomes a general word for prohibition
and is contrasted with أَحَلّ and used for anything that the
law prohibited including شِرك .[4]

Other words did not develop the sense of intrinsic wrong
but derived their ethical significance from their relationship
to the will of God. Hence harmful (سُوء) speech and kill-
ing and fighting in some situations are wrong (ظلم) but
in others are permissible, or even enjoined in the case of
the latter two.[5] Still other words were seen to be general
in some situations and specific in others. Of such a nature
was عُدوان, which the context required to be a general

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[1]pages 52-53.

[2]Page 55.

[3]Page 57.

[4]Pages 106-108.

[5]Pages 68, 120-121.

word for sin in one case but implied that it had the more
specific sense of injustice in another.[1] Finally the use of
the various forms of اِثْم shows that the Qur'anic vocabulary
does not distinguish clearly between the state of sinfulness
or guilt and the action of wrongdoing.[2] Certainly Arabic
lexicographers have been aware of the development and use of
many of the words studied. However the synthesis of these
ideas, particularly as they were influenced by the developing
Qur'anic law, is original.

The preceding results have all been of an incidental or
secondary nature, while the following results relate to the
primary intention of the study. The first of these was of
course the definition of all the relevant Qur'anic words which
developed out of the ten major roots chosen for study. It
is not necessary to repeat the discussion in the Introduction
concerning the inadequacies of the existing dictionaries and
word studies. There they were shown to be too brief and in
some cases inaccurate, and the inaccuracies were further noted
in the text.[3] Furthermore, though some studies, such as that
of Jefferey, have noted the value of Comparative Semitics in
determining the meanings of some words, they do not deal with

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[1]pages 54-55.

[2]page 95-100.

[3]E.g., pp. 67-68, 81, 96, 98, 99.

all the necessary words. Yet such a study was seen to be necessary for most of the words were observed in other languages, and the present study has suggested some relation between the previous monotheistic faiths and the Arabian monotheism which provided Muhammad with the vocabulary for the Qur'an. However, because Arabic is a cognate language to Syriac, Judeo-Aramaic, and Hebrew and as a result has parallel forms, Arab philologists have tended not to recognize the probable influence of the latter upon the vocabulary of Arabian monotheism. Furthermore, the most developed word studies, those of Gardner and Izutsu, did not trace the development of meaning in the pre-Islamic Arabic poetry when necessary. Yet without such study, one sometimes has difficulty determining either the existing meanings available to the writer or the relationship between the meanings of different forms from the same root.[1] Thus the first ten chapters were attempts to give definitions of the designated words in historical focus.

However, these studies revealed that the meaning of each word, together with its relationship to the others in the larger concept of sin, could only be determined by an analysis of the Qur'anic world view. A number of results led to this conclusion. First, the words revealed that there was no comprehensive idea of sin with the result that what unity they

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[1] E.g., p. 77.

possessed would have to be found in the world view. Secondly, the words were chosen for study because of their general nature with the result that they were observed to be used rather flexibly and with an interrelation of concepts. Again the world view was necessary for unity and significance. Thirdly, and most important, most of the words were observed to be held in common with other languages and religions. Hence whatever uniqueness they possessed was to be found in the world view. There is some originality in the discovery of the factors themselves which led to this conclusion. It was possibly the failure of recognizing the flexible use of words which led Gardner and the writers of the Qāmūs and the Tāj al-ʾArūs to make more precise definitions of words than valid.[1] There is also originality in the conclusion and its ultimate development, for Qur'anic scholars have not previously analysed the words for sin in the context of their world view.

