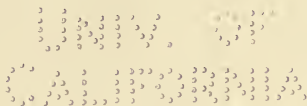


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SIN AND GRACE IN THE BIBLICAL
NARRATIVES REHEARSED IN THE KORAN

JAMES OSCAR BOYD

Introduction: Explanation of the subject; summary of the material; peculiarities of the Koran affecting this material:

All uttered by Allah; all addressed to an individual; all cast in the oratorical mold.

Sin and Grace:

- 1) In the narrative of the fall:

Sin of Adam and Eve: its nature and consequences; its explanation in the fall of Satan and his tempting of them.

Grace of God to sinful man: central grace is revelation; its mediation to Adam left vague; other gracious gifts to mankind.

- 2) In the progress of individual wickedness and of divine direction:

Conception of progressive revelation: soundness of its framework; in what sense it is an evangel; its universality and perspicuity; the relation of these qualities to a limited election.

Conception of sin in the individual: root religious rather than ethical; sins against God, apostle and gospel; transgression of the moral law.

Conclusion: Suitability of kindred themes for further comparison.

(NOTE.—Quotations from the Koran are rendered from the Arabic edition of Fluegel, Leipsic, 1841.)

SIN AND GRACE IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVES REHEARSED IN THE KORAN

Much has been written by many scholars on the subject of Mohammed's indebtedness to the Scriptures. In particular his use of the Biblical narratives as the basis of much of his preaching in the Koran has awakened a variety of comment, and from authors varying all the way from the professional Arabist to the missionary apologist. Moreover, since 1833, when Abraham Geiger published his study¹ entitled *What Did Mohammed Adopt from Judaism?* there has been a growing literature on the genetic relation sustained by Judaism to Islâm, including on the one side an investigation of the Moslem commentators, and on the other side a comparison of all the cognate material in the Jewish midrash-literature. That this last-named comparison, however, is not even yet felt to be fairly completed, is indicated by the present appearance of a new work² on *The Haggadic Elements in the Narrative Portion of the Koran*.

Similarly, it may be felt that, with all that has hitherto been said, and well said, concerning Mohammed's use of the Old Testament characters and events, the last word has not yet been written on even this familiar subject. There is yet lacking, for example, a systematic grouping of the material, the usual arrangement of which has been the chronological order—surely a principle as foreign as possible to Mohammed's unchronological mind! Let what has been said, then, suffice as an apology for the choice of the subject of this paper, which will not pretend to say that "last word", but will

¹ *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* by Abraham Geiger, Bonn, 1833.

² *Die haggadischen Elemente im erzählenden Teil des Koran*, by Dr. Israel Schapiro; Heft I covers the life of Joseph.

seek, within well-defined limits, to contribute something to this comparison, which is so fruitful for the correct understanding of Mohammed and his mission.

What those limits are, is indicated in the title. By it the inquiry is limited, first, to those parts of the Koran which are indebted to the Bible for their subject-matter; second, within these, to that which deals with persons, places and events,—the narrative-material; and third, within this again, to the treatment of the themes of sin and grace, which play so large a part in the purpose of the story-teller both in the Bible and in the Koran.

In order to have the facts before us, in their broad outlines, it will be necessary, first, to state as briefly as possible what Biblical narratives are reflected in the Koran.

Of the first eleven chapters of Genesis much is represented: the stories of creation, including matter from both the first and the second chapters; the fall; the brothers' quarrel; Enoch (?); Noah and the flood; the dispersion of the nations; and the family of Terah.

With Abraham we reach a character whose career is expanded in both the Old Testament and the Koran. His separation from Terah, the ratification of the covenant in chapter xv., the birth of Ishmael and of Isaac, the episode of Lot, and the sacrifice of Isaac,—to all these portions of Abraham's biography reference is made by Mohammed with greater or less fullness.

As Isaac appears only in connection with Abraham, so Jacob, apart from a couple of bare allusions to him, appears only as a character in the story of Joseph. But there is a wealth of detail in the treatment of Joseph's life, most of which is covered in the long Sûra devoted thereto.

With Exodus Moses is reached, and there is no other Biblical character so thoroughly appropriated by the Koran as is Moses. The story begins with the oppression by Pharaoh and the slaying of the male children. Moses' rescue from the water by the wife (*sic*) of Pharaoh, his adoption, and the part his own mother and sister play in the drama, are all reflected in the Koranic story. The two attempts to help his Hebrew brethren, the consequent flight to Midian, the meeting with

