depend on constant teaching. We have, however, even in this succeeded, and the term *vumbi lia Zambi* is now something recognized as characteristic of Himself and the basis and ground of all His dealings with humanity.

Sin

For 'sin' as a root principle in us, the word used from the beginning of the work has been *shili*. This word in the minds of the people seems to be the basic motive power for all evil that a man may commit. It has a very slight tinge of the meaning of 'malice' but this quite obviously as a secondary or perhaps explanatory meaning. Then mission natives started using it (maybe led by missionaries) as a euphemism for 'adultery', and this led one or two to doubt its propriety for 'sin', even though we have precisely the same usage in English. Our main trouble lies in the fact that there is no word for a concrete act from this same root, and therefore we have to use a different word for the act, *mulonga*. There is an abstract word for the act of committing a *mulonga (kuvulumuna mulonga)* which is *uvulumunyi*, but this refers rather to the state or condition of one because he has been guilty of such an act and not to any principle within which led him to do it. Much as we would have liked to have, as in most other languages they have, the same word for 'sin' as a principle and 'sin' as an act, the native seems to assume that *mulonga* springs from and is the fruit of *shili* in the heart and therefore we have used that with the backing of almost fifty years of usage.

A Study of the Word "Sin"

With its correlatives *Sinner, Err, Fault, Guilt, Iniquity, Offence, Malefactor, Mischief, Perverse, Transgress, Trespass, Wicked, Wrong.*

Kenneth Grayston

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Part 1 - Old Testament

Despite the variety of these words which denote something central in the religious consciousness, they are inadequate to express the corresponding Hebrew terms. Nor has the English Bible any consistent way of translating one Hebrew word or group of words by one English word. The Hebrew usages may roughly be classed according to derivation thus: (1) Deviation from the right way: *h t'*, to miss a goal or way; e.g. among the Benjamite warriors there were men 'who could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not *miss*' (Judges 20 : 16). Hence sin is failing to do something in relation to man or God. The same idea underlies *'awon* (iniquity), *shagah* (err), and *'wl* (wicked). A group of seven words is represented by 'perverse', meaning any deviation,

distortion, crookedness of what is properly upright. In the Wisdom literature, perversity becomes a consciously arrogant attitude which inevitably leads to strife and disharmony. Its opposite is 'the fear of the Lord', i.e. the true religious life. (2) Words denoting the changed status of the agent: *rasha'*, used of the guilty as opposed to the innocent; and *'asham* (guilt, guilt-offering). Leviticus 4 : 1-6 : 7 sets out the consequences for anyone who sins unwittingly in any of God's commanded things. Neither the sin-offering (the root is *h t'*) nor the guilt-offering is known before the exile, and they are not clearly distinguished; though the guilt-offering seems to apply to offences against God or man that could be estimated and so recovered by compensation (e.g. a ram as sacrifice, restitution and one-fifth the value as penalty). The sin here in question is not deliberate disobedience of moral laws but ritual and ceremonial mistakes, and defilements by inadvertence and ignorance. It follows from Hebrew psychology that a man is responsible for all his actions, for every action has its effect on the soul of the person who acts. This state of 'answerableness' for something done is expressed by *'asham;* and unless some atonement is made it poisons the soul from within. Unless it is laid down that a man bears his own sin, 'guilt' spreads and infects the group to which he belongs. (3) Rebellion against a superior or unfaithfulness to an agreement (*pasha'*—inadequately translated 'trespass', 'transgress'). 'Israel rebelled against the House of David' (I Kings 12 : 19) gives the secular sense, and 'Thy first father sinned, and thy interpreters have rebelled against me' (Isaiah 43 : 27) the religious sense. Compare Isaiah 1 : 2, 'sons have I brought up and reared, and they have rebelled against me'. The force of this word is shown by Job 34 : 37—'he addeth rebellion (*pesha'*) unto his sin (*hatta'th*)'. Together with associated terms it describes sin as a personal, voluntary act; rebellion against a superior, not withdrawal from co-operation with an equal. (4) A wide group of words characterizing sin as badness, violence, destructiveness, trouble, worthlessness, vanity, folly, and senselessness.