The comparison of the Qur'anic view of the world and sin with those of the polytheistic religions of the area and with the Bible led to a number of results. The Qur'an was observed to possess elements of polytheism, seen, for example, in the use of هرم , but these were transformed in the new world view which corresponded roughly to that of the Mosaic period in the Bible rather than to the New Testament. Sin was observed to occasion man's estrangement from God, and the

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[1]pages 5, 67-68.

exclusive elevation of God resulted in a deepening of the
sense of sin in the old words. The covenant was seen as
central in the world view. Its revelational character led
to a new clarity and authority concerning what constituted
sin. The fact that God had issued it gave a sense of re-
bellion against God to any disobedience of the law. And
finally its laws determined what constituted sin. It was
law rather than social mores or some vague concept of taboo
which now governed the understanding of sin. And the general
words for sin which were studied gained their new significance
from this understanding. They now expressed non-conformity
to or transgression of the revealed will of God as expressed
in His covenantal law. As noted above, other men have ob-
served the place of the covenant in the Qur'an. But it has
been a contribution of this study to attempt to spell out
the implications of this insight as they relate to the
Qur'anic vocabulary for sin. But there has been still
another observation of this study which philologists usually
miss but which profoundly affects the significance of the
words used. It is the depth and urgency of the message. In
contrast to the Arabians before him, Muhammad saw the trans-
cendence of God and the imminence of doom; and as a result
his words conveyed the deep tragedy of sin.

APPENDIX

PRE-ISLAMIC VIEWS OF THE WORLD AND WRONG

The necessity of looking at the pre-Islamic context is
indicated by a number of factors. First, it gives the Qur'anic
view historical and theological focus by showing how it differed
from some conceptions and how it was similar to others.
Secondly, history and reason show that socio-religious move-
ments are never entirely new but must be based on at least
some existing ideas or practices in order to be comprehensible
to the recipients and to appeal to their religious feelings.
Thirdly, internal evidence confirms this reasoning, for the
words studied were seen to have been used in the Qur'an with-
out explanation and thereby imply that this religious vocabu-
lary was already well-known to the hearers. Fourthly, the
preceding study showed that some words were probably loan-
words. Hence it would be helpful to study the previous
relivious systems to see what foreign flavor, if any, has
influenced the Arabic words. This problem is heightened,
however, by the fact that almost all of the relevant languages
are cognate to Arabic with the result that the latter has
parallel roots. Finally, the Qur'anic materials demand this

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approach; for, as will be illustrated later, Muhammad expressly states his position in relation to that of the Jews, Christians, and pagans as he understood them. Hence understanding both what he agrees with and what he is reacting against becomes important in reconstructing his own position.

However, this section, together with the development of the Biblical views in the main text of the thesis, should not be considered an attempt to make a "source" analysis of the Qur'an even though material relevant to such a study will be treated. In the first place, even if such an analysis were possible, it would extend far beyond the space limitations of this study. Secondly, well-known works of varying value are already in existence.[1] Thirdly, definite conclusions are difficult because of such considerations as the following: information from the period is scanty; correspondence does not always imply dependency; almost all Jewish sacred books were also used by Christians; Muhammad's understanding of such Christian doctrines as the Trinity (5:116) reveal either little contact with orthodox Christians or contact with heretical groups; elements of literary dependence are inter-twined with original elements; and finally, such Qur'anic passages as 3:3 and 53:33-54 plus pre-Islamic poetry point to a previous Arabian monotheism which already contained

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[1]E.g., Richard Bell, The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment (Edinburgh, 1925); Charles C. Torrey, The Jewish Foundation of Islam (New York, 1933); and Andrae.

many of the foreign and indigenous elements found in the Qur'an.[1] Fourthly, a discussion of "sources" is not necessary for the purposes of this paper. All that is necessary is that the previous conceptions of sin in the context of their world views be outlined so that the Qur'anic conception might be given historical and theological focus -- thereby showing contrasts and similarities and their developments.

First we shall look briefly at the ancient Near Eastern religions.[2] Even though these religions predate Islam by many centuries -- in that they form the background of the Old Testament -- they warrant some consideration because some of the words studied have been traced back to this period and because they show polytheistic world views lying behind and in some way related to the polytheism of Arabia. These views of the world and sin are seen to be in sharp contrast to the

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[1]Cf. Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia," Harvard Theological Review, LV (1962), 269-280; W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Mecca (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 24-29, 158-164; Nicholson, pp. 139-140; Alfred Guillaume, trans. and ed., The Life of Muhammad (Translation of Ibn Hisham's recension of Ibn Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh; London, Oxford U.P., 1955), pp. 98-103; Charles Lyall, trans. and ed., Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry (New York, 1930), pp. 90, 92, 112, 119.

