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Three Pairs of Men in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Qur'an  
THOMAS J. O'SHAUGHNESSY, S.J.

In their comment on the first prelude of St. Ignatius's Meditation on Three Classes of Men, Longridge and Puhl note that "three classes" literally means "three pairs" (*tres binarios de hombres*). Rickaby translates by the equivalent "three couples."<sup>1</sup> In modern Spanish *binario* is an adjective like the English "binary," of two elements or units. But in the sixteenth century it still kept the medieval Latin sense of "pair." St. Thomas Aquinas had so used it to signify "a pair of witnesses."<sup>2</sup>

Ignatius may have used "pairs" naturally to suggest in this meditation the condition of suspense between alternatives that is implied in the very title, which sets forth as the aim of the exercise "to choose that which is better" (149).<sup>3</sup> In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in fact the French *binnaire* meant a specific kind of choice — that to be made in order to solve a moral problem or case of conscience.<sup>4</sup> Since the first known text of the

1. W.H. Longridge. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, 4th ed. (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 109; Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Westminster: Newman, 1954), p. 181 (Puhl's translation is cited throughout except where otherwise noted); and Joseph Rickaby, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1923), p. 117.

2. The Latin *binarius* is from *bini* which comes in turn from *bis* meaning "twice," "in two ways." *Bis* is a variant of *duis* (as *bellum* is of *duellum*) or *dis*, the inseparable particle "asunder," "in two," used in compounds like *discedo* and *discerno*. See Ronald E. Latham, ed., *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 50; and *Summa Theologica*, II-IIae, q. 70, a. 2, ad corp.: "... et ideo requiritur binarius testium."

3. Numbers given after citations from the *Spiritual Exercises* are the marginal numbers of the text published by Marietti, Turin, 1928 and edited by Fr. Arturo Codina, the author of the critical edition in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu: Exercitia Spiritualia et eorum Directoria* (Madrid; 1919).

4. Mario Gioia, *Gli scritti di Ignazio di Loyola* (Torino: Unione Tipografico Torinese, 1967), p. 130, n.

*Exercises* to include the meditation on three classes is the Parisian *versio prima* of 1534, it is now generally assumed that Ignatius added this meditation to the Manresan text in Paris, in view of the needs of certain ecclesiastics of that city.<sup>5</sup> Binarios was a classroom term in common use among the dialecticians and moralists of the time to designate indefinite persons.<sup>6</sup> It thus expressed the nuances of choice and indefinite applicability in an exercise designed to prepare the retreatant to choose a state of life or a program of reform. Several other reasons for the use of binarios have been advanced, but they are either improbable or reducible to those already given.<sup>7</sup>

#### BINARIOS IN THE TEXT OF THE *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES*

It is noteworthy that binarios or classes is used as an indefinite noun both in the title of the meditation (149) and in the first prelude or history (150): “. . . let there be made a meditation on three classes of men” and “. . . the history, which is concerning three classes of men.”<sup>8</sup> Fr. Roothaan thinks that the use of indefinite pairs would be an attempt on Ignatius’s part to preserve anonymity – “lest any particular person should seem to be referred to.”<sup>9</sup>

The first and third preludes of the three classes set the whole exercise into a background of salvation: “They all wish to save their souls” (*quieren todos salvarse*, 150), and “to choose what is more for . . . the salvation of my soul” (*eligir lo que mas a . . . salud de mi ánima sea*, 152). At first sight it seems strange that lack of right intention or mere attachment to money honestly acquired should be regarded as endangering one’s salvation. Longridge answers the difficulty by referring to the purpose of the exercise

5. See Ignacio Iparraguirre, ed., *Obras Completas de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1952), pp. 137-38; H. Pinard de la Boullaye, *Les étapes de redaction des Exercices de S. Ignace* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950), pp. 28-29 and nn.; and Arturo Codina, *Los orígenes de los Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio de Loyola* (Barcelona: Balmes, 1926), pp. 102-3.

6. Iparraguirre, *Obras Completas*, pp. 137 and 188, n.

7. Luis Gonzalez and Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Ejercicios Espirituales: Comentario Pastoral* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1965), pp. 284-85, summarize and evaluate some of the more important ones.

8. Longridge, *Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 108-9, as a translation of “. . . se haga meditacion de tres binarios” and “. . . la historia, la qual es de tres binarios de hombres.”

