Six Lessons on Islam

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I

MUHAMMAD

A biologist has said that we are immersed in the habits of our era, like the glands in their fluids. We are creatures, to a great extent, of our environment. But there is one Being Who is not the product of His environment. This is the holy Personage Who appears among us as the Manifestation of God. He is outside of and free of custom, tradition, environment. It is only by following Him that we too are released from the ways of our ancestors and can start a new way. He is reality -- truth -- and the truth makes us free.

The materialist says man is the product of his times. Therefore the materialist cannot account for the Prophet of God. All of a sudden, in Arabia, there rises an Arab Who is not like the Arabs. He summons the people to go against custom. He smashes their idols. Think of the effect on them: something they had been taught to worship, toppling down, broken in pieces. Today, we too are told to smash idols -- the idols of men's own imaginings. 'Abdu'l-Baha says that those other idols at least had a mineral existence, while mankind's present idols are but fancies, and not even mineral. (Some Answered Questions, 171).

Our standard for appraising Muhammad is the Baha'i Teachings. Much of the material about Muhammad is written either by Muslims who have repeated unfounded traditions about Him, or by hostile Occidentals. We are still victims of centuries of propaganda against Him. Dante, for instance, placed Muhammad and the Imam 'Ali in the eighth circle, ninth pouch, of the Inferno. The Middle Ages called Him "Mahound," a word influenced by the English "hound." Today -- and I am sure it is in a measure due to fifty-five years of continuous Baha'i teaching -- the Protestant Church in North America is actually telling people to study Islam and other Faiths. A Collier's Magazine article reaching millions of readers, featured a clergyman talking to a veteran, and saying that all religions are one and that the veteran should study them all; the article specifically included Islam. (Collier's, December, 1947). However, I felt sorry for the poor veteran because, without the light of the Baha'i Teachings, he would find the study of Islam -- or of any previous religion -- a bewildering business.

To study Islam we need new books. We need a re-evaluation by future Baha'i scholars, of all the available data, in the light of Baha'u'llah's Teachings. The Guardian told a pilgrim that the Baha'is must vindicate Islam in the West; we must convert people, not to its institutions, now abrogated by the Bab and

Baha'u'llah, but to its truth as a further step in Divine Revelation, following Christianity. We can appreciate our own Faith better if we are familiar with Islam. The Guardian refers to Islam as "the source and background" of our Faith (Advent of Divine Justice); he says we need "a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam" and must devote special attention to the investigation of those institutions and circumstances that are directly connected with the origin and birth of their (the Baha'i) Faith, with the station claimed by its Forerunner, and with the laws revealed by its Author." (Idem). There is an interesting point of similarity between us and the Muslims in that both our sacred writings and those of Islam are authentic, while scholars do not accept the authenticity of all the Gospel text. It is also of note that the New Testament mentions Peter as the successor but gives no specific laws as to marriage, pilgrimage, fasting and the like; the Qur'an, on the other hand, contains a great body of laws but is silent as to the successorship; while in the Baha'i Teachings, we have, specifically established, both the laws and the successorship. <p2>

"Islam" does not derive from Muhammad's name. The word, from the Arabic root "salima," is variously translated as surrender to God's Will, and as obedience, peace and salvation, A Muslim is one who follows Islam; who has surrendered himself to God, is obedient, has attained salvation.

Islam in the beginning is a story of two cities -- Mecca and Yathrib, later called Medina.

Medina was a rich oasis.

It was an agricultural community; many of its clans were Jews and they cultivated the extensive palm groves.

Medina suffered from malarial fever and sometimes its ponds and wells were henna-colored from the droppings of the herds so that even the camels sickened of the water.

The other city was Mecca.

It was a city of naked hills; it had regular, paved streets, fortified houses and a town hall.

A Negro poet of the time wrote that in Mecca there was "not a blade of grass to rest the eye... no hunting...instead, only merchants..."[1] There were no trees, no gardens, only a few spiney bushes.

It was so hot that to torture a man they had only to lay him on the ground.

The black flagstones around the Ka'bih had to be sprinkled for the ritual barefoot processions and they dried at once.

Even the waters of the ancient well of Zemzem -- which tradition says bubbled up from the sand, under the feet of Ishmael, when Hagar his mother had set him down in the wilderness -- were sometimes bitter.

Other wells were distant and unsafe.

Mecca was a place of "suffocating heat, deathly winds, clouds of flies." (Dermenenghem, op. cit., 23).

In winter the town was flooded; or buried in silt; the waters destroyed houses, floated carrion around, spread epidemics.

They say that once the Temple was so deep in water that a pious man made his circumambulation, Seven times around, by swimming.
[1. Cf. Dermenghem, Emile, Life of Mahomet, 22.]

The Meccans were merchants. Two great caravans left Mecca each year, one to Yaman, the other to Syria. Ezekiel 27 tells us, as early as ca. 600 B.C., how Tyre was enriched by Arab merchants. A writer comments: "The steppes of Central Asia and Arabia were the ocean of the ancients, and companies of camels their fleets." (Muir, Wm., The Life of Mohammad, xc). The great caravans included as many as 3,000 camels and 200 men. The whole town might invest in them; their coming and leaving was the cause of wild excitement, and announced with the beating of drums.

A writer calls the Arabs the first exploiters of international trade; Mecca was a crossroads between the Orient and the Mediterranean world. The Byzantines found indispensable the Arab caravans of jewels, spices from India, silk from China, skins, metals, perfumes, gums, dates. (Cf. Dermenghem, op. cit., 24-25).[1a]
[1a. In addition to commerce and herding, the Arabs' "national industry" was the seizing of booty. (Dermenghem, 175). Muhammad strictly regulated this, the bulk going to charity and army upkeep.]

After their journeys, the Arabs gambled and drank and speculated. Streams of wine flowed in the great houses; we hear of a man who owned two slave-girls celebrated for their voices, whom he called his two cicadas. He got drunk, and gave another man a black eye; later he repented, and presented the man with the two singers. (Ibid., 30). Another Arab gambled himself away to a friend. There were constant tribal wars, brawls and blood-feuds. The poets enjoyed prominence as the journalists and historians of the time, and held annual poetry competitions; famed among the Arabs were the Seven Golden Odes, poems written in letters of gold on Egyptian silk. A proverb says: "Wisdom has lighted on three things: the hand of the Chinese, the brain of the Frank, and the tongue of the Arab." "The Arabs prized above all else, eloquence; an Arab prayed, "O God, preserve me from being silenced in conversation." (Dozy, Reinhart, Spanish Islam, Duffield and Co., N.Y., 1913, 6). <p3> Skill at arms and horsemanship were also valued; and hospitality to the point of profligacy; an Arab poet comments, "Wealth cometh in the morning, and ere the evening it hath departed." (Ibid., 5).

In Mecca, also called Becca, the leaders lived in the central, flat part of the city, around the Ka'bih (i.e., in Batha); the commoners lived surrounding this area, in the sloping streets; foreigners, slaves, and the rabble lived on the outskirts. Beyond, in the desert, were the Bedawin, tent-dwellers and nomads.[2]

[2 The Bedawin were scornful of both tillers of the soil and merchants. "Ah," wrote a Bedawin poet, "if my camel could hear the tricks of the trade, what a lot she could gain in Mecca by exchanging green grass for dried grass!" (Dermenghem, op. cit., 31).]

The most important thing in Mecca was the Ka'bih, or cube: the oblong stone House which was a center of pilgrimage for all Arabia. The Arabs were members of innumerable isolated clans, worshipping different idols, but all would come and gather at the Ka'bih. It is a structure 55 feet long, 45 wide and something over 55 high. It has a covering of cloth, which is renewed annually, and did even in Muhammad's day. Abraham traditionally built the Ka'bih, its site being granted to Him and Ishmael for a place of worship that would be monotheistic and universal (Qur'an 22:27). The Qur'an says of it: "The first temple that was founded for mankind, was that in Becca, Blessed, and a guidance to human beings. In it are evident signs, even the standing-place of Abraham: and he who entereth it is safe. And the pilgrimage to the temple, is a service due to God from those who are able to journey thither." (Qur'an 3:90-91). The Black Stone (Hajaru'l-Aswad) is set in the south-east corner of the Ka'bih wall; it is semi-circular, about six inches in height and eight wide, and reddish-black in color. We read in the Dawn- Breakers how the Bab, having first circumambulated the Ka'bih and performed all the rites of worship, stood before the Black Stone and declared His mission. The territory around Mecca (Haram) was and still is sacred. Four months of the year were months of general amnesty and truce, and it was then that pilgrims made their journeys to Mecca and to the merchandise fairs.

In and around the Ka'bih in the time before Muhammad -- the Days of Ignorance (Jahiliyya) -- were 360 idols, equalling the days of the year. Their chief was Hobal, a bearded man made of red agate, with one hand of gold, and dressed in multi-colored clothing. People consulted him about marriage, where to dig a well, and other problems, using divining arrows. We read of a poet who wished to avenge the murder of his father, consulting one of the idols with three divining arrows symbolizing "Proceed," "Abandon," "Delay." Three times he drew "Abandon." He became furious, broke the arrows and threw them at the idol, crying "Had it been thy father who was murdered, thou wouldst not have forbidden me to avenge him." (Dozy, op. cit., 14. Also Lane-Poole, Speeches and Table Talks.... cxiii.) Sometimes they would cheat the idols, sacrificing a gazelle when they had promised a sheep. They did acknowledge a vague supreme Deity, called Allah; but they joined partners with Him, lesser deities called al ilahat -- the goddesses; Muhammad's teaching was La ilaha illa'llah -- There is no ilah but Allah. This reminds us of Acts 17:23: "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." George Sale in his "Preliminary Discourse" tells of one tribe who even worshipped a lump of dough, but he says they treated it with more respect than some Christians do theirs, because they would not eat it unless compelled to by famine.

Over Mecca and in charge of the Ka'bih ruled the Quraysh, a powerful <p4> Arab tribe forming a sort of religious hierarchy, whose members enjoyed such

functions as distributing water and food to the pilgrims, taking charge of the council hall, and raising the banner in war. Muhammad was a member of this tribe -- closely related to the oligarchy, His grandfather ('Abdu'l-Muttallib) being the foremost chief of Mecca, and His uncle and protector (Abu-Talib) a leader afterward. In tearing down the Ka'bih gods Muhammad was- -in their view -- destroying His own family.

Mankind has always surrounded the birth of its Saviors with beautiful stories. We know of the shepherds and angels on the night of the Nativity. The Zoroastrians say that when Zoroaster was born even the trees and rivers rejoiced, and a divine light shone around the house. On the night Muhammad was born His mother (Aminih) saw light streaming from Him, reaching up to the stars; the idols of the Ka'bih toppled over and lay face downward; across the world, in all the fire temples of the Magians, the fire died on the altars. (Tabari, II, 234-5). The year was 570.[3]
[3. "The Year of the Elephant." The birth took place about 55 days after the attack of Arabia; Caussin de Perceval calculates August 20. Cf. Muir, op. cit., 5.]

Muhammad was either posthumous or soon lost His father ('Abdu'llah). A shepherd's wife cared for Him in the mountains until He was five; this was the custom. He tended sheep. At six, He lost His mother. His grandfather took Him in; He used to sit by the old chieftain on a rug spread out in the shade of the Ka'bih. At eight, He lost His grandfather; His uncle then cared for Him. Muhammad was poor and practised several trades: He tended herds, kept a little shop, went on caravan expeditions and to the great fairs. He became known for the purity of His life and they called Him al-Amin -- the Trusted One.

There was a prominent and beautiful woman in Mecca, who had been twice widowed and was now about forty. She was a merchant, and Muhammad, as her agent, successfully conducted one of her caravans to Syria. She had refused the leaders of Mecca but now fell in love with her poor Kinsman, sixteen years her junior. Their marriage is one of the true - love stories in history; until her death twenty- three years later, Muhammad married no other, although polygamy was almost universally practised. We read that there was a great wedding: some leather bottles of precious grape wine; in the inner court under the torches, the bride's slave girls danced and sang to the tambourines; a camel was slaughtered on the door-step and its flesh divided among the poor...Muhammad and Khadijih had several children; the sons all died; then she became the mother of Fatimih, the holiest woman in Islam.