[2]The following outline of pre-Islamic views of the world and wrong will rest heavily on secondary sources because it is not an original contribution of this thesis but is merely added to lend historical and theological focus to the study.

views of the Bible and the Qur'an -- even though elements of the ancient views will be seen to crop up on occasion among followers of the later monotheistic faiths. Henri Frankfort states: "The ancients . . . experienced human life as part of a widely spreading network of connections which reached . . . into the hidden depths of nature and the powers that rule nature."[1] Because whatever was significant was embedded in the life of the cosmos, he points out that the king's function was to maintain the harmony of that integration. He notes further that, though this doctrine is valid for the entire ancient Near East and for many other regions, there are contrasts between the two centers of ancient civilization -- Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The Egyptians with their cosmological view of the world and society believed that the universe contained opposing forces in continual equilibrium. Thus evil was balanced by good. Ma'at was the cosmic force of harmony which, according to John A. Wilson,[2] comes closest to the moral connotation of our word "good." In this context the Egyptian viewed his misdeeds as aberrations, not as rebellion against a holy God.[3]

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[1]Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature (Chicago, Chicago U. P., 1948), p. 3.

[2]The Burden of Egypt (Chicago, Chicago U.P., 1951), p.48.

[3]Henri Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion (New York, Columbia U. P., 1948), pp. 73-74.

The good was not that which in the modern sense was ethically right or the evil that which was morally wrong. Rather the cosmic forces and natural processes were personified in human form and were thus subject to human shortcomings and instability, and "the good was what they willed and loved and the evil that which was contrary to their desires and the right ordering of things, and consequently displeasing to them."[1]

This idea of cosmic order with its rhythms was also found among the Mesopotamians, but it was not something given. It was rather something achieved by a continual integration of the many individual cosmic wills.[2] Man's position in the universe was comparable to that of a slave in a city-state, and his task was to submit to the hierarchy of authority.[3] In this context what seems praiseworthy to one's self may be contemptible before the god, and what seems bad to the individual may be good before one's god. Thus, though the Mesopotamian believed he lived under a divine imperative, he did not believe that this was an eternal law given by an absolutely just God. As a result their psalms refer to guilt but ignore a deep sense of sin (such as shown by David

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[1] Edwin Oliver James, Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East (London, Thames and Hudson, 1958), p. 183.

[2] Thorkild Jacobsen, "Mesopotamia," Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, ed. Henri Frankfort, et al. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1949), p. 139.

[3] Ibid., p. 163.

in Psalm 51). The guilt was recognized by its consequences, for the gods struck automatically when a divine decree was transgressed. However the individual might not know exactly what his offense had been.[1] It is true that the Mesopotamians had a law in the Code of Hammurabi, but this should not be considered a revealed law in the sense that the Law of Moses or the Qur'anic laws claim to be. As noted by George Ernest Wright,[2] the text makes clear that the king was only commissioned by the god to prepare the code; he did not receive it from the god in its present form.[3]

When we turn to paganism in Arabia, we face new problems, for one cannot always differentiate clearly between elements of paganism and the monotheism which was developing. As pointed out by Henri Lammens[4] and many others, the Arabians had contact with Jews and Christians. These religions undoubtedly had some relation to the Arabian monotheism, so we cannot always tell what ideas were indigenous and what were related to other religions. Thus we find a strong religious feeling and a sense of sin in the Dīwān of Labīd, but

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[1]Frankfort, Kingship, pp. 278-279.

[2]The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society (London, SCM Press, 1954), p. 30n.