9. Ioannes Roothaan, in *Thesaurus Spiritualis Societatis Jesu* (Brugis: Desclee, 1928), p. 120, n. 64.

– to prepare the retreatant to choose a state of life or a program of reform. A necessary condition for a good choice is impartiality or liberty of spirit, that is, detachment from any affection not subordinated to the end for which man was created. Failure to make a good choice risks missing one's true vocation. This in turn may endanger one's salvation.<sup>10</sup>

The wording of the second prelude, "to behold myself standing in the presence of God our Lord and of all His saints" (151), gives the exercise a solemnity that recalls the fourth rule for making a good choice: "Let me picture myself . . . standing in the presence of my judge on the last day" (187).<sup>11</sup> "Standing in the presence of God" suggests a final judgment on one's conduct in choosing. The introduction of such a scene befits the seriousness of a decision which will affect one's eternal salvation. It also aims to motivate the retreatant to do what is most pleasing to God and so will best dispose him to receive the revelation of His will.<sup>12</sup>

Fr. Codina regards the sixteenth annotation (16) also as the result of St. Ignatius's dealings with the academicians of Paris. He therefore dates it and the meditation on three classes from about the same time. Both are seen as additions to the Manresan text and are aimed at freeing the retreatant from disordered attachments that might impede a good choice. Both passages also have a number of parallelisms that display this aim. Annotation sixteen says

if the soul chance to be inordinately attached to anything. . . if one's attachment leads him to seek . . . an office or a benefice, not for the . . . glory of God . . . nor . . . the spiritual welfare of souls, but for his own personal gain . . . he should strive to rouse a desire for the contrary . . . (16).

The three classes also wish to "rid themselves of the burden arising from the attachment to the sum acquired" (150). The sixteenth annotation advises such a person to "neither seek such office or benefice, nor anything else, unless the Divine Majesty . . . change his former attachment. As a result the reason he wants . . . anything will be solely the . . . glory of the Divine Majesty." This is also the disposition sought for the third class who "will strive to

10. Longridge, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 110.

11. *Como me hallare* where *hallarse* is idiomatic. See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises*, p. 186.

12. Longridge, *Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 110-11.

conduct themselves as if every attachment . . . had been broken” (155).<sup>13</sup>

In both passages too the object of the inordinate attachment is the same — wealth itself or an office or benefice that would guarantee the kind of affluence the wealthy enjoy. Annotation sixteen speaks of “holding an office or benefice, not for the honor . . . of God . . ., but for his own personal gain and temporal interests” (16), while in the meditation on three classes “each . . . has acquired ten thousand ducats, but not entirely as they should have, for the love of God. They all wish to save their souls and find peace in God our Lord by ridding themselves of the burden arising from the attachment to the sum acquired” (150). Even though the first pair of men, like the other two pairs, profess this wish, they alone do nothing to realize it: “. . . the hour of death comes, and they have not made use of any means” (153).

Nevertheless the commentators on the *Spiritual Exercises* generally agree in regarding people in the second of the three classes as the worst off. The three classes, says de Ponlevoy, represent humanity divided into three categories of which hardly even one shows any serious and effective goodwill.<sup>14</sup> The average member of the human race is simply too lazy or too selfish to do anything about attachments that keep him from acknowledging God’s demands. If he is saved it will be only by the divine mercy and almost in spite of himself. But while the first class of men turns a deaf ear to God’s call, the second indulges in compromise and insincerity.<sup>15</sup> Only the third manifests a generous devotion which wishes only to know and accomplish the divine will.<sup>16</sup> Only the third class too will find the “peace in God” which all three classes are seeking. The other two classes stifle their good inspirations and so deprive themselves of that quiet of soul which perfect generosity with God can give. Disquiet of conscience is the punishment their attachments merit. Hence Peters, in his comment on the first two classes, remarks.

The first group does not go to hell, although they really do nothing to get rid of the attachment for the sum of money they possess. The

13. Codina, *Los Origines*, pp. 102-3.

14. A. de Ponlevoy, *Commentaire sur les Exercices Spirituels de Saint Ignace* (Evreux: Imprimerie de l’Eure, 1889), p. 236.

15. Longridge, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 109.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

second class are in a worse disposition than the first, because they want God to come to what they desire: weakness is not so bad as cool calculation.<sup>17</sup>

The remark of Simone Weil might well apply here: "Of two men who do not have the experience of God, the man who denies him is perhaps the closer to him."<sup>18</sup> If any members of the three classes of the *Spiritual Exercises* fail to attain salvation, they would be those of the second.