Muhammad was now a man of considerable means, but He did not enter public life. The times were lawless, and except for serving the poor He kept to Himself. He retired often to a high, cone- shaped mountain north of Mecca, and stayed in a cave there. From Mt. Hira He could look out east and south on other mountains, and elsewhere on bare, blackened hills, grey hills, and white sandy valleys (Cf. Muir, op. cit., 38). It was on this mountain that He first saw the Archangel, veiled in light, on a throne of fire, and because of this greatly troubled and in deep anguish, He went to Khadijih and she comforted Him. Ever

since, Mt. Hira has been called Jabal-i-Nur, the Mount of Light. <p5>

There was a man named Salman the Persian and he had spent many years of his life traveling in search of a Prophet. He was born in a Persian village and as a boy had tended the sacred fire. Then he left Persia for Damascus, and went from one holy man to another -- four in all. Each one, dying, sent him on to the next one. As the fourth one died he said to Salman "This is an age of Prophets. A Prophet will be sent."

In those days it was not safe to travel, because if you were caught they sold you into slavery. When Salman was going toward Arabia they caught him, and sold him to a Jew of Medina. Salman worked in the palm groves; it was his job to take care of the camel that turned the wheel which brought water up from the sub-soil for distribution into irrigation trenches. One day Salman was up at the top of a palm tree, and he heard his master speaking down below. His master was saying that a man had arisen in Mecca who was calling himself a Prophet. Salman began to tremble all over; he became so agitated that he almost fell on his master's head. He slid down the tree, and his owner struck him, saying, "What is it to you?"

Baha'u'llah tells us in the Iqan: "...when the hour draweth nigh on which the Day-star of the heaven of justice shall be made manifest, and the Ark of divine guidance shall sail upon the sea of glory, a star will appear in the heaven, heralding unto its people the advent of that most great light. In like manner, in the invisible heaven a star shall be made manifest who, unto the peoples of the earth, shall act as a harbinger of that true and exalted Morn (62)...Likewise, ere the beauty of Muhammad was unveiled, the signs of the visible heaven were made manifest. As to the signs of the invisible heaven, there appeared four men who successively announced unto the people the joyful tidings of the rise of that divine Luminary. Ruz-bih, later named Salman, was honoured by being in their service. As the end of one of these approached, he would send Ruz-bih unto the other, until the fourth who, feeling his death to be nigh, addressed Ruz-bih saving: "O Ruz-bih! when thou hast taken up my body and buried it, go to Hijaz for there the Day-star of Muhammad will arise. Happy art thou, for thou shalt behold His face!." (65).[4]
[4 "... there was, immediately before the preaching of Mohammad, a general feeling that a change was at hand; a prophet was expected, and women were anxiously hoping for male children, if so be they might mother the Apostle of God; and the more thoughtful minds, tinged with traditions of Judaism, were seeking for what they called the 'religion of Abraham.' These men were 'Hanifs,' or 'incliners'...." Lane-Poole, Speeches and Table Talks of the Prophet Mohammad, xxiv-xxv.] <p6>

II

MUHAMMAD (Continued)

In after years, Muhammad said of His wife Khadijih, "When I was poor, she enriched me; when all the world abandoned me, she comforted me; when they treated me as a liar, she believed in me." (Dermenghem, op. cit., 44). An

account relates that in the early stage of the Revelation, when Muhammad was still in anguish at the phenomenon, He asked Khadijih to wrap Him in His robe,as a kind of protection, whereupon Gabriel appeared before Him and said, "O Thou, enwrapped in thy mantle! Arise and warn, and glorify Thy Lord!" (Qur'an 74:1-3).

After the surih of The Brightness, which brought Him consolation and told Him: "Thy Lord hath not forsaken Thee...." He felt confident of His prophetic mission. The Faithful Spirit taught Him to pray, perform ablutions, stand and kneel in worship. One day as He and Khadijih were praying together young 'Ali entered the room. He saw them bowing down before empty space. He said, "What are you doing? Before whom are you bowing down?" Muhammad said, "Before God, Whose Prophet I am." 'Ali accepted the Faith, and in future he was called "Him whose face was never sullied," because he was so young when he became a believer that he had never worshipped an idol.

When three years had passed, Muhammad was commanded to preach in public, and withdraw from the idolaters; the Qur'an reads: "Profess publicly then what Thou hast been bidden, and withdraw from those who join gods to God." (15:94). He invited His kinsmen, the leaders of Mecca, had a sheep cooked with milk, and after they had eaten He freely told them what had happened, ending, "Never before has an Arab bestowed on his people what I now bring you . . . Who will act as my brother and helper? " There was icy silence. Abu Lahab, one of the uncles, shrugged his shoulders. Then young 'Ali cried out, "I will help you, Prophet of God!" And they all laughed, and the meeting broke up. (Cf. Dermenghem, op. cit., 73-74).

Muhammad preached, and the Meccans scoffed. They asked Him to perform miracles: turn the hills to gold, make a book fall from heaven, show them Gabriel, bring a well of pure water, prophesy the approaching price of goods: "Cannot your God disclose which articles will rise in price?" Muhammad would answer, "I am only a man like you." (Qur'an 18:110). "It is revealed to me that your God is one God: go straight then to Him, and implore His pardon. And woe to those who join gods with God." (Qur'an 41:5). The Qur'an tells us: "But most of them withdraw and hearken not: And they say, 'Our hearts are under shelter from Thy teachings, and in our ears is a deafness, and between us and Thee there is a veil." (Qur'an 41:3-4). They spoke much as the materialists of our own day; the Qur'an states, "And they say, 'There is only this our present life: we die and we live, and nought but time destroyeth us.' " (Qur'an 45:23). An idolater who owed money to a Muslim told him he would pay him back in the next world . . . And Muhammad warned them: "The likeness for those who take to themselves patrons other than God is the likeness of the spider who buildeth her a house: But verily, frailest of all houses surely is the house of the spider," (Qur'an 29:40). <p7>

Besides insisting that there was only one God, and telling them to follow righteousness as they would be called to account in the next world, Muhammad spoke to them repeatedly about the coming of "The Hour" and the "Meeting with God." Once He held up two fingers and said that He and The Hour were as close

as the two fingers. The Qur'an states: "Aye, they have treated the coming of 'the Hour' as a lie. But a flaming fire have we got ready for those who treat the coming of the Hour as a lie." (25:12). Sometimes He called it "The Inevitable": the chapter of this name in the Qur'an begins: "When the day that must come shall have come suddenly, None shall treat that sudden coming as a lie: Day that shall abase! Day that shall exalt!" Sometimes He called it "The Blow" or "The Striking": this chapter begins: "The striking What is the striking? And what shall make Thee to understand how terrible the striking will be? On that day men shall be like moths scattered abroad, and the mountains shall become like carded wool . . ." (Surihs 56 and 101). It was the great Day of God that He warned them of -- our day; to understand the Qur'an here it is essential to study the Iqan. In the surih of The Daybreak, He told them: "and thy Lord shall come, and the angels rank by rank . . ." (Surih 89).

In later life, as Muhammad was entering the mosque, a disciple said, "Ah, Thou for Whom I would sacrifice father and mother, white hairs are hastening upon Thee!" And the Prophet raised up His beard with His hand and gazed at it; and the disciple's eyes filled with tears. "Yes," said Muhammad, "(the surih of) Hud and its sisters have hastened my white hairs." They asked what He meant by its "sisters," and He replied" 'The Inevitable,' and 'The Blow.'" (Rodwell, Qur'an, 225-226 n.).

The Meccans did not know what to make of Him.

For a time they mocked Him: "Here cometh the son of 'Abdu'llah with his news from heaven." (Dozy, op. cit., 15).

Then, as He continued to warn them, and to denounce their gods, and as He made some converts, they tried to bribe Him: "If thou wishest to acquire riches . . . we will collect a fortune larger than is possessed by any of us; if thou desirest honors . . . we shall make thee our chief . . ." (Ameer-'Ali, The Spirit of Islam, 98).

He answered, "Do ye indeed disbelieve in Him . . . do ye assign Him peers?

The Lord of the worlds is He!."[1] They appealed to His uncle and protector, the head of His clan, and this uncle begged Him to desist from teaching, as He was bringing ruin on Himself and His family.

He answered, "Were the sun to come down on my right hand and the moon on my left, and the choice were offered me of abandoning my mission until God himself should reveal it, or perishing in the achievement of it, I would not abandon it." (T.W.Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, 13-14).

The Quraysh stopped Him from praying in the Ka'bih, they pursued Him, they covered Him and His disciples with filth when they were praying, they incited children and the rabble to follow and mock them, a woman strewed thorns where He would walk.

Baha'u'llah says: "How abundant the thorns and briars which they have strewn over His path! . . .

Such sore accusations they brought against Him that in recounting them God forbiddeth the ink to flow . . . or the page to bear them . . .

For this reason did Muhammad cry out: 'No Prophet of God hath suffered such harm as I have suffered.'" (Iqan, 108-109).
[1. Qur'an 41:8.]

He sent many of His disciples to safety in Abyssinia (615), where there was a pious Christian king. The king asked why they had fled, and they answered, "O King, we were plunged . . . in ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols, we lived in unchastity; we ate dead bodies, and we spoke abominations . . . when God raised among us a man . . . he called us to the unity of God . . . to fly vices, and . . . abstain from evil . . . For this reason our people have risen against us . . ."(Ameer-'Ali, op. cit., 100). To kill Muhammad would have meant a civil war, and so the Meccans tortured His poor disciples instead. Balal, the Ethiopian, they exposed, <p8> day after day, to the desert sun, stretched out with a rock on his breast. They told him he must renounce Muhammad or die, and he answered, "There is only one God, only one God." He lived to become the first muezzin.[2]
[2. The Christians of the period used the clapper to call to prayer, the Jews, trumpets, the Zoroastrians, bonfires, says Dermenghem, 267.]

Baha'u'llah says of him, "Consider how Balal, the Ethiopian, unlettered though he was, ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude . . ." (Gleanings, 83).[3] Muhammad called him "the first fruits of Abyssinia," just as He called another early disciple "the first fruits of Greece." It is important to remember that Islam is a universal religion, meant for the whole world -- not in any sense a restricted or local faith.
[3. Baha'u'llah says, "The acts of his honor, Balal, the Ethiopian, were so acceptable in the sight of God that the 'sin' of his stuttering tongue excelled the 'shin' pronounced by all the world (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, 76).]

The Meccans said, "Know this, O Muhammad, we shall never cease to stop thee from preaching till either thou or we perish." (Ameer Ali, op. cit., 107).

For three years (617-619) they blockaded Him and His kinsmen in a remote quarter of the town and forbade the other towns-people to have any dealings with them whatever.[4] Then Khadijih died (December 619) and five weeks later, Muhammad's uncle and protector. Since His own people refused Him, He then went to another city -- Ta'if, a beautiful place about seventy miles distant, where fruit trees grew -- but the people stoned Him away. It was when He returned to Mecca that He had the vision of the Night Journey (Mi'raj, i.e., Ascent), when He rose in spirit through the seven heavens to the throne of God. Surih 17 of the Qur'an is called the Night Journey; in the Iqan Baha'u'llah refers to Muhammad as the "Lord of the Mi'raj" and says that the mirror of the heart must be purified to understand its mystery (187).
[4. We should remember that, as R. L. Gulick points out in his Muhammad The Educator (ms. p. 21), "Tribal opinion was of supreme importance as a regulator of behavior. The worst punishment was expulsion from the tribe..."]

You would say this was the end of the story of Muhammad: He and a tiny group, shut away in the sand, alone on the planet, encircled by men so wild they buried children alive as a point of honor, who killed casually, and who -- because His teachings meant the destruction of the national religion and the loss of their own wealth and power -- had for thirteen long years been waiting to shed His blood. An enemy of His has written: "We search in vain through the pages of profane history for a parallel to the struggle in which for thirteen years the Prophet of Arabia, in face of discouragement and threats, rejection and persecution, retained thus his faith unwavering, preached repentance . . . he met insults, menace, and danger with a lofty and patient trust in the future." (Muir, op. cit., 518).