Jethro's daughters, and his marriage with one of them and service of their father as shepherd, the account of the burning bush with the divine call, the accrediting miracles and the commission of Aaron as spokesman:—all this leads up, in Mohammed's account as in Exodus, to the narrative of the plagues. From the contest with the Egyptian magicians to the departure from Egypt by night, most of the story of the plagues is recorded or alluded to. The Egyptian pursuit, the crossing of the sea dry-shod and drowning of the enemy, the manna and quails, the arrival and covenant at Sinai, God's rendezvous with Moses on the mount, Aaron's lieutenancy together with the whole episode of the golden calf, Moses' wrath, intercession and publication of the tables of the Law—this fills in with tolerable completeness the outline of the historical portions of Exodus. The remainder of Moses' career, as depicted in portions of Numbers and Deuteronomy, is represented in the Koran by allusions to the smitten rock, the murmuring of the Israelites, their refusal and consequent prohibition to enter the "holy land", the revolt of Korah, and—what is purely legal in the Old Testament, but is transformed into a story by Mohammed,—the red heifer of Numbers xix., combined with the heifer mentioned in Deuteronomy xxi.

There is no indication that the contents of the books of Joshua and Judges were known to Mohammed, save one reference to Gideon's odd test of his followers by drinking, and this is erroneously ascribed to Saul. But with Samuel and the choice of Saul we again reach stories for which the Koran finds a place. The earlier part of the struggle with the Philistines is probably represented by an allusion to the ark as "coming" to Israel. David's victory over Goliath is expressly mentioned. David's skill in music and his authorship of the Psalms, his sin and repentance, together with the substance of Nathan's parable and the restoration of David to divine favor:—these constitute all of the remainder of Samuel that finds a place in the Moslem Scriptures.

Solomon plays a larger rôle. In the Koran, as in other oriental literature, his judgments, his splendor, his buildings, his wisdom and knowledge of nature, and the visit to him of the Queen of Sheba, have appealed to the author's imagina-

tion. Elijah's contest with the Baal-worshippers is the only other incident in the books of Kings to receive Mohammed's attention. Elisha is barely named. Ezra is mentioned, merely to rebuke the Jews for saying of him that he is the Son of God.

Among the narratives embedded in the poetical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, those which have appealed to Mohammed are the story of Job and the story of Jonah. Job's afflictions, prayers, patience, deliverance, and acceptance with God, all find a place in the few verses that refer to him. And of Jonah we learn from the Koran that he was a prophet, how he withdrew from God's mission, of the casting of the lots on the ship, his being swallowed by the fish (he is known to Mohammed as "He of the fish"), his prayer from its belly, his deliverance, the growth of the gourd, Jonah's preaching and its success.

Turning now to the New Testament, we find none of its narratives reproduced, save a perverted version of the angelic announcement to Zacharias, his dumbness for a season, and the birth and naming of John; and, mingled with the events in this family, the similar events in the kindred family of Jesus: the annunciation, the miraculous conception and the birth of our Lord. But through the crassest anachronism this cycle of sacred story is united with the cycles of Moses-stories and Samuel-stories, by the confusion of Mary (Maryam) with Miriam the sister of Moses and Aaron, and the confusion of Anna the (traditional) mother of Mary with Hannah the mother of Samuel. So that it is hardly too much to say that for Mohammed there are no New Testament narratives; such as he knows are amalgamated with those of the Old Testament. For references to Jesus' life and death amount to little more than allusions; as, for instance, to his miracles, his mission to Israel, his institution of the Supper, his promise of the Paraclete (Ahmed, i. e. Mohammed), his attitude toward the Law, and the Jews' hostility to him resulting in their crucifying—not Jesus but a man who resembled him, Jesus himself being translated without tasting of death. Our Lord's Apostles are barely mentioned, under the style *Ḥawârî*,—a word borrowed from the language of the Abyssinian Church, since the Arabic equivalent *Rasûl* is Mohammed's favorite ap-

pellation of himself and his predecessors as the "Sent" of God.

Such being the material available for our inquiry, we proceed first to note certain characteristic formal differences, that have had the effect of molding this material, taken as a whole, into different forms from those it exhibits in the Bible.

The first of these formal peculiarities of the Koran is that every word of it is supposed to be uttered by Allâh himself. This oracular style is not foreign to the Bible, but it is there confined for the most part to limited portions of the prophetic discourse and to the laws. By no means all of the matter introduced or completed with a "saith Jehovah" is so molded by the prophets as to read like a divine utterance to them or, through their lips, to the people. In fact there is so constant a variation between the first and the third persons in such passages, when referring to the revealing deity, that it amounts to what may be termed a consistent inconsistency, and only logical analysis can resolve the blended personality of the revelatory subject. We should err in using of an Isaiah so harsh an expression as has been used of Mohammed,³ that "he falls out of his rôle". Mohammed's claims are quite different from those of the Hebrew prophets. The dictation, or rather recitation (Koran = reading aloud) of a portion (*âya*) from a heavenly book by the archangel Gabriel to the listening Mohammed, is quite unlike what the prophets of Israel have to say of their revelations, even when they insist most strongly upon their objectivity, certainty and divinity.