The second class attitude is a negative one: ". . . God is to come to what they desire, and they do not decide to give up the sum of money in order to go to God, though this would be the better way for them" (154). "They do not decide" amounts in practice to a refusal. Their hearts are where their treasure is and their good desires are mere self-deceit, like those of the laggard whom Dante met in Hell: "The coward spirit of the man who made the great refusal."<sup>19</sup>

#### TEXTUAL COMPARISON WITH THE QUR'ĀN

Despite certain significant differences which will be pointed out later, there is a surprising similarity both in content and expression between the meditation on three classes and chapter fifty-six of the Qur'ān, the book sacred to Islam. Juxtaposing Richard Bell's translation<sup>20</sup> with Rudi Paret's<sup>21</sup> and with a literal translation of the Arabic into English will make some of the likenesses immediately apparent.

17. William A. M. Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Exposition and Interpretation* (Jersey City: Program to Adapt the Spiritual Exercises, 1967), p. 101; and compare Longridge, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 244.

18. Cited by William McNamara, *The Human Adventure* (New York: Image Books, 1976), p. 189.

19. *Colui che fece per viltà il gran rifiuto, The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers (London: Penquin Books, 1954), Cantica I Hell, Canto III, line 61, p. 87.

20. Richard Bell, *The Qur'ān Translated with a Critical Re-arrangement of the Surahs*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1937-39), 554-55. Bell's translation is cited throughout.

21. Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Übersetzung* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1962). This is regarded by many as the best translation made so far into any Western language. Verse numbers before the diagonal are those of the official Egyptian edition of the Qur'an; those after are those of Flugel's edition.

*Bell's Translation**Paret's Translation**A Literal Translation  
into English*

(1) When the Event happens . . . . . (7) and ye are classes three, (8) Those on the right hand, what are they? (9) Those on the left hand, what are they? (10a) Those who go before, (10b) Those who go before, (11) They are those brought near, (12) . . . in Gardens of Delight, (13) A company from former generations (14) And a few from the later . . . . . (26) Those on the right, what are they? (27) Mid lotus-trees bent down (with fruit), (28) And acacias thickly grown, (29) And shade extended, (30) And water outpoured, (31) And fruit profuse . . . . . (40) Those on the left, what are they? (41) Mid hot wind and boiling water, (42) And the shadow of black smoke . . . . . (44) Formerly they were in luxury, (45) And were persisting in the great refusal.

(1) Wenn die Katastrophe (des Gerichts) hereinbricht . . . . (7) und ihr in drei Gattungen zerfällt. (8) Die von der rechten Seite – welcher Art sind sie nun? (9) Und die Unglückseligen – welcher Art sind sie? (10) Und die (schon) gewonnen haben, sind die, die (schon) gewonnen haben. (11) Sie sind es, die (Gott) nahestehen (12) in den Gärten der Wonne. (13) Einge ganze Schar (von ihnen) gehört den früheren (Generationen) an, (14) und (nur) eine kleine Anzahl den späteren . . . . . (27/26) Und die von der Rechten – welcher Art sind sie? (28/27) Sie befinden sich an Zizyphusbäumen, die der Dornen entblösst sind, (29/28) und dicht (mit Laub) besetzen Akazien, (30/29) in weit reichendem Schatten, (31/30) an Wasser, das sich (über das Erdreich) ergießt, (32/31) mit vielen Früchten . . . . . (41/40) Und die von der Linken – welcher Art sind sie? (42/41) Sie befinden sich in sengender Glut und heissem Wasser (43/42) und Schatten von schwarzem Rauch, . . . . . (45/44) Sie führten vordem ein Wohleben (46/45) und verharrten in dem gewaltigen Sünde (des Un-

(1) When the Event takes place, . . . . . (7) and you are three pairs, (8) the fellows of the right side, what are the fellows of the right side? (9) And the fellows of the left side, what are the fellows of the left side? (10) And those preceding, those preceding, (11) those are the ones brought near, (12) in gardens of delight, (13) a multitude from the former (times) (14) and a few from the later (times) . . . . . (27/26) And the fellows of the right, what are the fellows of the right? (28/27) Among bent lotus trees (29/28) And acacias set in rows, (30/29) And shade spread out (31/30) and water poured forth, (32/31) and much fruit . . . . . (41/40) And the fellows of the left, what are the fellows of the left? (42/41) In a hot wind and hot water, (43/42) and a shadow of black smoke . . . . . (45/44) Indeed they were, before this, living in ease and luxury (46/45) and they were persisting in the great perjury.