It was now that the tide of history turned . . . The Guardian has said to a pilgrim that our Cause "is impelled forward through crises. The spread of the Cause precipitates crisis . . . and the solution of the crisis through the operation of the Cause facilitates the spread of the Cause." Baha'u'llah says, "I recognize, O Thou Who art my heart's desire, that were fire to be touched by water it would instantly be extinguished, whereas the Fire Thou didst kindle can never go out, though all the seas of the earth be poured upon it." (Prayers and Meditations, 150). We who are believers are working with something unkillable.

What happened in Islam was this: Muhammad had often preached to other tribes, people who would come to the Ka'bih or the great fairs. On such occasions, His uncle, the squint-eyed Abu Lahab (he and Zayd, Muhammad's adopted son, are the only two contemporaries named in the Qur'an) would follow <p9> and cry: "He is an impostor who seeks to lead you away from the faith of your fathers!" And the visitors would laugh, saying, "Thine own kindred know thee best. Wherefore do they not believe?" But there were some men of Medina (Yathrib) who listened to Him. They were weary of the fighting between rival clans in their own city, and they asked Him to come and be their Chief. Muhammad sent His disciples on to Medina. It was the fateful year 622 -- the year of the Hijra (Emigration) from which the Muslim calendar was afterward reckoned.

At this juncture the Meccans united to murder Muhammad. They arranged for members of all the clans to attack Him at once, so that the blood-guilt would not rest on any one of them. They waited outside His house, watching as He lay in His cloak on the bed, but when the dawn came, they saw it was not Muhammad there but 'Ali. Muhammad had escaped to Medina, which from this time on was called the City of the Prophet.

Muhammad entered Medina in triumph; a shaykh put his turban on the end of a lance for a banner, and a parasol of palm branches was held over the Prophet's head, while the Helpers (Ansar), the Medina believers, surrounded Him, brandishing swords and spears. He dismounted on the outskirts, and turned toward the Point of Adoration, Jerusalem (later Muhammad changed the Qiblih to Mecca; the Baha'i Qiblih is the Shrine of Baha'u'llah); He prayed, with all the multitude; then, the accounts say, He let His camel go free into the town, and where it knelt, a mosque was later erected. As He entered, He greeted all the

people, even the children.

So the Meccans were cheated of their prey. The despised outcast, the One they had called a crazed poet, a madman, a liar, was now the Head of a State. And now all Arabia rose against Medina; the Meccans rallied the tribes, including a "fifth column" within Medina itself. The battle was on, between idolatry and true worship, between Hobal and the Omnipotent Lord, between freedom and death.

'Abdu'l-Baha says in Some Answered Questions: "If Christ himself had been placed in such circumstances . . . culminating in flight from his native land -- if in spite of this these lawless tribes continued to pursue him, to slaughter the men, to pillage their property, and to capture their women and children, what would have been Christ's conduct with regard to them? If this oppression had fallen only upon himself he would have forgiven them . . . but if he had seen that these cruel and bloodthirsty murderers wished to kill, to pillage, and to injure all these oppressed ones . . . it is certain that he would have protected them, and would have resisted the tyrants . . . To free these tribes from their bloodthirstiness was the greatest kindness, and to restrain them was a true mercy." (24-25). "The military expeditions of Muhammad . . . were always defensive actions . . ." (22).[5]
[5. Cf. Luke 22:36: "Then he (Jesus) said unto them. But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one."]

The Prophet of God now had ten more years to live.

They were years of intense activity . . .

At the Battle of Badr, the Meccans were put to flight.

They rose again, 3,000 strong, and attacked Muhammad with His thousand men at the hill of Uhud, three miles from Medina.

Muhammad did not love war, but He had no choice.

He was so gentle and mild that His enemies called Him womanish.

When He fell at Uhud, a disciple asked Him to curse the enemy; He answered, "I have not been sent as a curse to mankind, but as an inviter to good and as a mercy." (Maulana Muhammad 'Ali, Muhammad the Prophet, Ahmadiyya Anjuman-i-Isha 'at-i-Islam, Lahore, India, 1924; 262).

It was at Uhud that the idolatrous women marched to battle, beating their timbrels and singing: "We are the daughters of the morning star; soft are the carpets we <p10> tread . . . our necks are adorned with pearls, and our tresses are perfumed with musk.

The brave who confront the foe we will clasp to our bosoms, but the dastards who flee we will spurn -- not for them our embraces!"

It was here that these women mutilated the dead, and that Hind, notorious wife of Muhammad's chief enemy, Abu Sufyan, ripped out the liver of a Muslim hero and devoured it.

It was this battle that the Muslims lost, because the archers who were holding the Meccan cavalry in check disobeyed Muhammad and left their positions to look for booty.

Muhammad was wounded in the mouth and on the temple, and reported killed. 'Ali wept in despair when he saw Him, and brought water in his shield, saying, "Wash the blood from Thy face, O Apostle of God, that Thy men may know Thee . . ." (Chronique de Abou Djafar Mohammed-ben-Jarir Ben Yazid Tabari, tr. by M.H.

Zotenberg, Paris, 1871; III, 33).

Then 'Ali raised up the Prophet's banner and rallied the defeated Muslims.

The idolaters' victory was costly; they dispersed for a time but in 627 they came again, 10,000 strong, and besieged Medina.

On the advice of Salman the Persian, a stratagem previously unknown in Arabia was now used: a trench was tug around the city.

The Prophet Himself worked with the others at digging the trench.

An account Says He "seized a pickaxe . . . and with it he struck a flint which had defied those who were digging; a spark came out of it, and he- -peace be with him -- said 'In this spark I saw the cities of Chosrau (King of Persia.)' Then he struck another blow, and another spark came out; and he said 'In it I saw the cities of Caesar.

Verily God will give them to my nation after me.'" ('Ali Tabari, The Book of Religion and Empire, tr. by A.

Mingana, Manchester, University Press, 1922; 44).

There was a fifteen day siege, but the trench saved Medina and a Storm put the enemy to flight.

Islam had conquered.

After the battle, Muhammad went to His daughter, Fatimih, "and she began to weep and to kiss his mouth; and he said to her: 'O Fatimih, why art thou weeping?' And she said 'O Apostle of God, I see thee shabby, weary, and clothed in worn out garments.' And he said 'O Fatimih, God has revealed to thy father that it is He who places dignity or lowliness in every house, be it of clay or of hair; and He has revealed to me that my lowliness will be (until it reaches where night has reached).' " (i.e., soon over). (Idem). Baha'is will remember the agony of the young 'Abdu'l-Baha on seeing His Father as He was brought out of the Black Pit (Siyah- Chal).

The old blood-tie was now replaced throughout Arabia by a new, much wider loyalty. For the first time, hundreds of hostile Arab tribes were now united under one banner -- Islam. Muhammad took Mecca (630), making an entry so peaceful as to be unparalleled in history, and telling the Meccans: -- "I say to you what my brother Joseph said to his brothers: 'No blame be on you this day. God will forgive you, for He is the most merciful of those who show mercy

(Qur'an 12:92).' " And He struck down the Ka'bih gods, saying: "Truth is come and falsehood is gone. Verily, falsehood is a thing that perisheth." (Qur'an 17:83). The Arabs now came into the religion of God by troops. As each tribe accepted, Muhammad sent them a teacher of Islam, telling him: "Deal gently with the people, and be not harsh; cheer them, and contemn them not . . . the key to heaven is to testify to the truth of God and to do good works." (Ameer-'Ali, op. cit., 208). Muhammad also sent out missives and embassies declaring Islam to rulers of the day, the King of Persia, the Negus of Abyssinia, Heraclius the Greek emperor, the ruler of Egypt, the governor of Yaman, the chief of the Bani Hanifa. The King of Persia, enraged at seeing Muhammad's name before his own on the letter, tore it up. Muhammad said, "God will tear up his kingdom in the same way." <p11>

Then Muhammad fell ill. He had an intense fever. A disciple laid his hand on Muhammad's forehead and said, "How fierce is the fever upon thee!" "Yea, verily," said Muhammad, "but I have been during the night season repeating in praise. of the Lord seventy surihs, including the seven long ones." The disciple said, "Why not rest and take thine ease, for hath not the Lord forgiven thee?" "Nay," replied Muhammad, "wherefore should I not yet be a faithful servant unto Him?" (Cf. Muir, op. cit., 488). As He grew worse, He asked if there was any gold in the house; on being told there was, He insisted that His wife 'Ayishih give it away to the poor, and could not rest until she had done this. He said, "It would not have become me to meet my Lord, and this gold still in my hands." While He lay dying, He called for pen and ink to write His will, but 'Umar said, "Pain is deluding God's Messenger; we have God's Book, which is enough." They disputed at the bedside, whether to bring the pen and ink, and He sent them away. He was praying in a whisper when He ascended. (June 8, 632). <p12>

III

"AN EXCELLENT PATTERN HAVE YE"

"His morals are the Qur'an," said 'Ayishih of Muhammad. He, like the other Manifestations of God, is a perfect example for men to follow. The Qur'an says: "An excellent pattern have ye in the Apostle of God." (33:21).

He was stern in punishing criminals, but always forgave personal enemies; for example Habrar, who drove the end of his lance against the Prophet's daughter, as she was mounting her camel to flee from Mecca. She was far advanced in pregnancy; she fell to the ground, and later died from the injury. Habrar threw himself on Muhammad's mercy, and was pardoned. (Ameer-'Ali, op.cit., 178). The God of the Qur'an is a God of mercy; over and over, we hear of His mercy; we are told never to despair of it; God says, "I will answer the cry of him that crieth, when he crieth unto me: but let them hearken unto me, and believe in me." (2:182). We are told that God "hath imposed mercy upon Himself as a law." (6:12).[1]

[1. This teaching seems to have freed the Muslims from the burden of conscious and unconscious guilt which weighs so heavily on many Christians]

He was always thankful. "When the first-fruits of the season were brought: to Him, He would kiss them, place them upon His eyes and say: 'Lord, as Thou hast shown us the first, show unto us likewise the last.'" (Muir, op. cit., 516). Repeatedly, we are directed in the Qur'an to be thankful: "forsooth is God rich without you: but He is not pleased with thanklessness in His servants: yet if ye be thankful He will be pleased with you." (39:9).

He was immaculate in His person, and loved fragrances; He would use musk and ambergris, and burn camphor on odoriferous wood. It is said that once His revelations ceased, and He remarked to some people who were present, "How can revelations not be interrupted when you do not trim your nails, nor clip your moustache...." ('Ali Tabari, The Book of Religion and Empire, 27). The Qur'an says, "God loveth the clean." (9:109).

Many of our modern courtesy customs are traceable to Muhammad. He said, "The duties of Muslims to each other are six...When you meet a Muslim, greet him, and when he inviteth you to dinner, accept; and when he asketh you for advice, give it him; and when he sneezeth and saith, 'Praise be to God,' do you say, 'May God have mercy upon thee'; and when he is sick, visit him; and when he dieth, follow his bier." Again He said, "When victuals are placed before you no man must stand up till it be taken away; nor must one man leave off eating before the rest; and if he doeth, he must make an apology... It is of my ways that a man shall come out with his guest to the door of his house...It is not right for a guest to stay so long as to incommode his host." (Cf. Suhrawardy, Sayings). He also directed His followers not to present themselves at mealtime unasked, and not to interfere with the owner of the house in the management of his house. (Cf. Persian Dars-i-Akhlaq).

Modern societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals owe much to Him. He taught kindness to animals, and said that an adulteress was forgiven her sin because, seeing a dog suffering from thirst, she tied her shoe to her garment and lowered it into a well, to draw up water for the dog.

He was endlessly patient. ('Abdu'l-Baha once said to my mother: Sabr kun; mithl-i-man bash -- Be thou patient; be thou like unto Me.) The Qur'an enjoins patience in over seventy passages. It states: "How goodly the reward <p13> of those who labor, Who patiently endure, and put their trust in their Lord!" (29:58-59); and "Verily those who endure with patience shall be rewarded: their reward shall not be by measure." (39:13).