If this is true of the Biblical prophecies, how much greater still is the contrast between the utter freedom of the Biblical narratives and the stiffness of the Koran! It is obvious that these must undergo a great change in being recast in accordance with the conception that God is the speaker. The facts and actors must be viewed as from the seventh heaven. History must be conceived *sub specie aeternitatis*.

And it must be said to the credit of Mohammed that this exalted level is remarkably well maintained. The hold of this

³ E. g. by H. P. Smith in *The Bible and Islam*, p. 66, in referring specially to *Sûra* xi. 37.

book upon Islâm through all the centuries and lands is undoubtedly due to its power to appeal to the religious imagination, to transport its readers into the same frame of mind, to enable men of narrow views to see themselves and one another as transient, trivial and helpless creatures of an eternal, almighty, self-sufficient Lord. Even the woeful lapses from this high God-centered ideal of the Koran have not been able to destroy its power of lofty appeal, because Mohammed succeeded in so interweaving his own personality and interests with those of deity, that even selfish ends, the temporary makeshifts of a time-server, and the weaknesses of a sinful man are made to appear in the rosy light of a divine interest and commendation.

Yet Allâh in the rôle of a story-teller has necessarily something absurd about it. "We are going to relate to thee the best of stories in our revealing to thee this recital",⁴—such is the introduction to the long narrative of Joseph's life; and at its close the divine story-teller warns his human *râwî* that he is "not to demand pay for"⁵ reciting the story. And at the conclusion of the story of Moses in *Sûra* xxviii. Allâh is actually made to boast of his superior facilities in obtaining the information implied in the teller of these tales, seeing that he was present and active in those scenes: "Thou wast not present on the Westward Side⁶ when we communicated the Commandment unto Moses, nor wast thou among the witnesses . . . nor wast thou dwelling among the people of Midian rehearsing our revelations unto them; yet we have sent (thee) as (our) messenger".⁷

The second pervasive difference in the form of these narratives arises from their being addressed primarily to an individual. Like all the rest of the Koran, they are intended for the ears of many—for Mohammed's own tribe of Koreish in the earlier *Sûras*, later for various groups of men, Jews, Christians, "Helpers", "Emigrants", all men of Arabian speech, or even all the "sons of Adam";—but only through Mohammed's mediation. Whenever there is a "ye" of direct

⁴ *Sûra* xii. 3.

⁵ *Viz.*, of Sinai.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷ *Sûra* xxviii. 44 f.

address, there is an actual or an implied "say thou" preceding it, and much of the Koran would have to be printed between quotation-marks, if the devices of modern printing were employed. Often also Allâh talks to Mohammed about those who are to be influenced by the revelation, referring to them in the third person.

When this peculiarity of the Mohammedan revelation in general is considered in connection with the narratives in particular, its effect upon them is seen to be striking. There is such a complication in the machinery of expression as to cumber the whole, and the machinery threatens at any moment to break down. There are wheels within wheels. The actual human author (Mohammed) has to represent the supposed author (Allâh) as telling the real author to tell others about how somebody else did this or that, or—worse still—said this or that. When these characters in the story are to answer their interlocutor, or when former words of Allâh addressed to any of the parties in the story are to be rehearsed, the confusion becomes unparalleled. It is no wonder then that Mohammed occasionally "falls out of his rôle", particularly when we consider that to his lively imagination he is but painting himself in the character of the ancient "prophet" of his story, and his own hearers in the character of those ancient auditors. Even when the author cannot be charged with so serious a fault, it is often difficult or impossible to say of this or that sentence whether it was meant to be a part of the story, or to interrupt it with an appropriate comment (addressed to Mohammed).⁸

A third formal peculiarity that differentiates the Koran, even in its narrative-portions, from the Bible, is the exclusively oral or oratorical mold of the Koran. Whatever may be thought of the origin of the Old Testament stories, they are not clothed, as we read them, in a literary style that can be described as oratorical. How they would sound if they were so constructed, may be seen from such passages as the first four chapters of Deuteronomy, or the last chapter of Joshua. Comparison of these and similar passages with the Koran

⁸ So, e. g., *Sûra* xl. 37.

affords an instructive parallel; for it reveals how, to the orator, his rôle affects not only the manner of his narration, but his selection of material. He is always a man of his day. To convince and move his audience is his one aim. What therefore he draws from the past in narrative must be so obviously instructive and decisive for the hearers, that they cannot fail to recognize the lesson for the present conveyed by that past. It is this, more than any other consideration, that has determined Mohammed's attitude towards the Biblical narratives, in selecting, recasting and applying them.