Most of the details that characterize the meditation on three pairs can be verified, point by point, in chapter fifty-six. The Qur'anic term *azwāj*, translated as "classes" or "groups," literally means "pairs." It is the broken plural of *zawj*, "one of a pair" or simply "pair." The Qur'anic *zawj* is a term borrowed from the *zūg* of the Midrash, which like the Qur'ān speaks of God creating all things in "pairs."<sup>22</sup> But the Midrashic *zūg* in its turn is a rabbinic loanword from the Greek *zeugos*, a yoke or pair of mules or oxen.<sup>23</sup> Luke's Gospel uses the term twice, once in the phrase "a pair of turtle doves" (2:24) and again "five pairs of oxen" (14:19).

In its Qur'anic use in creation accounts the word is variously translated as "pairs," "classes," "kinds" or "species." Here in chapter fifty-six, as in the *Spiritual Exercises*, it is used indefinitely — *azwājan thalathatan*, "three pairs," or "three classes." It occurs in the same indefinite form in two warnings against excessive concern for material things, 15.88 and 20.131: "Cast not longing eyes towards that which We have given classes (*azwājan*, pairs) of them to enjoy." The Muslim commentators (Baydāwī and Jalālayn) say that classes here refer to kinds or types of unbelievers without specifying any particular persons — although a tradition cited by Baydāwī refers the "pairs" of 15.88 to Jewish merchants of the tribes of Quraizah and An-Nadīr.

The salvation theme so prominent in chapter fifty-six is found especially in the first fifty-six verses. These deal with the end of the world, its terrors, and the reward and punishment allotted to the good and evil. Those to be saved are freed from the burden of ephemeral things "in gardens of delight" (56. 12.89/88) which are

22. The Qur'ān says in 51. 49, "Of everything We have created pairs," and in 36. 36, "Glory be to Him who created all the pairs." Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1971), p. 412, gives other parallels in commenting on 36. 36. These verses recall the rabbinic account of creation in Midrash Rabbah, Deuteronomy II, 31: "The Rabbis say: God said to Israel: My children, all that I have created I have created in pairs; heaven and earth are a pair; sun and moon are a pair; Adam and Eve are a pair; this world and the world to come are a pair." H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, gen. ed., *Midrash Rabbah Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices*, Vol. 7. *Deuteronomy, Lamentations*, trans. J. Rabbinowitz (London: Soncino Press, 1961), pp. 60-61. The Qur'anic commentary, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, echoes this passage in its explanation of 51. 49: "The two kinds, like male and female, heaven and earth, sun and moon."

23. See William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), s.v. *zeugos*; and Julian Obermann, "Islamic Origins: A Study in Background and Foundation" in *The Arab Heritage*, Nabih Amin Faris, ed., (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 102.

constantly associated with eternity in the Qur'an;<sup>24</sup> they are served by immortal youths (56.17); they hear there no vain speech but only the greeting, "Peace – peace" (56. 25f/24f); they enjoy final union with God – suggested in the term *al-muqarrabūn*, "those brought near /to God/" (56.11).

The Last Judgment, which is the occasion for the separation of mankind into three classes, is explicitly mentioned in verse 56, "This /punishment of the wicked/ will be their reception-feast on the Day of Judgment," and in verse 50, "They are surely going to be brought together to the meeting-place of a day appointed." The sudden calamity marking the advent of that fearful day erupts in the hammering Arabic of the first six verses: "(1) When the Event happens. . . (3) Abasing, exalting, (4) When the earth is shaken, shaken, (5) And the mountains are pounded, pounded, (6) And become dust scattered." The placing of the good on the right hand of the eternal Judge and the wicked on His left is the prelude to the final judgment to be passed on each group.

In the other two Qur'anic passages, 15. 88 and 20. 131, already referred to, which warn Muslims against overconcern for material things, the second of the two texts adds a phrase stating the object of attachment: "the flower of this nearer life." It then declares, "The provision of thy Lord is better and more lasting." The Muslim exegetes explain "the flower of this present life" as its pomp and splendor which people often covet beyond measure. The "provision of thy Lord" is likewise taken to be the reward prepared for Muhammad in the next life or the special revelations he was favored with during his earthly career.