He taught people to love the next world; He said this world was only a vapor in a desert. Again He said, "Verily, the world is no otherwise than as a tree...when the traveler hath rested under its shade, he passeth on." (Cf. Muir, op. cit., 330 n.). As He was dying He told them, "God hath a servant to whom He hath said: Dost thou desire this world or the next? The servant hath chosen the next, and God hath approved his choice, and hath promised to call him into His presence." And one of the believers who was there understood, and wept. (Cf. Tabari, Chronique, III, 208-209).

He taught them to give alms, this being contrary to their wishes. Persia seemed

to me a nation of alms-givers; I will never forget the grace and courtesy with which a friend of ours, a member of Parliament, gave alms to anyone who asked. Muhammad said, "Fear the Fire by giving alms, although it be but one half of a date." ('Ali Tabari, op. cit., 26-27). This Persian boasted that his father and grandfather died poor. Poverty is highly prized by the true Muslims, because Muhammad said "Poverty is My glory." He ate sitting on the ground; His pillow was His arm; He lived in a row of modest rooms, made of sun-dried brick, furnished with leather water-bags, and leather mats stuffed with palm-fibre, and cots of palm-fibre rope. He kindled the fire, swept the floor, patched His own garments and shoes, milked the goats. He said, "I am a servant, I eat and sleep like a servant." (A. Tabari, idem).

As to the question, what is a Muslim?

Islam is a clear and fundamentally easy religion to obey.

The Qur'an says, "We will teach thee to recite the Qur'an. . .And we will make easy to thee our easy ways." (87:8).

And again, "we will lay on them our easy behests." (18:87).

It does not confuse its adherents with a complicated theology, and its text is clear on the duties to be performed by them.

It has no priesthood, no mediators between the faithful and their Lord; the 'ulama, meaning the learned ones -- the qadis (judges), muftis (exponents of the religious law), mujtahids, mullas -- are not a priesthood in the Christian sense, but expounders of the law.

The Muslims do not worship Muhammad (Who seems indeed to have stressed the human station of the Prophet to compensate for the Christian worship of Jesus).

We read that in His lifetime "The meanest slaves would take hold of his hand and drag him to their masters to obtain redress for ill treatment or release from bondage." (Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, The Ideal Prophet, Woking, 1925; 194).

He was at everyone's disposal, "even as the river's bank to him that draweth water from it" (Muir, op. cit., 511); and this loving and trusting attitude continues, but the Qur'an forbade the Muslims to deify Him; He told them He was a "witness, and a herald...and a warner; And one who, through His permission, summoneth to God, and a light-giving torch." (Qur'an 33:

44-45).

It is the one, universal God Who is worshipped in Islam; One closer to man" than his neck-vein" (50:15), and aware of all things: "no leaf falleth but He knoweth it." (6:59), and characterized by ninety-names given throughout the Qur'an, and another name, the Greatest Name, not made known at that time (asma'u'l-husna; Qur'an 7:179; 17:110; 59:24).

He said, "The idols which ye invoke...can never create a single fly...and if the fly snatch anything from them, they cannot recover the same...." (Qur'an 22:72).

Muhammad did not found a new religion, but renewed the one religion brought by successive holy Prophets before Him, and Who were on the same plane as Muhammad Himself (2:130).[2] The soul is immortal and accountable for its actions.

The Muslims do not believe in original sin, or vicarious atonement; salvation is not only for Muslims but for the followers of all <p14> previous faiths: "Verily, they who believe, and the Jews, and the Sabeites, and the Christians -- whoever of them believeth in God and in the last day, and doth what is right, on them shall come no fear, neither shall they be put to grief. (Qur'an 5:73). (The Qur'an states of unnamed Prophets, "Of other Apostles We have not told Thee." (4:162).

A Zoroastrian wrote 'Abdu'l-Baha to ask why Zoroaster was not mentioned by Muhammad; the Master referred him to Qur'an 25:40 and 50:12, "those who dwelt at Rass," explaining that Rass is the Araxes River and the reference is to Zoroaster and others.

Cf.

Persian Tablets, published text).

Islam is against aggression, permitting war only in self-defense and under well- defined conditions: "Fight in the way of God against those who attack you, but begin not hostilities, for God loveth not the transgressors." (2:186).

Islam, the religion, was not propagated by the sword; to the charge that Islamic aggression was infused into medieval Christianity, the Muslims reply: "The massacres of Justinian and the fearful wars of Christian Clovis in the name of religion occurred long before the time of Muhammad." (Ameer-Ali, op. cit., 311-314).

They contrast the taking of Jerusalem by the Caliph 'Umar, and its conquest six hundred years later by the Christian Crusaders; 'Umar rode into the city with the Patriarch Sophronius, conversing on its antiquities; when the hour of prayer came, he declined to pray in the Church of the Resurrection, where he then happened to be, lest in future the Muslims, claiming a precedent, should infringe the rights of the Christians to their church.

This was in 637.

The Crusaders dashed the brains of children against the walls, roasted men at slow fires, ripped up others to see if they had swallowed gold, drove the Jews into their synagogue and burnt them, massacred 70,000 people.
[2. The oneness of religions is unequivocally stated: "Verily We have revealed to Thee as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after Him, and as We revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and Jesus, and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron, and Solomon; and to David gave We Psalms." (4:161).]

Non-Muslims in the conquered countries were equal to the Muslims in all respects, paying a moderate capitation-tax (jizyah) in return for military exemption, and exemption from payment of the poor-rate (zakat), a tax of 2 - 1/2% on total annual income, compulsory for Muslims. We are told (in the useful

introduction to the re-edition of Sir 'Abdu'llah Suhrawardy's Sayings of Muhammad, Wisdom of the East Series, E. P. Dutton, M.Y., 1941; 17-46) "When the Roman Emperor embraced Christianity, the population of the whole Roman Empire, including Egypt, was by decree forced to renounce all other religions and adopt Christianity; but it was not until after five hundred years of Muslim rule in Egypt that, as the result of peaceful conversion, the Muslims formed even 50 per cent. of the total population. In Northern India...which has been under Muslim rule for six centuries...there is a Hindu population of 41 millions, against the Muslim population of 7 millions, according to the Census of 1931. The Hindus and Muslims have lived together as fellow-citizens for centuries..."

Muhammad said, "He who wrongs a Jew or Christian will have Me as his accuser." (Dermenghem, op. cit., 331). "Before the Hejira, the Mussulmans had endured persecution without defence; later they put up a legitimate resistance and when they became victors they practised tolerance...

The idolater was not allowed to remain on Moslem soil; but the People of the Book both Jew and Christian, by paying tribute, had a right to protection, could practise their faith freely, and were considered a part of the community." (Idem).

In Spain as elsewhere, Ameer-'Ali points out, Muslim rule brought great progress, order, peace and plenty, promotion of freedom and equality, regard of rulers for their subjects.

Countries under Muslim rule were exempt from the disastrous consequences of the feudal system and the feudal code; Muslim legislation freed the soil and assured the rights of individuals.

Spain had greatly suffered from barbarian hordes, and the people had been weighted down with feudal burdens, while vast areas were deserted; under the Muslims, people and land were enfranchised, cities sprang up, <p15> order was established, Muslims and non-Muslims -- Suevi, Goth, Vandal, Roman and Jew -- were placed on equal footing, intermarriage took place.

This author says it "would be an insult to common-sense and humanity" to compare the Arab rule in Spain "with that of the Normans in England, or of the Christians in Syria during the Crusades..." (op. cit., 422 ff.).

The Arabs colonized the depopulated areas, bringing in large industrious communities from Africa and Asia, including 50,000 Jews, with their families, at one time; the generous offers of the Muslims attracted these peoples.

The Qur'an forbids drinking, gambling, usury, all forms of vice, and is the first of the sacred Books to put a restriction on polygamy. Muhammad forbids the vengeance of blood and all blood feuds. He prepared the way for the abolition of slavery, encouraging the manumission of slaves by His own example, and greatly ameliorating their lot; slavery as practised in the West is unknown in Islam; slaves, such as the mameluke sultans of Egypt, could become kings. As for women, Muhammad has been called the greatest champion of women's rights the world has ever seen; Islam gives to women the same property rights as her

husband; she can inherit and dispose of property, has various alimony and other rights, must be treated with respect. There is no color or race prejudice in Islam -- color is "a sign of God" (30:21; 35:25). Islam teaches love of country (nationalism is its great contribution, the Guardian told Emeric Sala). The Muslims have no caste system, and the Hajj brings them all together, as equals. Islam imposes only five obligations on the faithful: They must affirm that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is the Apostle of God; they must pray five times a day; fast one month out of the year; pay the poor-rate annually; make one pilgrimage to Mecca in their lifetime, if they are able. The Muslims pray wherever they happen to be at the appointed hours, facing the Ka'bih; they must be in a state of cleanliness and have performed the ablutions.

In studying the Qur'an we should remember that no council of scholars has ever translated it into western languages, as was done with the King James and other versions of the Bible, and that the standard English rendering, George Sale's, is based on Maracci's Latin version, made for the purpose of discrediting Islam.

The Muslim Paradise and Hell are to be taken as symbols, not in the literal sense. The Qur'an tells of "The parable (mathal) of the Garden which the righteous are promised" (13:35). The descriptions are figurative, just as Jesus the Christ was speaking figuratively when He said to His disciples, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:29). Muhammad tells of "the meadows of Paradise" (42:21); He says Paradise has "storied pavilions beneath which...the rivers flow." (39:21). He speaks of the gardens of delight, and the cup that shall not oppress the sense, of the houris with faces fair as ostrich eggs, of the ever-blooming youths going round about with goblets, of lote-trees and acacias, of soft green cushions and delicate carpets. (Cf. 55,56, 37). He says of the believers in Paradise, "No vain discourse shall they hear therein, nor any falsehood, but only the cry, 'Peace! Peace!'" (56:24-25).

The Qur'an -- the Book to be Read -- is like the ocean, always new and always changing. It cannot be presented in brief -- you cannot summarize the Atlantic. I have only suggested a few ripples. One further aspect of the Qur'an I would like to mention: its completely realistic view of humanity. (This fact of Omniscience being onto us is not without humor). <p16>

The Qur'an states that man "hath been created weak" (4:32) and "hasty" (70:19, 17:12); that woman is "forever contentious without reason." (43:17). It reminds man that he was made of a drop of "sorry water" (32:7) and repeatedly warns him, in the circumstances, against pride: "Walk not proudly in the land, for thou canst not cleave the earth, neither shalt thou equal the mountains in stature," (17:39). The true Muslims are humble, known by the dust on their foreheads -- "their tokens are on their faces" (48:29) -- from bowing down in prayer. In prosperity, an individual forgets God, returning quickly to Him when in trouble: "When We are gracious to man, he withdraweth and turneth him aside; but when evil toucheth him, he is a man of long prayers." (41:51). A believer whose custom it was to slip discreetly away from over- long meetings, was

somewhat dismayed to come upon this: "God knoweth those of you who withdraw quietly from the assemblies, screening themselves behind others." (24:63) .

What was He like, this Man Who, thirteen hundred years ago, said, "We shall hurl the truth at falsehood, and it shall smite it, and lo! it shall vanish." (21:18). The Imam 'Ali, who loved Muhammad, remembered Him as follows: "He was of the middle height, neither very tall nor very short. His skin was fair but ruddy, His eyes black; His beard, that surrounded all His face, luxuriant. The hair of His head was long and fell to His shoulders; it was black. His neck was white...His gait was so energetic you would have said He was wrenching His foot from a stone, yet at the same time so light He seemed to float...But He did not walk with pride, as the princes do. (Elsewhere we read that He sometimes walked very rapidly, and that He never turned, even if His mantle caught in a thorny bush). There was such sweetness in His face, that once you were in His presence you could not leave Him; if you were hungry, it fed you just to look at Him...When they entered His presence, the afflicted forgot their anguish. Whoever saw Him declared that he had never found, before or afterward, a man of such entrancing speech. His nose was aquiline, His teeth somewhat far apart. Sometimes He would let His hair fall free, sometimes He wore it knotted in two or four strands. At sixty-three...age had whitened but some fifteen of His hairs..." (Tabari, Chroniques, III, 202-203).