With these preliminary observations upon the general character of the Koranic narratives we are ready to pass to the examination of that specific phase of them which has to do with their treatment, first, of human sin, and secondly, of divine grace. No doubt these two subjects, sin and grace, are important chapters in any theology of the Koran in general. But we are to be concerned, not with sin and grace in the Moslem theology which has been developed out of the Koran supplemented by traditions, but with sin and grace as they appear in the narratives drawn from the Bible.⁹ We accordingly observe, first, Mohammed's treatment of the narrative of the fall.¹⁰

The sin of the protoplasts consisted in their eating of the fruit of a tree in paradise that is described as a "tree of eternity".¹¹ To this act they are led by Satan. He uses

⁹ To attempt an historical treatment of Mohammed's teaching, within these limits, would no doubt be theoretically desirable; but it is rendered impracticable by the obscurity which veils the order of its delivery, and the consequent disagreement of scholars in constructing historical schemes of doctrinal development.

¹⁰ This is told in *Sûras* ii., vii., xv., xvii., xx. and xxxviii., and alluded to in *Sûras* xviii. and xxxiv.

¹¹ xx. 118. With this phrase is combined the parallel expression, "and a kingdom that fadeth not away". Moreover, Satan declares the reason for the divine prohibition to be, to prevent Adam and his wife from "becoming angels or becoming of the immortals". Yet though the tree is elsewhere indicated only by the pronoun "this", its character is assimilated to the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in *Sûra* vii., where both Satan's "whispering" to the human pair and their consequent partaking of the fruit are connected with the discovery to them of their nakedness.

deceit to accomplish his purpose. The deceit consists in awakening in them ambition to "become angels or of the immortals", in suggesting a hostile purpose in God, who prevents them by his prohibition from attaining this, in denying with an oath that he is the enemy to them that God has represented him to be, and of whom he has warned them, and in asserting his own benevolent intentions.¹²

The immediate consequences of this act of "forgetfulness", "irresoluteness" and "disobedience"¹³ are the "discovery" of what had been "hidden" from them, namely their "nakedness",¹⁴ so that they "set about sewing leaves of the garden to put upon themselves"; the divine "summons" and reminder of his prohibition and warning; the recognition of their having "done a wrong to themselves", which would involve their "destruction" or "loss"; and their banishment from the garden.¹⁵

The more general and remote consequences of the transgression embrace the "Benî Âdam" as well as the transgressors themselves in a state that is characterized by mutual hostility,¹⁶ by misery,¹⁷ and by constant exposure to the moral assaults of Satan,¹⁸ with their inevitable issue for all those who succumb,—"the Fire" of "Gehennem" forever.¹⁹

The terms used in the compass of these narratives to describe the operations of Satan upon mankind are: to cause to slip or stumble,²⁰ to delude²¹ (literally, to let down by delusion), to allure (apparently by making evil appear attractive), to seduce or cause to err²² (the same act as Satan at-

¹² vii. 19, 21, xx. 115, 118.

¹³ xx. 114, 119. "Revolt" is perhaps better than "disobedience".

¹⁴ Apparently by stripping off something that could be called *libâs*, vii. 26. Cf. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. i, p. 74.

¹⁵ It is difficult to harmonize *Sûra* ii. 28 with other indications of the original home of the race. We read there that God said to the angels, before the creation of man, "Behold, we are about to place on the earth a representative (*chalifa*)". But in the account of the fall we read repeatedly, "Get you down" (viz. from paradise to earth), and the humorous remark is often made that Mohammed believed in a literal fall.

¹⁶ ii. 34, vii. 23, xx. 121.

¹⁷ xx. 115, 122 f.

¹⁸ vii. 26, cf. 15 f.

¹⁹ ii. 37, vii. 17, xv. 43, xvii. 64, etc.

²⁰ ii. 34.

²¹ vii. 21.

²² xv. 39, xxxviii. 83.

tributes to God as the cause of his own fall), to take complete mastery over,²³ to affright,²⁴ to attack as with an army.²⁵

The story of Satan's fall does not belong to the Biblical narrative itself, but it has been brought by Mohammed, following his Jewish teachers, into such close connection with the story of the fall of man, that the one cannot be studied without reference to the other. In the Koran the beginning of evil is coincident with the creation of man and associated therewith. A great drama is unfolded in which God, the angels and Adam play their respective parts, with the result of introducing a moral distinction among the angels. For the angels are represented at first as acquiescing reverently in the divine wisdom, though inscrutable to them, when God proposes to make man, and in the divine ordinance in giving knowledge to his creatures or withholding it from them, when God endows man with ability to name the animals—an ability which the angels do not possess. But there arises subsequently the first moral schism, when God commands them to prostrate themselves before Adam. Iblis (*Διάβολος*) refuses.²⁶ The evil phases of this refusal are not left to the reader's imagination. "Pride" is repeatedly specified as its inward accompaniment and cause. "Denial", that is to say, refusal to recognize the right of God to his creatures' faith, gratitude and fealty, is ascribed to Iblis; he becomes the first "kāfir". His hostility to men is explicitly traced to his purpose thereby to revenge himself on God for having "seduced" him. This malignity of purpose is matched by a confidence in the power of evil (or, self-confidence), which enables him to predict that most of mankind will become his followers, "unthankful" to God,²⁷—an opinion, by the way, that seems to coincide with

²³ xvii. 64.