More specifically, wealth and the sumptuous living it permits are said to be the object of man's disordered desires in 56. 45/44 which speaks of those in hell as formerly "living in ease and luxury" (*mutrafīn*). This expression is used here and elsewhere in the Qur'an<sup>25</sup> in describing a situation that prevailed in Mecca during Muhammad's years of preaching there. It refers to the actuations of an influential group who opposed him and stubbornly refused to accept Islam. These adversaries were for the most merchants and financiers among the leaders of the Quraysh who, at least in Muhammad's opinion, were responsible for bringing God's anger

24. By means of the modifying phrase, *khālidūna fihā*, "to remain there forever," e.g., 2. 82/76; 3. 15/13; 7. 42/40; 10. 26/27; and 11. 23/25.

25. E.g. 17. 16/17; 23. 64/66; 34. 34/33; and 43. 23/22.

on their people. It was of this party that the Qur'ān made God say in 17. 16/17: "When We intend to destroy a town, We command its affluent people (*mutrafīha*) and they act viciously therein, so that the sentence against them is justified, then We destroy it utterly."<sup>26</sup>

These same persons deserving hellfire for their selfish greed and disbelief are now challenged to overcome the power of death. If their refusal to accept the revelation claimed by Muhammad is justified, let them send the departing soul of a dying person back into the body. The challenge is embodied in a graphic picture of departing life: "When it [the soul of one dying] reaches the throat, as you look on . . . why do you not send it back [into the body] if you speak the truth [in denying the Resurrection and Last Judgment]?" (56. 83-87/82-86) This introduction of a deathbed scene resembles the situation described in the first point of the meditation on three classes. There the first pair find themselves at "the hour of death . . . and they have not made use of any means" to rid themselves of the attachment that keeps them from knowing God's will (153).

As in the meditation on three pairs, so also in chapter fifty-six the second of the pairs is the worst off. The first two pairs follow the classical division of the Haggadah into "fellows of the right and left sides." These symbols of good and less good fortune are at times referred to in the Old Testament (as in Ecclesiastes 10: 2 and Proverbs 3:16)<sup>27</sup> and are used in Christ's description of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:33). The symbols occur elsewhere too in the Qur'ān as the norm of distinction between those who believe and those who disbelieve – for example in 90. 17-19 and 69. 19-37. In chapter fifty-six alone, however, there is question of a third division, which is described in some detail: "You shall be three pairs, the fellows of the right, what are they? the fellows of the left, what are they? and the outstrippers" (56.7-10). No interrogative phrase follows mention of the third class. Instead their lot is immediately declared: "The outstrippers, those are the ones brought near, in gardens of delight" (56. 10-12). In the Qur'ān

26. See. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 135, and Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar*, pp. 298-99 on 17. 16/17.

27. Other references to the Old Testament and the Talmud are given in Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus Erläutert aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 4th ed. (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1965), 1:980-81.

“those brought near,” that is, to God, *al-muqarrabūn*, is a term reserved for the angels (4. 172/170) and other most highly favored persons like Jesus (3. 45/40).<sup>28</sup> The Hebrew cognate *cherubim* signified in rabbinic theology those who were admitted into the special group of spirits attending God’s throne. In chapter fifty-six the word is used twice, in verses 11 and 88/87, to indicate those destined to enjoy the highest bliss of paradise.

As the description of the different pairs continues, the third, the “outstrippers,” is given the highest reward in paradise. This class is said by the Muslim commentators to be made up of the first converts to Islam or the prophets or any persons of outstanding virtue.<sup>29</sup> This third or highest class alone merits the perfect peace of paradise (56. 26/25). In this they resemble the third class of the *Spiritual Exercises*, who alone find that perfect peace which full conformity with God’s will brings. The first class, “the fellows of the right,” receive a lower place in paradise, “mid lotus trees bent down [with fruit] and acacias thickly grown and shade extended and water outpoured and fruit profuse” (56. 28-32/27-31). But the second class, “the fellows of the left,” formerly living in ease and luxury, are now condemned to hellfire, “mid hot wind and boiling water, and the shadow of black smoke” (56. 42-46/41-45).<sup>30</sup> The description of the respective fates of each of the three classes is repeated in summary form at the end of the same chapter (56. 88-94/87-94).