Fanny Knobloch, a distinguished early Baha'i pioneer, once told me that if she ever were found worthy to enter Paradise and consort with the Prophets of God, she wished to be with Muhammad because she had fought His battles against the Christians for so many years. Undoubtedly, in the realms of the placeless, He knows that we Baha'is are trying to redress the wrongs that have been done Him for thirteen centuries. These verses, which He brought His followers, apply to us as well:

"Verily, in the creation of the Heavens and of the Earth, and in the succession of the night and of the day, are signs for men of understanding heart; Who standing, and sitting, and reclining, bear God in mind, and muse on the creation of the Heavens and of the Earth. 'O our Lord!' say they, 'Thou hast not created this in vain. No. Glory be to Thee! Keep us, then, from the torment of the fire...O our Lord! we have indeed heard the voice of one that called. He called us to the faith -- 'Believe ye on your Lord' -- and we have believed. O our Lord! forgive us
then our sin, and hide away from us our evil deeds, and cause us to die with the righteous. O our Lord! and give us what Thou hast promised us by Thine Apostles, and put us not to shame on the day of the resurrection. Verily, Thou wilt not fail Thy promise.' And their Lord answereth them, 'I will not suffer the work of him among you that worketh, whether of male or female, to be lost...And they who have fled their country and quitted their homes and suffered in My Cause, and have fought and fallen, I will blot out their sins from them, and I will bring them into gardens beneath which the streams do flow...They shall

abide therein forever.'n(3: 197 ff.). <p17>

IV

THE QUR'AN

Enemies of Islam have often said that Muhammad copied the Qur'an from the Christian and Jewish Scriptures. This is impossible. Muhammad knew only Arabic. He had never seen the Bible. "The earliest official Arabic translations of the Old and New Testaments were made centuries after Mohammed's death."[1]
[1. Bodley, R V C, The Messenger, 86.]

If it be objected that the Prophet of God traveled to Syria in His earlier years, and that there, as well as in Arabia, there were both Jews and Christians (such as 'Abdu'llah ibn Salam -- Waraqa -- the Nestorian monk Buhayra - who understood and recognized Muhammad on the basis of their Scriptures) who could have relayed information to Muhammad, this of course is true. The Qur'an itself makes references to such sources -- e.g., Surih 10:94: "And if thou art in doubt as to what we have sent down to thee, inquire at those who have read the Scriptures before thee." But we should explain that merely knowing of various religious teachings does not make one a Prophet of God.

It is important to understand that anyone could have compiled some former teachings in a book, but that only a Manifestation of God could create a living religion that swept across the world and influenced millions of human beings down the centuries.

Furthermore the historical material is only one aspect of the Qur'an. Muhammad could never have copied the laws which He inaugurated and the many other teachings He brought -- from the Old and New Testaments, because they were not there.[1a]
[1a. There is only one direct quotation from the Bible in the entire Qur'an: Surih 21:105 quotes Psalms 37:29.]

The great miracle of Islam is that an illiterate man gave the Arabs their first Book.

As Muhammad approached forty, He would retire to a cave on Mt. Hira to be alone and meditate. Finally He was absent for a long period, and since He had taken very few provisions with Him, Khadijih was much troubled. She sent a slave to the mountain, and he stood at the cave and called, but only his own voice echoed back. When Muhammad returned, He was exhausted. An apparition had come to Him, an angel, saying: "Read!" Muhammad had said, "I cannot read." Again the presence cried, "Read!" and then a third time, and Muhammad said, "What shall I read?" And the being said, "Read, in the name of thy Lord who created; Created man from clots of blood...Thy Lord is the most Beneficent, Who hath taught the use of the pen; Hath taught man that which he knoweth not." These are the opening lines of the first surih of the Qur'an according to Rodwell's arrangement. The Qur'an means the Reading, or the Book to be Read. A surih is a chapter of the Qur'an -- the word is also used of a row of stones in a wall, or

a rank of soldiers, or things in a series.

Muhammad began to fear He was possessed of a jinn, or was going mad.

He was in despair.

Sometimes measured phrases burst from Him.

He went to Khadijih, and she consoled Him: "...are you not the Amin (the Trusted One)...?

How can God allow you to be deceived when you do not <p18> deceive?

Are you not a pious, sober, charitable, hospitable man?

Have you not respected your parents, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, helped the traveller, protected the weak?

It is not possible that you are the plaything of lying demons and malicious jinns."[2] She talked with her cousin Waraqa about this; he was a Christian, versed in the Scriptures, and he was overjoyed: "Holy, holy, verily this is the Namus-i-Akbar, who came to Moses.

He will be the prophet of His people.

Tell Him this.

Bid Him be of brave heart."[3] For some time Muhammad continued to fear Himself the victim of a hallucination.

He returned to the mountain, and no voice came.

He was utterly despondent, and longed for death.

Then once again Gabriel appeared, and brought Him great consolation -- a surih of the Qur'an called The Brightness: "By the noon-day Brightness, And by the night when it darkeneth' Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, neither hath He been displeased.

And surely the future shall be better for thee than the past, And in the end shall thy Lord be bounteous to thee and thou be satisfied.

Did He not find thee an orphan and gave thee a home?...And found thee needy and enriched thee....as for the favors of thy Lord tell them abroad."
[2 Dermenghem, E., Life of Mahomet, 60, 61.]
[3 Ameer-'Ali, Spirit of Islam, 84.]

The angel Gabriel is the Holy Ghost, the intermediary between God and Muhammad; in Christianity it is symbolized by a dove; in the Baha'i Dispensation, the spirit of God within Baha'u'llah is personified by a Maiden, as the Guardian explains in the book God Passes By (p. 118, 121, etc.). The Trinity according to our teachings is the unknowable Lord, the Perfect Man, and the Holy Spirit.

The Qur'an was not revealed to Muhammad all at one time. It came to Him over a period of about twenty-three years, that is, from the time He was forty until His ascension in Medina in 632. Sometimes the voice was silent. Sometimes its

on-rush was so great that a vein would swell on Muhammad's forehead, and His sweat would pour down. Once, we read, He was riding on a camel when the revelation came to Him with such intensity that the camel was forced to its knees. These physical effects of the revelation upon Him account for the enemies of Islam referring to Muhammad as an epileptic. Modern scholarship has refuted this. No one in the disturbed physical condition of epilepsy could have endured Muhammad's thirteen years of agony in Mecca, His arduous desert campaigns, and His onerous and complex duties as Head of the Muslim State. Furthermore, then as now, inspired utterance is distinguishable from pathological expression -- the babbling of a sick man could never create a Book that has attracted and inspired the most brilliant minds of many centuries.[3a]
[Dermenghem, op. cit., 249: "His creative ability and the vastness of his genius, his sense of the practical, his will, his prudence, his self-control and his activity -- in short the life he led -- make it impossible to take this inspired mystic for a visionary epileptic."]

Baha'u'llah says, "...the unfailing testimony of God to both the East and the West is none other than the Qur'an." (Iqan, 210).

The Guardian tells us that the Qur'an, "apart from the sacred scriptures of the Babi and Baha'i Revelations, constitutes the only Book which can be regarded as an absolutely authenticated Repository of the Word of God." (The Advent of Divine Justice).

Baha'u'llah writes of the "mighty Qur'an" (Son of the Wolf, 112) and says "Hearken unto that which the Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'an..." (Ibid.., 82).

He says that Muhammad "came unto them with a Book that judged between truth and falsehood with a justice which turned into light the darkness of the earth, and enraptured the hearts of such as had known Him..." (Ibid., 81).

You must not be afraid of not being able to understand the Qur'an; Baha'u'llah says, "Were it beyond <p19> the comprehension of men, how could it have been declared as a universal testimony unto all people?" (Iqan, 210).

He says, "The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning.

They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit." (Ibid., 211).

And the Bab has said, "Should a tiny ant desire in this day to be possessed of such power as to be able to unravel the abstrusest and most bewildering passages of the Qur'an, its wish will...be fulfilled, inasmuch as the mystery of eternal might vibrates within the innermost being of all created things."[4]
[4 Dispensation of Baha'u'llah.]

The Qur'an is divided into 114 surihs, which in turn are divided into "verses" -- the Arabic word for these is "ayih," a term signifying any revealed verse or other sign or miracle of the Manifestation of God. Muhammad had nothing to do

with this division, or with the chapter titles, which latter are taken from the first important word, or from something else in the text. Every surih except the ninth is prefixed with the words, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful," a verse which Muhammad constantly used. As Baha'u'llah frequently says, God in the Qur'an is preeminently the "All-Merciful."

Some surihs are prefaced with detached letters of the alphabet -- e.g., the surih which Muhammad is said to have called "the heart of the Qur'an," and which is read to the dying in Muslim countries, is named the Ya Sin, because it begins with these letters. We read in God Passes By (140) that Baha'u'llah when in Baghdad revealed a commentary on these letters.

The Qur'an is from the literary standpoint most beautiful.

It is the standard Arabic Text, and is written in the dialect of the tribe of Quraysh, to which Muhammad belonged.

Imam 'Ali was the great authority on the Qur'an; he said, "There is not a verse in the Qur'an of which I do not know the matter, the parties to whom it refers, and the place and time of its revelation, whether by night or by day, whether in the plains or upon the mountains."[5] I read in the Persian Bayan that 'Ali would keep the fragments of the Qur'an in the fold of his robe.

The verses were written down at the moment of revelation or soon after, on palm leaves, leather, stone, the shoulder-blades of sheep; furthermore, the Arabs had wonderful memories, and many learned it by heart.

What we have today is a gathering-up of all the verses into one text; to this day, in spite of all the schisms in Islam, there is only one Qur'an, and scholars say "There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text."[6] The oldest copies now extant probably belong to the third century of the Hijra, and a few may belong to the second.[7] Muir, certainly no friend of Islam, tells us that "we may upon the strongest presumption affirm that every verse in the Kor'an is the genuine and unaltered composition af Mohammad himself, and conclude with at least a close approximation to the verdict of Von Hammer:

That we hold the Kor'an as surely Mohammad's word, as the Mohammadans hold it to be the word of God." (Op. cit., xxviii). (The few variations are mostly vowel points and diacritical signs, invented at a later date).
[5 Muir, Sir Wm, The Life of Muhammad, Edinburgh rev. ed, 1923, xx iv n.]
[6 Ibid., xxiii.]
[7 Ibid., xxiii n.]

Soon after the ascension of Muhammad many reciters of the Qur'an were killed in battle; it was therefore thought necessary to compile the entire Qur'an into one; the task was given to the Prophet's amanuensis, Zayd ibn Thabit. Therefore, although with misgivings and doubting the <p20> propriety of the work, Zayd searched out the entire Qur'an and compiled it, simply putting the long surihs first, regardless of chronology. As a matter of fact, the short surihs at the end, telling of the coming of the Day of God, were revealed at

the beginning. (The English version of J.M. Rodwell attempts to restore the true chronology). Zayd's text continued to be standard during 'Umar's caliphate, but it was found that variations had crept in to many copies; the men of Syria and 'Iraq had different readings, and the caliph 'Uthman therefore had all the versions compared with Zayd's original, Zayd and three coadjutors being appointed to do the work. Transcripts of this recension were sent out to all the cities, all other copies were burnt, and what we still have is this recension of the third caliph's. Zayd's original compilation was made within two or three years of Muhammad's ascension, and there is no question as to its accuracy; 'Ali, the Imam, was there, and many of the devout who knew the Qur'an by heart, and besides the transcripts of the separate portions were in daily use.[7a]
[7a. The Treaty of Versailles required Germany to restore one of these 'Uthman Qur'ans Earnest Carroll Moore, The Story of Instruction, 256.]

There is to my knowledge no satisfactory translation of the Qur'an into English. Some day a Baha'i group of scholars may perhaps make one. Able Christian writers have translated the Qur'an but their hostility always creeps in. Of the equally able Muslim translators, not one has had the necessary literary skill to convey the Text to us, and this also applies to the work of Christian converts to Islam The translators I use are Sale (1734), who is scholarly and accurate; Rodwell (1861), whose work is the most literary in quality and easy to read; Maulana Muhammad-'Ali, who includes both Arabic and English texts and a learned and helpful commentary; and a two-volume version by A. Yusuf 'Ali, also a bi- lingual text, mechanically the most legible and accessible of all.