²⁴ xvii. 66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ In *Sûra* xviii. 48 Iblis is called "one of the Ginn". Sale (*The Koran with Explanatory Notes*) has this note on the passage (p. 243): "Hence some [Arabic commentators] imagine the *genii* are a species of angels: others suppose the devil to have been originally a *genius*, which was the occasion of his rebellion, and call him the *father of the genii*, whom he begat after his fall; it being a constant opinion among the Mohammedans, that the angels are impeccable, and do not propagate their species."

²⁷ vii. 16.

the preconceived opinion of man entertained by the angels before his creation.²⁸

Such being the idea entertained by Mohammed concerning the introduction of evil, into the human race and into the created universe, respectively, as derived from his stories of creation and the fall, the attitude of God towards this revolt of his creatures becomes the subject of primary interest. What degree of grace is ascribed to Allâh in determining the penal consequences of their sin? How is that grace to be mediated to man? What is to determine its application?

The great, central grace of God revealed in these narratives consists in guidance through revelation. Consistently with the metaphor of life as a path, the Koran extols the divine grace in providing for those who have erred from the true path a "direction" from heaven, that enables them to follow the right and safe course to a fortunate goal. Just as the Koran itself is the one great miracle of Islâm, so its conception of the redemption of fallen man resolves itself ultimately into revelation to him: a revelation that is not only a discriminating test, exculpating those who receive it and irremediably incriminating those who refuse it, but also in itself a grace, an unmerited proof and product of the divine *rahma*, or pitying love.²⁹ The first token of God's mercy upon Adam is that Adam "found words from his Lord":³⁰ evidently, words by means of which he could approach God in penitence and petition. For the consequence of this gift is said to be that "God turned unto him", that is, forgave him; "for," adds Mohammed, "he is inclined to turn (forgiving) and merciful."³¹

The mediation of this divine revelation is no uncertain matter in the case of mankind in its later generations, as will appear subsequently. But in the case of Adam and Eve it is a subject that is left vague, perhaps intentionally vague. The verb "found", by which Mohammed expresses the way Adam

²⁸ ii. 28.

²⁹ ii. 36, xx. 121.

³⁰ ii. 35.

³¹ It should be noted that the Arabic uses the same word for man's repentance and God's forgiveness: each party "turns" or "returns" to the other; cf. with such passages as Joel ii. 12-14.

got those "words from his Lord", is the vaguest possible word for getting: it is getting in the sense of lighting upon something that one meets in his path. It may be that Mohammed intended thereby to avoid the confusion of these "words" with the "direction" promised in response to that penitence of Adam which he voiced in those very "words". Yet the whole subject of an Adamic revelation remains obscure in the Koran, and the ideas of its author can only be inferred from the kindred notions of his predecessors and successors in the genealogy of haggadic speculation.

But besides this central act of divine grace in the "direction" of erring man, the narrative of the fall exhibits other manifestations of God's grace to his sinful creatures. Even Satan, for the mere asking and without so much as a hint of penitence, obtains reprieve till the day of resurrection. Adam himself, though banished from the garden, has a settled abiding-place and sufficient provision assigned him and his progeny. This gift is not granted, however, without repentance and supplication on the part of Adam and Eve. When they have acknowledged their offence and begged for forgiveness and mercy, they obtain these tokens of the divine clemency. At the same time it should be observed that all these gracious gifts, of which a habitation, food, drink, shade, clothing and adornments are enumerated, are called by the same word, *âyât*, by which Mohammed designates all God's signs and revelations, including the Koran itself. The central grace is thus never lost sight of in the details, which derive their worth, it appears, from their power to reveal to man the knowledge of God and his will.

We may best discuss the relation which the grace of God thus manifested to Adam and his posterity taken as a whole sustains to the salvation of the individual man, when we have passed—as we shall at once pass—to those later stages of revelation in which individuals, other than the first pair, are concerned. Of that first pair we can only say that it is evidently the belief of the author of the Koran that in their case the grace of God was "not in vain", but that they became sharers in eternal felicity.

The second section of our inquiry will therefore be an attempt to trace the grace of God in his progressive revelations to mankind through the apostles he has raised up in historical succession, and, together with this, the relation of the individual man to the revelation of his day, the sin of man which necessitated a revelation, and the sin which was involved in its rejection.

However ill we may think of Mohammed's notions of history, chronology and geography, we cannot withhold a certain measure of admiration for a man of his opportunities and attainments who has succeeded in so grasping the essential facts in the progress of divine revelation as to be able to write: "Verily God has chosen Adam and Noah and the people of Abraham and the people of Imrân above all creatures, a genealogical succession one from another." The context of this verse shows that by Imrân is here meant the father of the Virgin Mary, so that, even if Mohammed is to be charged with a confusion of Mary with Miriam the sister of Moses, he can at the worst be understood to include Moses as well as Jesus in the expression "the people of Imrân".³² Adam, Noah, Abraham and Jesus, with Moses perhaps included,—this is surely a list that shows in its author the ability to construct a sound framework for his philosophy of religious history.