The triple grouping closely parallels the rabbinical division of mankind into the “completely righteous,” the “average persons” or intermediate class, and the “completely wicked.” The Talmud uses these categories for the annual assessment as well as for the Final Judgment on the Last Day.

Three books are opened [in heaven] on New Year, one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitely in the book of life, the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitely in the book of death; the doom of the intermediate

28. Heinrich Speyer, *Die Biblischen Erzählungen in Qoran* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971), pp. 266 and 300, and W. Montgomery Watt, *Companion to the Qur’an* (London: Allen and Unwin, Ltd, 1967), pp. 50 and 171.

29. Az-Zamakshari, *Al-Kashshāf* and Al-Baydāwī, *Anwaru ‘t-tanzīl* on 56. 10, probably influenced by 9. 100/101, an early Medinan verse.

30. Obermann, “Islamic Origins,” pp. 106-7.

is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement; if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of death.<sup>31</sup>

The "average persons" (corresponding to the Qur'anic first class or "fellows of the right"), says one rabbinic commentator, are people "like ourselves." It is understood, therefore, that the "wholly righteous" (corresponding to the "outstrippers" or the third class, "those brought near" – to God) are only the great saints of past ages and a few individuals from more recent times, or, as the Qur'ān says, "a multitude from the former times and a few from the later times" – (56. 13-14). Because of these close similarities Obermann sees in chapter fifty-six the reproduction from memory of a homily or homilies based on the oral tradition of the Jews.<sup>32</sup>

In Qur'ān, man has only two final destinations – paradise and hell; but here and elsewhere distinctions in rank among the just in paradise are supposed: "For them [true believers] are in store degrees in the presence of their Lord," and "the Hereafter has greater degrees [of honor] and greater preferment."<sup>33</sup> Such distinctions appear here in the highest rank given to the third class, the "outstrippers," and the somewhat lower place reserved for the first class, "the fellows of the right."

In closing its description of the fate of the second class of men, the "fellows of the left," the Qur'ān says of their time on earth, "formerly they were in luxury and were persisting in the great refusal" (56. 45-46/44-45). Selfish disbelief and an attitude of stubborn denial are implied in the terms used throughout chapter fifty-six to describe this second class: "You who called others liars" (*al-mukadhdhibūn*), "will you not admit the truth" (*falawlā tusaddiqūn*), "will you not reflect" (*falawlā tadhukkarūn*), "will you not be grateful" (*falawlā tashkurūn*), "will you dissimulate" (*mudhinūn*).<sup>34</sup> The word *hinth* which Bell translates as "refusal" is

31. Rosh Hashanah, 16b. *The Babylonian Talmud Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices, 18 vols. ed. Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1978), Seder Mo'ed in Four Volumes, IV, 63.*

32. Obermann, "Islamic Origins," p. 107. See also J. Obermann, "Koran and Agada: The Events at Mount Sinai," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 58 (1941): 26; and Henri Lammens, "Les Chrétiens à la Mecque à la veille de l'Hégire," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Archeologie orientale* 14 (1918): 228.

33. 8. 4 and 17. 21/22. See also 6. 132; 20. 75/77; and 46. 19/18. Additional references are given in Paret, *Kommentar*, pp. 84-85 in connection with 3. 163/157.

34. 56. verses 51; 57; 62; 70/69; 81/ 80.

generally used in connection with unwillingness to accomplish an oath or pact.<sup>35</sup> The same root occurs in 38. 44/43 in its verbal form *tahnath*, “do not fail” (Bell) or “do not break your oath” — *werde nicht eidbruchig* (Paret), being an exhortation to Job not to fail to carry out his oath to punish his wife.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps more important than the notion of refusal contained in *hinh* is the attitude of persistence (*yusirrun*, 56. 46/45) in selfish insincerity. Blinded by attachments to comfort and wealth this second class scorns the revelation Muhammad brings, ridiculing the resurrection and questioning the Creator’s power (56. 45-87/ 44-86).

### SUMMARY AND EVALUATION OF THE PARALLELS

To sum up, then, both the meditation on three classes of men and chapter fifty-six of the Qur’ān employ a word which literally means “pairs” in the sense of “classes” or “kinds.” Both speak of *three* pairs and use the combination indefinitely. Both relate the three pairs to salvation and make reference to the Final Judgment. Both likewise introduce “pairs” into exhortations that aim to detach people from excessive concern for material things, more specifically from affluence and luxury. To reinforce the need of detachment, both chapter fifty-six and the meditation of three pairs introduce a deathbed scene. All three pairs in both texts are reminded that only those outstanding in generous virtue (the third pair in both) will find perfect peace. Both hold the second pair to be the worst off of the three because of its rooted attitude of selfish refusal.