In Persia the Qur'an is in constant use. It is often seen with a lacquered cover, and an illuminated opening page, and may be carefully wrapped in a hand-woven cloth. When you move to a new house, the Qur'an is taken there first, to bless it. When you leave on a journey, someone holds the Qur'an over you and you pass back and forth under it to ensure safety. My Muslim aunt read her Qur'an faithfully, every day. She longed for us to be Muslims, instead of Baha'is. She often thought she was ill, and would summon us to her deathbed. At one of her numerous deathbeds, she took her large Qur'an and banged me on the head with it, as a sort of baptism.

When you wish for guidance in Persia, you open the Qur'an and read wherever your eye falls. This is also done with the Odes of Hafiz. A friend of ours, married but romantically inclined, was once going on a journey. He decided to ask Hafiz if he would meet an attractive woman on the trip. He opened the book of Odes and his eye fell on this verse: "You have found your pearl; seek no more."

In addition to the Qur'an, the revealed word of God, there is a great body of hadith, i.e., recorded traditions of what Muhammad did and said; also, to the Shi'ah Muslims -- that section of Islam from which the Bab arose -- there are the recorded traditions of the holy Imams.

Hadith means relation of something that happened; it is from the root hadatha -- to happen.

Another word used instead of hadith is sunna -- which means the way or custom (of the Prophet).

After Muhammad's ascension, a new generation <p21> was eager to learn all they could of Him from His old Companions (the Muhajirin, Emigrants, His companions from Mecca, or the Ansar, Helpers, His Medinite followers).[8] We hear of a conversation that took place in the mosque at Kufa: "didst thou really see the Prophet, and wert thou on terms of familiar intercourse with him?...And how wert thou wont to behave towards the Prophet?n "Verily, we used to labour hard to please him." "Well, by the Lord...if I had been but alive in his time, I would not have allowed him to put his blessed foot upon the earth, but would have borne him on my shoulders wheresoever he listed." (Muir, op. cit., xxx).

Each hadith had its isnad -- its ascription, or chain of guarantors leading back to its source (Cf.

Alfred Guillaume, The Traditions of the Prophet, Oxford, 1924; 20).

A basic European authority on hadith literature is Ignaz Goldziher.

The "Sahih" of al-Bukhari is now available in English and French).

Men called "Collectors" spent their whole lives traveling from city to city, looking for vestiges of memories of the Prophet.

The earliest of the six standard Sunni collections were compiled under the caliphate of al-Ma'mun (813-833 A.D.); the four canonical Shi'ah collections somewhat later.

The collector al-Bukhari, after years of journeying, collected 600,000 traditions, and concluded that only 4,000 of these were authentic.

There are 1,465 collections of traditions extant.

The authenticity of a tradition was decided on the basis of the character of the men in its chain of guarantors.

Muslim law is to a considerable extent founded on the hadith; so is Muslim practice; for instance we hear of a pious man who would not eat watermelon -- he knew watermelon was not forbidden, but he could not discover what the Prophet did with the seeds.

Here are typical hadith:
[8. The general term for the Prophet's Companions is Ashib, their successors being the Tabi'un.]

"The world is sweet in the heart, and green to the eye...then look to your actions, and abstain from the world and its wickedness."

"To every young person who honoureth the old, on account of their age, may God appoint those who shall honour him in his years."

"The most excellent of alms is that of a man of small means, which he has earned by labour, and from which he giveth as much as he is able."

"He is of the most perfect Muslims, whose disposition is most liked by his own family."

"He who asketh the help of God in contending with the evil promptings of his own heart obtaineth it."

"Heaven lieth at the feet of mothers."

"The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr."

"Kindness is a mark of faith; and whoever hath not kindness hath not faith."

"Verily, God is mild, and is fond of mildness, and He giveth to the mild what He doth not give to the harsh."

"Desire not the world, and God will love you; and desire not what men have, and they will love you."
"The most excellent Jihad is that for the conquest of self."

"Death is a bridge that uniteth friend with friend."

"Trust in God, but tie your camel."

"No man hath drunk a better draught than anger which he hath swallowed for God's sake."

"Paradise is nearer to you than the thongs of your sandals; and the Fire likewise."

Muhammad's prayer, after being stoned out of Ta'if was this:

"O Lord! I make my complaint unto Thee, out of my feebleness, and the __ <p22> vanity of my wishes. I am insignificant in the sight of men, O Thou most merciful! Lord of the weak! Thou art my Lord! Forsake me not. Leave me not a prey to strangers, nor to mine enemies. If Thou art not offended, I am safe. I seek refuge in the light of Thy countenance, by which all darkness is dispelled, and peace cometh in the Here and the Hereafter. Solve Thou my difficulties as it pleaseth Thee. There is no power, no strength, save in Thee."[9]
[9. See The Sayings of Muhammad, compiled by Sir 'Abdu'llah Suhrawardy.]

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V

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam is a fuller Revelation from God than any which preceded it. There are a number of prophecies in the Old and New Testament proclaiming the advent of Muhammad:

Deuteronomy 33:2: "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints..."

Paran is a mountain in Arabia, and the Paran references are all to Islam; the other Manifestations in this particular prophecy are Moses, Jesus (Seir being a mountain in Galilee), and Baha'u'llah, the Lord of Hosts.

Habakkuk 3:3 speaks of the "Holy One from mount Paran."

Genesis 17:20 says: "And as for Ishmael...Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."

Muhammad descends from Abraham through Ishmael, and the twelve princes are the twelve Imams.

Deuteronomy, 18:18 says: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee (Moses), and will put my words in his mouth..."

This could not refer to the Israelites because it says "brethren," not "seed."

John 1:19-21 shows that the Jews were expecting three personages:

Christ, Elias, and that Prophet like unto Moses: the Jews having asked John the Baptist if he was Christ, he said no; "And they asked him, What then?

Art thou Elias?

And he saith, I am not, Art thou that prophet?

And he answered, No."

Qur'an 73:15 compares Muhammad to Moses: "Verily we have sent unto you an Apostle to witness against you, even as we sent an Apostle to Pharaoh."

I John 4:1-3 says: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God:

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God...."

This of course is applicable to Muhammad.

Again, Qur'an 61:6 says: "And remember when Jesus the son of Mary said, 'O children of Israel! of a truth I am God's apostle to you to confirm the law which was given before me, and to announce an apostle that shall come after me whose name shall be Ahmad!'"

The Muslims read the Paraclete, John 16:7, 14:16, 14:26, and 15:26 (also I John 2:1) as the Periclyte, or Illustrious, which is the meaning of Ahmad.[1] Muhammad said, in an indubitable hadith: "I have five names:

I am Muhammad; and Ahmad; and Effacing, by means of which God effaces infidelity; and Gatherer, who will gather people; and Final, that is to say, the last of the Prophets." ('Ali Tabari, op. cit., 42).
[1. See Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, s.v. Paraclete the word has been translated Comforter in the Gospel, Advocate in the Epistle.]

Muhammad, called by Baha'u'llah "God's Well-Beloved," (Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Baha'u'llah, 106), is at one with all the other Manifestations, and

therefore we must know Him as well as the others. Baha'u'llah says to the unbelievers, "If ye cherish the desire to slay Muhammad, seize Me and put an end to My life, for I am He, and My Self is His Self." (Gleanings, 101).

The Supreme Religious Court of Egypt in 1926 officially declared the Baha'is "as the believers in heresy, offensive and injurious to Islam, and wholly incompatible with the accepted doctrines and practice of its orthodox adherents." The text of their decision reads that the Baha'i Faith is a new religion, entirely independent, one of the established religious systems of the world; that Baha'i's are no more Muslims than Muslims are Christians or Jews (Baha'i Administration, 3rd Ed., 91 and 111). The opinion the Muslims have of us is such that they are still killing us in the streets of Persia. <p24>

When I worked on a Persian newspaper, the editor asked about my Baha'i ring; I explained, and he said, "Was there a shortage of religions, that you had to choose that one?" Today the secularized Muslims, i.e., the younger, educated element, do not care about religion. All Muslims, however, maintain that no new religion would come after Muhammad, since the text of the Qur'an declares that He is the seal of the Prophets (33:40). However, Baha'u'llah explains in the Iqan (161 ff.) What all the Manifestations of God are First and Last, beginning and end -- or, as the Revelation says, Alpha and Omega...It is obvious that we should expect no thanks for vindicating Muhammad, either from the fanatical element among the Muslims, who have cast us out, or from the fanatical element among the Christians, who condemn us as spreaders of Islam -- but a long injustice has been done to Muhammad, and a Baha'i will always champion the cause of truth, let the chips fall where they may.

The situation, as we all know, is this: All religions are inwardly one and eternal, but outwardly various and subject to change. The Guardian writes of "successive, of preliminary and progressive revelations..beginning with Adam and ending with the Bab..." (World Order of Baha'u'llah, 103). Today we are living in the promised time of all the ages, the great Day of God.

The Guardian directs the believers to "approach reverently and with a mind purged from pre-conceived ideas the study of the Qur'an..." (Advent of Divine Justice, 41); and to obtain "a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam..the source and background of their Faith.." (Idem).

The Christians do not seem to understand that the Qur'an teaches belief in all the Prophets of God.

When I went to Persia I found my Muslim relatives were more fanatical Christians than my Protestant Christian relatives.

The Qur'an teaches acceptance of all the Manifestations up to and including Muhammad, and establishes them on the same plane: "Say ye: 'We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down to us, and that which hath been sent down to Abraham and Ismael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes: and that which hath been given to Moses and to Jesus, and that which was given to the prophets from their Lord.

No difference do we make between any of them: and to God are we resigned (Muslims).'" (Qur'an 2:130; see also 3:78; 4:151; 5:73).

The Qur'an teaches the virgin birth of Jesus; it has a complete Surih -- the 19th -- devoted to Mary.

It does not hold with the notion of three Gods (4:169; 5:77) or that Jesus the Messiah is the son of God: "God is only one God!

Far be it from His glory that He should have a son!" (Qur'an 4:169).

But Muhammad insists on belief in Jesus, and 'Abdu'l-Baha' shows how the Qur'an adds much information on the life of Jesus, not given in the Gospel story (Promulgation of Universal Peace, I, 196).

The Qur'an also states that of all people the Christians are "nearest in affection" to the Muslims, "because they are free from pride.

And when they hear that which hath been sent down to the Apostle, thou seest their eyes overflow with tears at the truth they recognize therein..." (5:85-86). 'Abdu'l-Baha says, "Muhammad never fought against the Christians; on the contrary, he treated them kindly and gave them perfect freedom...In the edicts which he promulgated it is clearly stated that the lives, properties, and laws of the Christians and Jews are under the protection of God..." (Some Answered Questions, 25-26).

Ameer- 'Ali points out that Muhammad's Charter to the Christians gave them rights that they did not enjoy under their own sovereigns (Spirit of Islam, <p25> 176).[2] As for His relation to the people of the Old Testament, the Qur'an compares Muhammad to Moses (73:15), and Muhammad says the Qur'an confirms the Book of Moses: "But before the Qur'an was the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy; and this Book confirmeth it...." (46:11).

Elsewhere in the Qur'an He says His is the same Faith as those gone before: "To you hath He prescribed the Faith which He commanded unto Noah, and which we have revealed to thee, and which we commanded unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying, 'Observe this faith, and be not divided into sects therein.'" (42:

11).
[2.

See The Oath of Muhammad to the Followers of the Nazarene, tr. by Anton F.

Haddad, 1902; Published by Baha'i Board of Counsel, N.

Y.

Written by 'Ali and signed by twenty-two leading companions of the Prophet this was issued to the monks of St.

Catherine at Mt.

Sinai; for Arabic version, see Sunnajatu't-Tarab by Naufal Effendi Naufal: "This letter is directed to the embracers of Islam...as a Covenant to the

followers of the Nazarene...who disobeys that which is therein will be regarded as one who has corrupted His Testament, rejected His Authority, despised His Religion, and made himself deserving of His Curse...