In confirmation of this conclusion we observe that it is precisely these figures that possess the chief interest for Mohammed among the personages of the past. Joseph and Solomon, no doubt, are dignified by considerable space in the Koran devoted to their careers: yet these are not treated in the same way. And as a matter of fact it is precisely those five names of the above list, that, with Mohammed's name, make up for Moslem writers the series of the innovating or abrogating apostles of God. Among the very numerous "prophets" of history there have been some hundreds of "apostles"; and among these latter, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed have received revelations that mark the beginning of a new era in the progress of religion,

³² vi. 30. Imrân really represents Amram, Ex. vi. 20, &c.

by substituting for the revelation that sufficed for the previous age a fuller and better knowledge of God, while each in turn, save the last, pointed forward to that better revealer who should follow him.

This ladder of revelation, with Mohammed as its topmost rung, is at the same time the only history of redemption that Mohammed knows. This explains what is otherwise incomprehensible,—why these apostles of God can be called bearers of good tidings and their message a gospel.³³ What they say to their contemporaries is a condemnation of idolatry and immorality: such is God's message through them to their age. Yet the fact of what they are—God's representatives and spokesmen—and the fact of the message, fearful as is its content, constitute them evangelists. If this seems a gloomy conception of divine grace, it must be remembered that at least it is consonant with the general tenor of Islâm. Prophecy without the Promise is no more of a travesty of the Biblical revelation, than is Salvation without Saviour or Holy Spirit a travesty of the Biblical redemption.

Beside these great epoch-making apostles of history there is assumed a crowd of lesser lights, as already remarked, each of whom is sent to illumine his own restricted area of space and time. In fact, it is an essential part of this Mohammedan conception of the grace of God, that no single homogeneous portion of the human race has lacked its own peculiar spokesman for God. This is reiterated with emphasis in the Koran. So for example Sûra xxxv, verse 22: "Verily we have sent thee with the truth as an evangelist and a warner; and there is no people among whom there has not been a warner."³⁴ The principle on which mankind is distributed into these chronological and geographical divisions for the purposes of revelation is the principle of language. Just as Mohammed insists that the perspicuity of his Koran for all men of Arabic speech has an accrediting power superior to any hypothetical revelation in an unknown, ancient or heavenly tongue, so also the Koran attributes to each divine messenger a perspicuous

³³ *Bashîr*, and *bushrâ*.

³⁴ Grimme (*Mohammed*, vol. ii. p. 76, note 1) compares also xiii. 8 and x. 48.

revelation, so that his contemporaries who speak his own language may understand his message, and be "without excuse". Mohammed regards his own mission as the antitype of the missions of all his predecessors, as where he makes God say: "(Thou art) mercy³⁵ from thy Lord, to warn a people unto whom before thee no warner has come; that perchance they may be admonished, and, when misfortune befalls them for what their hands have already wrought, they may not say, 'O our Lord, if thou hadst sent an apostle unto us, we would have followed thy revelations and come to be of the number of the believers' ".³⁶

The attitude of the individual man toward this general gracious guidance from God is also represented as decisive for his own sharing in the blessings of divine grace. "Upon them that follow my direction there shall come no fear, neither shall they come to grief; but such as deny and dispute our revelations, these shall be inmates of the Fire,—they shall abide forever therein."³⁷ This would seem to suggest a classification of grace into "common grace" and "efficacious grace", at least analogous to the familiar classification of Christian theology. But the matter is not so simple as it appears. Whatever may be averred of Moslem theology, it is impossible to say of the Koran, still more of these portions that we are considering, that Mohammed ever gives a decisive and final answer to the question, Does the ultimate ground of salvation lie in God or in man? His utterances vary with his point of view at the moment.

The Koran has its Romans ix. 18 in Sûra xxix, verse 20: "He punishes whom he will, and upon whom he will he has mercy." It has its Jno. x. 28 in Sûra xv, verse 42, where Allâh says to Iblis: "As for my servants, thou shalt have no power over them, but only over him that follows thee, of those who are seduced." Yet the Koran has too its repeated iterations of the principle that man's faith or unbelief in God's revelation is the decisive element in salvation. When Mohammed asks himself, Whence comes this faith? he does not

³⁵ A *rahma*, that is, an evidence and gift of the divine *rahma*.

³⁶ xxviii. 46 f.