No difference of any importance is discoverable in the Old Testament use of the three commonest roots, *h t', 'awon, pesha'*, i.e. behind the diversity of derivation there is a fundamental, unified conception of sin characterized in part as failure, in part as irregularity or crookedness, in part as infringement of the psychic totality of the soul. In the old Israelite view of life, good actions are normal and must produce good results. Sinful actions are abnormal, preying on the positive forces of life. The righteous soul is upright; the sinful soul is crooked. Sin means dissolution of the soul, and the soul entirely sinful is no longer reckoned a human soul.

All life is upheld by covenant (*q.v.*); and the essence of sin is breach of covenant, e.g. injuring one's brother: 'forgive... the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil' (Genesis 50 : 17; note how widely this extends in Amos 1 : 6, 9, 11). Every violation of marriage is sin, because taking another man's wife violates a covenant (e.g. Genesis 39 : 9, 'how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'). So also is incest as violating one's own covenant

(Leviticus 20); the deed at Sodom as violating hospitality towards strangers (Genesis 19); and not at once giving a hired labourer the wages due to him by covenant (Deuteronomy 24 : 15). Every deed which injures the community is sin: thus Hezekiah offended by failing in his vassal duties to Sennacherib (II Kings 18 : 14). In Genesis 43 : 9 (R.V. margin) Judah, who has taken responsibility for Benjamin, says to Israel: 'if I bring him not unto thee... then I shall have sinned against thee for ever'. Thus one man may be a sinner in relation to another, by virtue of the obligation between them; and *rasha'* often means the man who is wrong in a particular case. In Exodus 23 : 1 assistance to the wicked is forbidden (i.e. to the guilty party in a lawsuit), for that is equivalent to 'justifying' him (Exodus 23 : 7, Deuteronomy 25 : 1, Proverbs 17 : 15, Isaiah 5 : 23). If the wicked man does not fulfil the duties of fellowship, the righteous man who maintains them does not get his due from the community. The violator of the covenant becomes the debtor of the righteous who can claim recompense and vengeance.

But sin also means that the soul itself is diseased, to a degree determined by the consideration: did the action arise in the centre of the will, or did it merely lie on the circumference? A man may sin unknowingly (Balaam sinned *because* he did not know that God's angel stood before him, Numbers 22 : 34), and none can avoid such actions (*shagag*, to err); but the infringement of rights can be healed by restitution and the mental hurt that threatens the sinner by sacrifice. But more deeply seated sin cannot be so removed: it spreads like a poison, issues in violence and mischief (Psalm 55 : 9-11), is allied with the curse (Deuteronomy 28 : 15ff.) as righteousness is allied with the blessing, and finally must come out and destroy the doer. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace...to the wicked' (Isaiah 57 : 20f.). The frequent descriptions of sinners reflect this point of view; though in the Psalms 'sinners' represent a definite religious type which lacks the fundamental devotion of the righteous to the Law. The term is applied as a result not of individual sinful acts but of an attitude comprising a man's life as a whole.

The sinner counteracts the positive forces which uphold the community and have their root in God. All sin, not only cultic transgression and direct apostasy, is violation of God because he is the soul of every Israelite covenant (II Samuel 12 : 13). As a result of the work of the eighth-century prophets, sin centred more and more on disobedience and rebellion against God, and gave strength to belief in God's imminent intervention in judgment upon sinners. 'But I will not be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made' (Isaiah 57 : 16). God is merciful (Micah 7 : 18ff.) and keeps his covenant with the fathers; and the soul dominated by consciousness of sin trusts in him and is maintained in life. Confession of sin (Psalm 32 : 5, 38 : 18), not only in the cult but face to face with God (Psalm 51), wins forgiveness and so the soul is restored to wholeness; 'thou has in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou has cast all my sins behind thy back' (Isaiah 38 : 17).