Whenever monks, devotees and pilgrims gather together...Verily we are back of them and shall protect them, and their properties..."

Exempted from all but a voluntary tax "they must not be offended, or disturbed, or coerced or compelled."

Their judges and monks are to be free, no churches are to be plundered, no poll taxes are to be imposed on those whose occupation is worship (judges, monks) "Verily I shall keep their compact in the East or the West, in the North or the South, for they are under My protection and the testament of My safety, against all things which they abhor "

The wealthy and able were to pay the about 12 dirhems a year poll tax, but none were to be obliged to carry arms, "for the Muslims have to fight for them " "Do not dispute or argue with them "

No Christian woman is to marry a Muslim without her consent; she is not to be prevented from going to her church for prayer..."

The Muslims must protect them and defend them against others.

It is positively incumbent upon everyone of the Muslim nations not to contradict or disobey this oath until the Day of Resurrection...."]

There are many unfounded charges brought against Muhammad and we must know how to refute them. They are generally of an emotional nature, centering on women and on war; the inquirer's thinking is at once blocked by the emotional content of the accusation, and he turns away.

The first thing said is that Muhammad had several wives. We should explain that when Muhammad came into the world He found polygamy generally practised. Muhammad did not invent polygamy. Parviz, a contemporary king of Persia, had 12,000 wives. Tabari tells how, each year, the king would despatch three messengers throughout the realm, to replenish the (already somewhat cramped) harem. These envoys did not, like Hollywood talent scouts, send back descriptions of the ladies they discovered; on the contrary, each of them set out with a description, and it was his job to find girls who conformed to it. (Chroniques, II, 312 ff.).

The Jewish law set no limit to the number of wives a man might have. The holy Prophets of the Old Testament, such as Abraham, had more than one wife. As for Christianity, Jesus does not establish monogamy nor forbid polygamy. The early Christian clergy often had more than one wife at one time. W.E.H. Lecky says, "A tax called 'Culagium,' which was in fact a license to clergymen, to keep concubines, was during several centuries systematically levied by princes." (History of European Morals, II, 330). "An Italian bishop of the tenth century epigrammatically described the morals of his time, when he declared, that if he were to enforce the canons against unchaste people administering ecclesiastical

rites, no one would be left in the church except the boys; and if he were to observe the canons against bastards, these also must be excluded." (Idem). Eventually, asceticism was forced on the priests, some being obliged to discard their legal wives. "St. Gregory the Great describes the virtue of a priest, who, through motives of piety, had discarded his wife. As he lay dying, she hastened to him to watch the bed which for forty years she had not been allowed to share, and, bending over what seemed the inanimate form of her husband, she tried to ascertain whether any breath still remained, when the dying saint, collecting his last energies, exclaimed, <p26> 'Woman, begone; take away the straw; there is fire yet.'" (Ibid., 332).

The Qur'an teaches monogamy. The text states: "marry but two, or three, or four: and if ye still fear that ye shall not act equitably, then one only." (4:3); elsewhere the text states that such equitable action would be impossible: "And ye will not have it at all in your power to treat your wives alike, even though you fain would do so...." (4:128).

The fact that Jesus did not marry was obviously not intended as an example to mankind, since this would mean our extinction. The Qur'an states of the Christians, "...as to the monastic life, they invented it themselves. The desire only of pleasing God did we prescribe to them..." (57:27). The whole tenor of Islam is to live in the world but not of it, and to practise abstinence and frugality; a hadith, sums this up: A goat had been killed in Muhammad's Household, and He asked, "What remaineth of it?" His wife 'Ayishih answered, "Nothing but its shoulder remaineth; for we have sent the rest to the poor and neighbors." Muhammad answered, "The whole goat remaineth save only the shoulder...."

As for Muhammad's own marriages, He was a celibate until twenty-five, had lived in strict monogamy until He was past fifty; He then married, in some cases to provide for them, a number of His follower's widows, for the male Muslims were being killed in battle; in other cases, His marriages were political, establishing alliances with other tribes; He had also two Jewish wives and one Christian, thus establishing inter-Faith marriages.

The list of those who became the Prophet's wives varies somewhat, but the number totals about thirteen.

Muhammad was the Head of a State, a powerful Ruler, Whose followers would gladly give Him anything He asked, even life; He could easily have followed custom by taking any number of wives, and by living in indulgence and luxury like the wealthy Meccans.

Instead, He was, all the days of His life, so frugal and abstinent, giving everything away to guests and to the poor, that His wives protested against the poverty of His Household; He then gave them their choice of continuing to share His poverty or going their way.

This is the text of the Qur'an: "O Prophet! (The Angelic Presence addresses Muhammad throughout in the second person, often prefacing a commandment with

"Say:") say to thy wives, if ye desire this present life and its braveries, come then, I will provide for you, and dismiss you with an honorable dismissal." (33:28).

We read that when His daughter Fatimih was married to 'Ali, the only dowry that the Prophet could give her as "a bed woven with twisted palm-leaves, a pillow of skin stuffed with palm-tree fibers, an earthen pot, a waterskin, and a basket containing some raisins and dates." ('Ali Tabari, The Book of Religion and Empire, 25).

Fatimih's hands were sorely hurt from the handle of the flour mill, when grinding the grains for flour; she asked if she could not have a serving woman, but the Prophet said no, "Because, my little daughter, I have not in my house a place to contain all the Muslim women of whom you are one; therefore remember and thank God frequently." (Idem)..To sum up, polygamy was greatly restricted as the result of Islam, and the basis for true monogamy, which will be one of the blessings of the Baha'i world, was established.

Again, enemies of Islam say that Muhammad degraded women; but western scholars have known for a long time that the Qur'an grants to women rights which no previous religion had given them; to prove this, you have only to compare the texts of the various Faiths. Furthermore, the Qur'an gives the sexes full spiritual equality: "Verily the Muslims of either sex, and the true believers of either sex, and the devout men and the devout women, and the men of truth, and the women of truth, and the patient men and the patient women, <p27> and the humble men and the humble women, and the men who give alms and the women who give alms, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the chaste men and the chaste women, and the men and the women who oft remember God: for them hath God prepared forgiveness and a rich recompense. (33:35).

Another false charge is that Islam was spread by the sword.

The Muslims point to the way Christianity was spread, from the Church-sanctioned slaughters of Charlemagne to the massacre and enslavement of the American Indians; Ameer-'Ali states that "The followers of the 'Prince of Peace' burnt and ravished, pillaged and murdered promiscuously old and young, male and female, without compunction, up to recent times..." (Spirit of Islam, 180-181).

He notes that Calvin burned Servetus for his opinions on the Trinity, and the Protestants applauded. (Ibid., 302).

The Qur'an says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion." (2:257) "What! wilt thou compel men to become believers?

No soul can believe but by the permission of God..." (10:99-100).

He always enjoined clemency, when He sent out expeditions against hostile tribes: "...molest not the harmless, spare the weakness of the female sex; injure not the infant...or those who are ill...Abstain from demolishing the dwellings of the unresisting inhabitants; destroy not the means of their

subsistence...." (Ameer-'Ali, op.cit., 180).

The conquered populations were given their choice of accepting Islam or paying a moderate capitation-tax (jizya) which incidentally released them from the military service compulsory for Muslims.

The non-Muslim subjects were called dhimmis, protected persons of other faiths (ahlu'dh-dhimma);[3] the second caliph even refers to them in his will and testament when he recommends them to his successor: "I commend to his care the dhimmis, who enjoy the protection of God and of the Prophet; let him see to it that the covenant with them is kept...." (T.W.

Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, 3rd ed., 57).

The many references to leading persons of other faiths at the Muslim courts, and the long history of Islamic polemical writing, are sufficient proof that non-Muslims flourished under Muslim rule.

T.W.

Arnold, (op. cit., 143 f.) gives the following:
[3. The Imam 'Ali said: "The blood of the dhimmi is as the blood of the Muslim." Ameer-'Ali, Spirit of Islam, 268.]

One of the Spanish Muhammadans who was driven out of his native country in the last expulsion of the Moriscoes in 1610, while protesting against the persecutions of the Inquisition, makes the following vindication of the toleration of his co-religionists: 'Did our victorious ancestors ever once attempt to extirpate Christianity out of Spain, when it was in their power?

Did they not suffer your forefathers to enjoy the free use of their rites at the same time that they wore their chains?

Is not the absolute injunction of our Prophet, that whatever nation is conquered by Musaknan steel, should, upon the payment of a moderate annual tribute, be permitted to persevere in their own pristine persuasion, how absurd soever, or to embrace what other belief they themselves best approved of?

If there may have been some examples of forced ConVersions, they are so rare as scarce to deserve mentioning, and only attempted by men who had not the fear of God, and the Prophet, before their eyes, and who, in so doing, have acted directly and diametrically contrary to the holy precepts and ordinances of Islam which cannot, without sacrilege, be violated by any who would be held worthy of the honourable epithet of Musulman....You can never produce, among us, any bloodthirsty, formal tribunal, on account of different persuasions in points of faith, that anywise approaches your execrable Inquisition.

Our arms, it is true, are ever open to receive all who are disposed to embrace our religion; but we are not allowed by our sacred Qur'an to tyrannise over consciences. <p28>

Our proselytes have all imaginable encouragement, and have no sooner professed God's Unity and His Apostle's mission but they become one of us, without

reserve; taking to wife our daughters, and being employed in posts of trust, honour and profit; we contenting ourselves with only obliging them to wear our habit, and to seem true believers in outward appearance, without ever offering to examine their consciences...."

Arnold adds, "This very spirit of toleration was made one of the main articles in an account of the 'Apostacies and Treasons of the Moriscoes,' drawn up by the Archbishop of Valencia in 1602 when recommending their expulsion to Philip III, as follows: 'That they commended nothing so much as that liberty of conscience in all matters of religion, which the Turks, and all other Muhammadans, suffer their subjects to enjoy."

We hear a great deal these days of the Four Freedoms -- freedom from want and fear, freedom of speech and belief; freedom of belief is not a modern invention -- we owe it to Islam. <p29>

VI

THE HOLY IMAMS

As Muhammad lay dying, He called for materials to write. He said, "Fetch Me hither ink and paper, that I may record for you a writing which shall hinder you from going astray forever." But 'Umar said, "Pain is deluding Him. We have God's Book, which is enough." So the companions wrangled at the deathbed, whether to bring the materials and write the words, and Muhammad sent them away.

At the taking of Mecca, surih 110 of the Qur'an had been revealed; Muhammad regarded it as the warning of His own death; it states: "When the help of God and the victory arrive, And thou seest men entering the religion of God by troops; Then utter the praise of the Lord, implore His pardon; for He loveth to turn in mercy." Tradition says that when it was revealed He called Fatimih and said, "My daughter! I have received intimation of My approaching end." And Fatimih wept. And he said, "Why weepest thou....? Be comforted...."

The Hidden Words is the Hidden Book of Fatimih -- the words which Gabriel brought to mitigate her anguish: for she had seen her Father's death, and, forty days after the Prophet had ascended, the schism in Islam beginning before her eyes. Those unknown words addressed to Fatimih were believed by Shi'ah Islam to be in the possession of the Promised One Who would come from the line of her descendants; and they were called "Hidden" because all down the centuries their content was unknown.

Muhammad had unmistakably appointed His successor, but nothing had been written down. The Qur'an, so detailed in other things, is silent here.

When the Prophet was returning from His Farewell Pilgrimage to Mecca, He had the caravan halt; He told the concourse of people to gather in the shade of some thorn trees, and had them build a pulpit of saddles, near the Pool of Khumm. Then He raised 'Ali up and said, "Whoever hath Me as his Master, hath 'Ali as his

Master...I have been summoned to the gate of God, and I shall soon depart...to be concealed from you." Then He spoke of two treasures He would leave them: "The greatest treasure is the Book of God...Hold fast to it and do not lose it and do not change it. The other treasure is the line of My descendants."

The great tragedy of Islam is that three men, one after the other, took over the headship of the Faith for a period of twenty- four years, and that all this time the Imam 'Ali was forced to stand aside. He must have suffered untold agonies as He watched the irreparable damage being done, knowing all the time in His heart that He was the intended of God -- the Imam, the one who stands before the people, the divinely ordained, divinely inspired.