³⁷ ii. 36 f.

hesitate to answer, From God. But when he asks again, Why does God give faith to this one and withhold it from that one? he answers, Because God sees that this one possesses and that one lacks a certain disposition toward God's revelation, which he terms a "turning" or "inclining"³⁸ towards God, or, more commonly, a "resignation" or "commitment"³⁹ to God. Indeed the latter term, *islâm*, has given its name to his religion, and we feel that when we have reached it we must have reached the foundation-fact in Mohammedan soteriology.

Yet even the elephant must have a tortoise on which to stand. Once more the question rises, Whence comes this favorable disposition toward God and his word? and again Mohammed does not hesitate to reply, From God. God gives to whom he pleases that disposition which determines that his guidance shall be efficacious; and conversely, in those "whom he has produced for Gehennem", God atrophies the organs for apprehending his revelation, "that they may not understand it".⁴⁰ There seems to be no good reason for supposing that this chain of questions and answers need stop just here. Rather we feel confident that if Mohammed were to be asked, Why then does God thus blind and deafen these, while inclining those to observe and hearken? he would again point us to some subtle differences in the creatures themselves, yet would acknowledge that those differences in turn could only be ascribed to God's sovereign act. The fact is, as above stated, that his attitude towards grace and merit varies with his changing point of view.⁴¹

What now, finally, is the nature of that sin in man, which

³⁸ *nâba*, ivth stem.

³⁹ *salama*, ivth stem.

⁴⁰ vii. 178, xvii. 48.

⁴¹ Every attempt to formulate Mohammed's notion of the relation of individual responsibility to original sin, of a universal revelation to a limited election, must reckon with the view adopted in *Sûra* vii. 171 f, —a silly rabbinical fiction designed to show how men "are without excuse, because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks". (Rom. i. 20 f). For in that passage Mohammed makes God say to him, "When thy Lord took from the sons of Adam out of their backs their posterity, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying) 'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'Yea, we testify:' lest ye should say on the resurrection-day, 'We have only been indifferent about

at once necessitates the sending of these "warners" to condemn it, and finds its culmination in the rejection of their ministry?

A writer who has attempted to formulate an answer to this question⁴² states it thus: "Man's injustice to man (*aḡlama*) and idolatry (*aṭḡâ*) are the names of those by-paths on which ere long the whole race came to walk; the former was the root, the latter the fruit that it produced." For proof he offers this passage in evidence: "Verily man practises idolatry,—because he sees that he (by injustice) has become rich".⁴³ But apart from the question of whether the words and the idea of the original are correctly rendered by this translation, it is doubtful how stringent a proof it affords of the assertion that injustice is the root and idolatry the fruit. For whatever may be true of the Koran as a whole,⁴⁴—not to say, of Moslem theology,—the impression made upon the reader of those narratives of the Koran with which we are concerned, is rather that if either one or the other is fundamental, it is the sins against religion that are fundamental and the offences against ethical standards that are attributable thereto. Just as in Romans Paul exhibits the ethical consequences of religious degeneration, instead of the perverting effect of unrighteousness upon the saving knowledge of God, so also in these portions of the Koran which represent Mohammed's philosophy of religious history, the Arabian prophet gives prominence and apparently causal priority to the sins that represent perversions of true religion rather than of sound ethics.

In the catalogue of offences against God charged against the men of the Bible to whom the prophets of the Bible are said to have brought divine reprehension and warning, we find the following specifications.

this matter,' or lest ye should say, 'Our fathers before us did indeed have other gods, and we are their offspring after them; wilt thou then destroy us for what those triflers did?'"

⁴² Grimme, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴³ xcvi, 6, 7.

⁴⁴ In the Koran, however, "believe" is always the *prius* of "perform good works"; and in Moslem theology religion as *imân*, "faith", precedes religion as *dîn*, "religious observance" (including duties to both God and man).

First, the great sin of sins, which the Koran calls *shirk*, i. e. "association" or "partnership",⁴⁵ the attribution to other deities of the glory and worship belonging of right to Allāh alone. It is the sin that is the antithetic of the divine jealousy. With this sin are charged specifically the contemporaries of Noah, the nation of Israel, and in particular the Israelites of Elijah's day in worshipping Baal.⁴⁶ Akin to this in the mind of Mohammed as in the Decalogue is the sin of idolatry in the narrower, etymological sense of that word. The worship of images is especially attributed to the men of Abraham's time and family; much also is made of the calf-worship at Sinai. The word *gahiliyya*, "ignorance", which has become the technical Moslem term for the pre-Mohammedan era in Arabia, is a quality ascribed to ancient Israel also,⁴⁷ and clearly as a means of designating their *penchant* for idolatry. The figurative equivalent for the same sinful state of mind is "blindness".⁴⁸ To Abraham's folk is even attributed the service of Satan; the former terms were negative, this one is positive, and finds its complement in the attitude towards God that these servants of Satan share with Satan himself. The same pride, the same "denial" or unbelief and ingratitude, and the same malignity, which we found ascribed to Satan in the story of the fall are all explicitly ascribed to these sinners in his service, notably to the men of Noah's age, to Pharaoh and to Israel.