The parallels are indeed close, but they would seem interesting rather than significant. The Qur’ān, as has been seen, often uses *zawj* (pair) for “class” or “species” in creation accounts. The very notion of “class” grows naturally out of that of “pairing” or “comparing.” *Gattung*, the German for “class,” has a corresponding verb *gatten*, “to pair” or “to match.” In English too one meaning of “pair” is an integral whole made up of a set of like things indefinite in number — a pair of beads. In classical Greek “pair” was used at times for more than two persons or things associated

35. In accord with the commentators’ interpretation of *hinh* as “idolatry” the pact said to be broken would be that entered upon by the human race, as narrated in 7. 172/171 to acknowledge God as their one and only Lord.

36. Baydāwī, *ad loc.*

in some way.<sup>37</sup> Cicero and Plutarch both use “three” in combination with “pairs” in referring to friends.<sup>38</sup>

In the realm of religion and ethics, moreover, general concepts – salvation, judgment, disordered desires, riches as an obstacle to moral development – can be and are common to different religions. Many such notions arise spontaneously from religious needs and sentiments experienced by all human beings.

Although Arabic enriched the developing language of Castile with many items of vocabulary, any direct influence on the Christian theological thought of Spain would have to be proven for it in each case. Such influence is even less likely in a part of the *Spiritual Exercises* composed in Paris during St. Ignatius’s days there as a student. It is true that part of the original plan of Ignatius and his companions had been to give spiritual help to the people of the Holy Land, most of whom were then Muslims.<sup>39</sup> But apparently neither he nor they ever investigated the beliefs of Islamism or consulted its sacred writings.

In the two selections whose resemblances have been considered several important differences are also found. Chapter fifty-six of the Qur’ān is speaking of the heavenly reward of two kinds of good persons – those of average virtue and those outstanding in holiness, and of the punishment of the greatest sin in Islam – idolatry, which is the meaning assigned to “the great refusal” (*al-hinṭhi ’l’azim*) by the Muslim commentators. But the meditation on three classes is speaking of three kinds of people similar in their lofty desires and good intentions but differing in their willingness to carry them out completely. In contrast to the “great refusal” of worship due to the Creator, which is the theme of the Qur’anic passage, the refusal of the first two classes of the *Spiritual Exercises* is concerned with using means to purify one’s intention in keeping money honestly acquired. Likewise, the peace envisioned in the Qur’anic passage is external and is contrasted with vain speech and bitter retorts. But the peace which the meditation on three classes aims at is peace of soul or free-

37. See Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 754, col. 1, III.

38. *Laelius de Amicitia*, IV, 15, and *Moralia*, p. 93, E.

39. *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (vol. 66) *Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola*, vol I (Romae: Mon. Hist. Soc. Iesu, 1943), 479-81; *ibid.* (vol. 73), vol. II (1951), 308.

dom from all attachment that would trouble a delicate conscience. Finally, the Qur'ān in the text here presented describes an eschatological scene properly so called, but St. Ignatius's meditation on three classes (149-57) uses eschatological elements to motivate good men to a sincere use of all means to know and accomplish God's will.

As is true in many parallels in vocabulary and concepts between Christianity and Islam, once the reader goes beyond superficial resemblances, he finds more differences than analogies. This is also true here, even though the similarity of concepts in the two passages comes from an eschatology common in its general lines to Judeo-Christian and Islamic thought.

The estimate of E. Allison Peers, then, regarding another alleged source of the *Spiritual Exercises* might be applied also to the similarities between the meditation on three classes and chapter fifty-six of the Qur'ān:

It is not that there are no similarities – even occasional verbal similarities – between Garcia de Cisneros and St. Ignatius, but rather that they relate to most ordinary themes, treated in every book of devotion, or that they are as likely to have come direct from one or another of Cisneros' own authorities as from Cisneros himself. . . . . Other of the alleged similarities are too little alike to be considered seriously.<sup>40</sup>

40. E. Allison Peers, *Studies of the Spanish Mystics*, (London, 1930), 2: 32-33, cited by James Brodrick, *St. Ignatius Loyola: The Pilgrim Years 1491-1538* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), p. 246, n.