[3]Theophile J. Meek, trans., "The Code of Hammurabi," Ancient Near Eastern Texts, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1955), pp. 163-180.

[4]L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hegire (Beirut, 1928), pp. 1-99.

Christianity was established in Najran among the tribe which he was addressing.[1] Hence any attempt to distinguish the source of these views too closely would be dangerous.

Another problem grows out of the scantiness of material -- particularly for North Arabia. This dirth of material is based not only on the limited writing prior to Islam but also on the fact that the Arabians themselves do·not appear to have had very clear ideas on the subject. The traditional cult was practiced, but anything approaching dogma certainly did not exist. There does not even seem to be a definite belief as to such questions as the relation of the Deity to sacred stones, trees and idols. If the heathen Arabians reflected on these subjects, they probably thought that these objects possessed a divine power which exercised a divine influence.[2]

The poetry, however, reveals that the pre-Islamic Arabians had a recognized moral code, but Nöldeke says that "the maintenance of morality was due much more to respect for traditional usages and public opinion than to fear of Divine wrath."[3] However, the pagan Arabian did think of God as "the Restrainer" (الوازع) from evil and the

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[1]Lyall, pp. 90-92 (Arabic text not available to the writer).

[2]Cf. Theodor Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, I, 665.

[3]Ibid., p. 673.

wrongdoer as "the enemy (or hated) of God" (عدوّ الله).[1]
Actually the Qur'an combines the two ideas of tradition
and the divine will in the minds of the pagans: "When they
commit an indecency they say, we found our fathers doing
this, and God (or the god) has so commanded us" (7:27).

When one turns from these general remarks about the pre-
Islamic Arabian view of religion and morality to a more specific
analysis, he observes a similarity and a difference between
the religions of Northern, Central, and Southern Arabia. A
brief look at the latter two will be sufficient for this study;
for material is more readily available concerning them, and
they contain most of the significant elements of similarity
and contrast with Islam. In Southern Arabia (Yemen and
Hadramawt) various powers were believed to work in nature,
for sorcery and magic were practiced as among all the Semites.
However, the most significant feature of their religion for
the present study was their developed temple worship. This
was characterized by the concept of ḥrm or inviolability,
which was discussed above in the background analysis of حرم .
The temple was called mḥrm because it was sacred and hence
inviolable by the profane or impure. Thus, in the world view
of the Southern Arabians there was a clear distinction between
the profane and the sacred and between the pure and the impure.

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[1]Julius Wellhausen, Reste Arabischen Heidentums (2nd. ed.,
Berlin, 1927), p. 224.

Women could not circle the temple in a state of impurity --
that is, at the time of their menses. People could not have
sexual relations during the pilgrimage. In order to approach
the temple one had to purify himself by washing. However,
the idea of inviolable divine protection was not confined to
the temple areas but also included funeral steles and tombs,
and those who violated them were subject to divine reprisal.
Likewise the concept of ḥrm or inviolability extended beyond
the temple and burial places. It was also taboo to approach
a woman in illicit (ḥrm) times, which included having relations
with her at the time of her menses or when she was in child-
bed.[1] The reason why "unclean" things are taboo like "holy"
things is because in primitive religion they were both believed
to have inherent supernatural powers or associations.[2]

Despite the previously-mentioned contention of Nöldeke,
that "maintenance of morality was due more to respect for
traditional usages and public opinion than to fear of Divine
wrath," the wrath of the god is a significant factor, at
least in the religion of the Southern Arabians. Thus the god
'Almaqah is portrayed as striking with pestilence and famine

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[1] Gonzague Ryckmans, Les Religions Arabes Préislamiques
(2nd. ed., Louvain, Bureaux du Muséon, 1951), pp. 5, 27-40, and
"La Confession Publique des Péchés en Arabie Méridionale
Préislamique," Le Muséon, LVIII (1945), pp. 1-14.