This attitude of men towards God determines in the first place their attitude towards his *chalifa*, his representative sent to them. And we find Mohammed attributing to the sinners of the Bible, from Noah's day to Christ's, not only jealousy and disdain of their apostles, but outspoken accusations against them, accusations of lying, sorcery and imposture, with insolence and mockery of them. And, worst of all, like the wicked husbandmen in our Lord's parable of the vineyard, they are charged with actual persecution, plotting, and full intent to murder. It is contrary to Mohammed's conviction and policy alike, to allow that one of these representatives of God

⁴⁵ E. g. vi. 80 f, 88, &c.

⁴⁶ xxxvii. 125.

⁴⁷ vii. 134.

⁴⁸ vii. 62.

was ever actually murdered; God always steps in and, being the better "strategist", thwarts their plots, disappoints their rage, and vindicates and rescues his servant.⁴⁹

The climax, then, of human sin against a God whose very warnings are mercies and whose messengers are therefore evangelists, is only reached by those to whom have already come these messages and who have turned from them. Indifference or neglect is the least flagrant of these crimes of *lèse-majesté*. Refusal to receive the gospel is for Mohammed, as for Christ himself, the supreme indictment against those who have rejected Christ's message.⁵⁰ Other and more overt manifestations of the same inward state of heart—a hard, perverse or impious heart—are covenant-breaking and gain-saying; and finally,—depth of human depravity!—a blatant bravado, such as that of Pharaoh, who would himself mount up to the God of Moses, or that of the enemies of Noah, who said of the threatened flood, "Bring upon us that wherewith thou art threatening us, if thou art speaking the truth!"⁵¹

Turning now to transgressions of the moral law imposed on his creatures by him who, according to Mohammed as according to the Scriptures, requires men both "to believe and to perform good works", we find the following sins charged against those to whom the ancient apostles of God brought their warnings.

Murder, which began with Cain, is to be imputed to such as have the inward intent as well as those who do the actual deed. And even when Moses kills the Egyptian to help his Hebrew kinsman, Mohammed feels it necessary to attribute to Moses the intention merely to strike and not to kill, but to Satan the fatal result of the blow; even so Moses must be represented as acknowledging immediately the wrong he has

⁴⁹ Mohammed's adoption of the Docetic expedient of rescuing Jesus from an actual death upon the cross is well known; it is in connection with his exposition of this view that he uses the remarkable language referred to in the text: *Sûra* iii. 47, "They (the Jews) played a trick (upon Jesus), and Allâh played a trick; and Allâh—he is the best of tricksters."

⁵⁰ Cf. *Jno.* xv. 22, xvi. 9, with *Sûra* v. 115.

⁵¹ xi. 34.

thereby done to his own soul and craving the divine forgiveness.⁵²

Offences against chastity are particularly associated in these narratives with the stories of Lot and of Joseph. It is significant that not only the grosser forms of this sin are condemned, but even those violations of the divine law which are inward and latent, quite in the spirit of Matthew v. 28; for after Joseph has been cleared of all suspicion through the confession of his mistress, he adds: "I do not wholly clear myself; verily the soul is imperious in demanding what is foul, unless my Lord grant grace."⁵³

Theft is of course reprehended; but also injustice, oppression, threats, persecution, and even the greed that begets these.

Just as that counterpart of the Decalogue in *Sûra* xvii.⁵⁴ includes among the prohibitions given at Sinai a further command to "perform the covenant; verily the covenant is an object of (divine) inquisition",⁵⁵ so also we find the sins of faithlessness and ingratitude among the sins specified as having brought down the just judgment of God upon those who of old were guilty of them. And other phases also of man's failure in his duty to man that might easily be passed over by even a strict moralist are not forgotten, in the sketching of these classical examples for the world of Islâm of human wickedness and its repudiation by God: namely, pride, insolence, contempt, scorn, and—a right Puritan touch!—"light behaviour".⁵⁶

Such an inquiry as the one we have thus pursued naturally suggests the methodical treatment of all the other subjects which, like sin and grace, are handled in this material common to Bible and Koran. The mutual relations of God and the believer and of God and the apostle, the ideal of the ancient "Moslem",—for in spite of Mohammed's repeated claim to the title of the "first Moslem", he represents Islâm as older

⁵² xxviii. 14 f.

⁵³ xii. 53.

⁵⁴ Verses 23-39; in shorter form also in *Sûra* vi. 152 f.

⁵⁵ Verse 36.

⁵⁶ xliii. 54, of Pharaoh and his people.

than Israel, as old as the race,—worship, prayer, providence, theophany and angelic mediation;—all these themes might well furnish the basis for further comparison of this interesting material common to the sacred books of three religions. Such comparison can only aid in our comprehension of both the power and the limitations of the Koran and of that strange person who produced it.