[2] W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (Re-
print of Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, 1889)(New
York, Meridian Books, 1956), pp. 446-448.

those who were tardy in paying what they had promised to the
temple. Furthermore, as noted in the religion of the ancient
Mesopotamians, this wrath of the god breaks forth automati-
cally, roused by the transgression itself and not by the
moral disposition of the one to whom it was imputed. In
this context an individual could become culpable by commit-
ting involuntary or unconscious wrongs or by sharing in group
responsibility even though he did not commit the wrong himself.[1]

When one turns to Central Arabia (Southern Hijaz and the
region to the north of Yemen), he can discern the outlines of
a world view even though the materials are only fragmentary.
The sky was the habitat of the gods; while the land and the
subterranean regions were haunted by _jinn_ - or spirits and
phantoms. In the Qur'an men and _jinn_ belong to two species
of the same genus of being and populate the land. Men are
corporal and the _jinn_ are spiritual, although terrestrial
and not supresensible in a strict sense. _Jinn_ are manifested
in the form of strange beings or animals and birds of various
kinds. They circulate by preference during the night and
haunt solitary places and ruins. And they are responsible
for the disorders which trouble the normal course of things
such as impotence in men, sterility in women, fevers, and
insanity. In this context there were many sorcerers and

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[1]Ryckmans, _Les Religions_, pp. 35, 37-38, and "La Con-
fession," pp. 8-14.

sorceresses, who tried to intervene in the laws of nature, and divination was used to interpret omens. However there was also a developed cult with priests who performed ritual functions and rendered the oracles of the god, while the faithful rendered homage to the divinity by apportioning to him offerings and sacrifices.[1]

Pre-Islamic Arabian poets such as Zuhair had a deep religious feeling and a sense of sin, but because of the nature of their poetry they will be considered in the section on Arabian monotheism. As with the South Arabian polytheists, what is most fruitful for the purposes of this study is an investigation of the concept of hrm in Central Arabia. These Arabians believed in sacred stones and trees as well as sanctuaries and often tombs. The sacred area in Mecca was called the Haram, and pilgrims were in a state of ihram -- that is in a sacred state. As in Southern Arabia women could not take part in feasts and sacrifices during the time of their menses, and sexual relations were prohibited in the environs of the temple. The latter restriction is not directed against immorality for it applies to spouses. Rather, once again a distinction is seen between the sacred and the profane and the pure and the impure. One should note however that what men did and what they abstained from doing was based on common practice rather than law.[2] In fact

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[1]Ryckmans, Les Religions, pp. 7, 9-12.

[2]Ibid., pp. 8, 12-13; Smith, pp. 142-143; 445-446.

what Watt calls "tribal humanism" was more effective by the
time of Muhammad than the archaic religion.[1] According to
this perspective, meaning in life was to be found in belong-
ing to a tribe which could boast of bravery and generosity
and in having some share in these. Thus the realization of
human excellence and the concomitant survival of the tribe
were the chief ends of life.

Besides the archaic religion and "tribal humanism," mono-
theism was also found in pre-Islamic Arabia. Historical
records point this out by their description of the ḥanīfs.[2]
But the internal evidence of the Qur'an also implies the fact,
for words and references with monotheistic content are used
without explanation and presuppose sufficient apperception
on the part of the hearers. The content of this monotheism
was vague,[3] and a great deal more study is necessary to deter-
mine its constituent elements. However an analysis of passages
such as 53:33-54 suggest that it included material from the
Old and New Testaments, from poets such as Zuhair, and from
native Arabian tradition.[4]

Not only does the vagueness of the pre-Islamic monotheism
militate against a clear understanding of its world view and

[1]Pages 24-25.

[2]Guillaume tr., Ibn Ishaq's Sīrat, pp. 98-104.

[3]Cf. Watt, pp. 158-161.

[4]Cf. Gibb, pp. 272-278.

concept of wrong, but so also does the fact that there is
some uncertainty as to the texts, the authors, and the
dates of much of the fragmentary material from the period.[1]
However, the fact that this monotheism was so strongly infused
with Biblical thought somewhat lessens the need for a separate
analysis. It will only be noted here that among the mono-
theists there was a belief that God created and sustained
the earth (cf. 29:61-63). Further, He had revealed Himself
and His will in the Tablets of Moses (cf. 53:36-56). In a
phrase reminiscent of Psalm 1:6, Labid describes right con-
duct as the way of the righteous.[2] And an-Nābigha says
that God requires his justice and his fidelity (أَنَّ آللَّهَ إِلَّا
عَدْلَهُ وَوَفَاءُ).[3] In this context, sin would obviously include
turning from God's revelation (as it did in the time of
Muhammad -- cf. 29:61; 53:33) or committing injustice or
not being faithful to God. Zuhair implies that this sin
need not be an overt action but may be hidden in the soul
when he says:

فَلَا تَكْتُمُنَّ آللَّهَ مَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ   لِيَخْفَى وَمَهْمَا يُكْتَمِ آللَّهَ يَعْلَمِ

You do not hide from God what is in your souls
To be hid; whatever one hides from God, He knows.

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[1] Cf. Andrae, p. 39.

[2] Lyall, p. 90.

[3] دواوين الشعراء الكاهليين ed. W. Ahlwardt (London, 1870)
ص ٢٠، ط ٣٢.

[4] Ibid. ، ص ٩٥، ط ٢٦.

Before one turns his attention from pre-Islamic Arabia, however, he should note that, despite the presence of many Biblical borrowings or parallels, there is a melancholy or pessimistic fatalism which runs through the poetry. Thus 'Imrū 'l-Qais writes:

وَهٰذَا آلْمَوْتُ يَسْلُبُنِي شَبَابِي   رَاَى عِزْمِ آلثَّرَى وَشَجَتْ عُرُوقِى

وَيُلْحِقْنِى وَسِيكًا بِآلثُّرَابِ   ١وَنَفْسِى سَوْفَ يَسْلُبُنِي وَجِرْمِى

My veins are interrelated with the vein of the earth.
    This death robs me of my youth.
It will rob me of my body and my soul,
    And soon will join me to the dust.

That Jewish and Christian ideas were present in Arabia at the time of Muhammad has already been noted. These ideas found expression both in the vague Arabian monotheism which has been mentioned and in Jewish and Christian communities -- though most of the latter may not have been orthodox. The writer has attempted to compare and contrast the Judeo-Christian world view and concepts of sin -- particularly as found in the Old and New Testaments -- with their Qur'anic counterparts in the one discussion in the main text, rather than giving a separate treatment to the Judeo-Christian materials here. The reason for this is first of all that good summaries of the Biblical views are readily accessible.[2] Secondly, there

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[1] _Ibid._، ص ١٢٠، ط ٤-٥.

[2] E.g., Wright, _op. cit._, pp. 35-62, and _The Old Testament against its Environment_ (London, SCM Press, 1950); Floyd V. Filson, _The New Testament against its Environment_ (London, SCM, 1950); or any of the standard texts on Biblical Theology such as Walter Eichrodt, _Theology of the Old Testament_, Vol. I, tr. John A. Baker (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 374-381.

are so many parallels between the views of the Qur'an and
Bible -- particularly those of the Old Testament -- that
separate discussions would involve unnecessary duplication.
This conclusion, that the perspectives of the Bible and
Qur'an have much in common, is borne out not only by the
internal evidence of the views presented but also by the
express claim of Muhammad. Thus in 5:48 we read that the
Book revealed to Muhammad is a confirmation and guardian
of the previous revelation of the Torah and Gospel, though
the verse also recognizes some differences between them.
In contrast Muhammad expressly repudiates polytheism (e.g.,
4:48). During Muhammad's early ministry Islam assimilated
not only elements of the belief of the Jews but also some
of their practices such as fasting and the qibla. Later,
after they had rejected Muhammad's message, he changed the
month for fasting and the direction of the qibla but he re-
tained the practices. Thus, even deliberate alterations
such as these did not affect the Jewish framework of thought
and practice.

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