Muhammad was dead. The people could not accept this. They had seen Him in the mosque, only a little time before; His voice still echoed there. 'Umar came into the room and lifted the sheet which covered the Prophet; then he stood at the street door and proclaimed to the people that Muhammad had only swooned away; 'Ali simply looked at 'Umar and wept; Abu Bakr entered, lifted the striped sheet, and kissed the dead face. And he said, "Sweet Thou wert in life, sweet in death." Then he hurried to the mosque and remonstrated with 'Umar and said, "Let him then know, whosoever <p30> worshippeth Muhammad, that Muhammad is dead; but whoso worshippeth God, let him know that the Lord liveth." And while 'Ali, the appointed Imam, was grieving over the body of His Beloved, and the funeral washings had not yet been made, 'Umar and Abu Bakr were seeing to their appointment as caliph (successor). In the mosque, the leaders of the various groups were proposing 'Ali and others as successor, when 'Umar settled the matter by swearing allegiance to Abu Bakr, who had himself proposed 'Umar; each seems to have been in collusion with the other, against 'Ali.

The Prophet was washed for burying by 'Ali, without removal of His garment, while some held the water vessels; then He was wrapped in three shrouds, two of white material and one striped, and covered with fragrant ointments; then the grave was dug in the same room of 'Ayishih's house where the deathbed had been. The people came to pray beside the Body, as it lay by the grave, and when all this was done, a few of them lowered it down: 'Ali was the last to climb up out of the grave, before it was filled with earth. (Cf. M. Tabari, III, 217 ff.).

For two years and three months, Abu Bakr was caliph. Before his death, he made them all agree to accept 'Umar as caliph, although some objected to him as rude and harsh. Meanwhile the Empire was forming; the Romans re beaten, under Heraclius; the Persians were beaten; Jerusalem surrendered; the people were thronging into the Faith. 'Umar was assassinated, put to death by a slave who had an Abyssinian sword with two blades, the handle being in the center, that would strike two ways at once; this did for the caliph, but even when he was dying from his wounds, he shut 'Ali out of office, by appointing a council of six, 'Ali being one, to deliberate as to the successorship.[1] For three days these deliberated in a guarded room, and then through various political machinations managed to appoint 'Uthman.

[1. Returning from 'Umar's deathbed council, 'Ali' told 'Abbas: "This man has

taken away the power from the Bani Hashim He has established a group who are linked one with the other." Tabari', III, 549-550]

When something is wrong in principle, it soon begins to show in practice -- to become manifest in the outside world.

It was with 'Uthman that the disobedience to Muhammad began to show flagrant consequences, so that the believers finally rose up in wrath against the caliph. 'Uthman, old and feeble, was of 'Umayyad stock, of the family that had for generations been opposed to the stock of Muhammad.

He had been backed for office by Abu Sufyan, the 'Umayyad -- a man forgiven by Muhammad, but the Prophet's arch-enemy, who led the Meccan armies against Him and who was the husband of Hind, the woman who tore out the vitals of a dead Muslim hero at Uhud.

I once read of ancient Tibetan play, in which the believers had got ready the sacrifice and placed it on the altar, whereupon a raven flew down and stole the sacrifice.

This is what happened in Islam: the raven stole the sacrifice...It is said that one day 'Uthman sat by a well, toying with the Prophet's signet ring, which had been worn by his two predecessors, slipping it on and off again, when it fell into the well and was never found again.

Whether the incident is true actually or only in symbol makes no difference...'Uthman began to exhaust the public treasury in favor of his own relatives, saying it was a duty to give to the poor; 'Ali commented, "You could have given them one thousand or two thousand dirhems instead of fifty thousand." (M.

Tabari, III, 592-593).

He began to appoint throughout the Empire, his people, the 'Umayyads, to office, putting the power in their hands.

The first two caliphs had frequently consulted 'Ali; "Most of the grand undertakings initiated by 'Umar for the welfare of the people were due to his counsel. (For he was) Ever ready to succour the weak and to redress the wrongs of the injured..." (Ameer-'Ali, A Short History of the Saracens, 53). 'Uthman did not consult him.

The <p31> accounts show 'Uthman weak and whining, always doing the wrong thing and then appealing to the peoples' sympathies in weak self- justification, always vowing to reform and then continuing on as the tool of his vazir, Marvan, a man who had been exiled by Muhammad; that 'Uthman fasted and read the Qur'an continually is not impressive in view of his actions.

Soon a Second-Advent-of-Muhammad movement sprang up in Egypt (35 A.H.), and one of their tenets was the rightfulness of 'Ali as Chief of Islam.

Tabari gives the whole story.

And all these years, to preserve unity, 'Ali stood aside; he had spent his life in teaching the people and in intellectual pursuits, for he was an outstanding scholar and writer.

Now that the believers rose up to champion his cause he disdained to seize the office by force; he did his best to maintain order and did not take the believers' side against the established caliph.

On the contrary, since 'Uthman was the duly-constituted ruler, he bolstered him up and told him how to regain his lost prestige, by public apology and reform; 'Uthman would promise to follow 'Ali's advice and then, shifting and vacillating, would do the opposite.

Always, with these leading contemporaries, hatred of 'Ali's excellence seems to have been the hidden motive.

Once 'Uthman begged 'Ali to say that a certain appointee of his was no worse than one of 'Umar's; 'Ali answered, 'Umar had his foot on his agents' necks -- you give them free rein.

Mu'aviyyih (son of Hind and Abu Sufyan, and now, by the grace of 'Uthman, governor of Syria) was more afraid of a slave of 'Umar's than of 'Umar himself -- you let him do what he wants and will brook no complaints." (M.

Tabari, III, 587 ff.).

Believers from other countries were crowding to Medina to protest againsSt the scandalous rule of 'Uthman's appointees; to give only one example of what was going on, the caliph's half-brother, appointed (in the best twentieth century tradition!) governor of Kufa, went to the mosque and led the congregational prayer while drunk, and only escaped being stoned by running back to his palace, chanting as he went, "Where wine and song abound, there you will find me!" (Dozy, op. cit., 30).

'Uthman begged 'Ali to make the protestants go away; 'Ali persuaded them to leave and then, when the danger was passed, 'Uthman went to the mosque and told the people they had gone because their complaints had been proved baseless. At this, all over the mosque, voices cried out, "Repent, 'Uthman!" In the end there was civil war; fighting in the streets, and around 'Uthman's house; and although 'Ali and his sons fought to defend the old weakling, the mob broke in and killed him. According to Ibn Battuta, in the 14th century, at Basra, you could still see exhibited a Qur'an with 'Uthman's blood splashed on the page he was reading when they killed him. For many days, no one would even allow him a bier for burial; they finally carried him to the grave on one of the ruined doors of his house.

Well, it was 'Uthman who gave the play to the 'Umayyad caliphs, who, 'Abdu'l-Baha teaches us, are the Beast in Revelations, that warred on God's two Witnesses, Muhammad and 'Ail (Some Answered Questions. 53 ff.). "The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them,- -this beast means the Bani-Umayya who attacked them from

the pit of error, and who rose against the religion of Muhammad and against the reality of 'Ali -- in other words, the love of God." (Ibid., 60).

The leaders and populace now swore allegiance to 'Ali, saying: "The world is without a spiritual Head, and none hath more rights to this office than thou." And so at last, after a quarter of a century, the rightful successor of Muhammad was allowed to perform his function of Guardianship (vilayat) -- for the Imams were Guardians -- but it was too late. 'Abdu'l-Baha, in His commentary on the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the Revelation <p32> of St. John, explains what happened to the Faith of Muhammad.

'Ali, who would never for an instant compromise with evil, at once deposed the unworthy 'Umayyad office holders, so that Mu'aviyyih rose against him with Syrian armies. Meanwhile 'Ayishih, widow of Muhammad, who had long hated 'Ali (and devotion to 'Ali was the test of faith then, just as devotion to Shoghi Effendi is the test of faith today) rallied her forces against him. "When Ayishih wanted something done," says a modern writer, "it was carried out regardless of ethics." (Bodley, R.V.C., The Messenger, 349). She rode to battle against 'Ali in a red pavilion that was strapped to the back of camel; soon the pavilion was stuck through and bristling with lances and arrows, ten thousand Muslims had perished, and 'Ali, who had implored peace, won the day. But there were other battles and betrayals and finally the first Imam was martyred in the mosque at Kufa, iu 661.

Even yet in Persia, if men have a hard job to do or a heavy load to carry, they band together and shout, 'Ya 'Ali!" He was the Guardian (Vali), and the Lion of God. Muhammad, embracing him after the Farewell Pilgrimage, said, "He is to Me what Aaron was to Moses....God be a friend to his friends and a foe to his foes; help those who help him and frustrate the hopes of those who betray him." (See Dwight M. Donaldson, The Shi'ite Religion). 'Abdu'l-Baha says, "Muhammad was the root, and 'Ali the branch, like Moses and Joshua." (SAQ, 57). 'Ali was also called the Hand of God. He was the cousin, the adopted son, and the son-in-law of the Prophet. He was the first male believer, having accepted Islam as a child. He was the husband of the great Fatimih (the marriage took place in 624) whom the Muslims call Our Lady of Light, and they two were the parents of the next Imams, Hasan and Husayn. Remember that Baha'u'llah is to Shi'ah Islam the return of Husayn (God Passes By, 94), and that the Bab is of the seed of Fatimih.

He was a man broad and powerful, of the middle height, of ruddy complexion, of a thick and comely beard. He was utterly devoted to Muhammad, simple in tastes, strictly honest; when he was caliph, if he had business of state to perform at night, he would light a candle; then as soon as the work of the state was done, and he was at leisure, he would blow it out and sit in the darkness, rather than use the peoples' candle. When he prayed he was so rapt that once, an arrow having lodged in his foot at war, they waited till he was at prayer to withdraw it, knowing that then he would not feel the pain. Daring in battle, he has been called chivalry's beau ideal; it was he who took the Prophet's place when Muhammad escaped from Mecca, lying on the Prophet's couch, wrapped in His green

cloak; He fought with Muhammad at Badr, he received sixteen wounds at Uhud, he engaged in single combat at the Battle of the Trench, he carried away the banner at Khaybar; but braver than all this, he stood aside for a quarter of a century from his rightful place, in order to protect the Faith. He was a very perfect, gentle knight.[1]

[1 'Ali was frequently appointed by Muhammad in His own place: when some Bedawin were wrongfully killed, it was 'Ali who was sent to make reparations; he wrote the Charter to the Christians of Najran; when Muhammad once left Medina, He left 'Ali' as khalifa, saying, "O 'Ali, art thou not content that thou art to Me what Aaron was to Moses?" When the munafiqun (hypocrites) said that 'Ali had stayed behind because he was afraid of combat, whereupon 'Ali rode after the Prophet and told Him and He said "Kadhdbabu -- they lied." Then, according to Ibn Hisham, He said, "Wa lakinni khallaftuka lamma turikta vara'i; fa'rjaf'khlifni fi abli wa ahlik." It was 'Ali who was commissioned to read the Declaration of Discharge, forbidding the idolaters to practise their heathen rites at the Ka'bih. Cf. Ameer-'Ali, Spirit of Islam, 97, ff. (rev. ed., 1922).]

After 'Ali, Mu'aviyyih the Umayyad was caliph, and after him, his notorious son Yazid. The center of government shifted away from Medina to Syria. When the Medinites found Yazid drunk and incestuous, a lute <p33> player, frequenting brigands and playing with hunting dogs, never at prayer, they littered the mosque at Medina in their wrath, calling for his deposition. Then he sent an army and sacked the City of the Prophet; seven hundred who knew the Qur'an by heart were killed at the sack of Medina, and eighty aged Companions of the Prophet; horses were stabled in the mosque that Muhammad had built, in the space between the Prophet's tomb and His chair -- a spot which He had called the Garden of Paradise. The men were killed, the children enslaved, the women violated by the caliph's soldiers. The Helpers, Medinite followers of Muhammad, escaped as they could to join the army of Africa, later (712) passing over to Spain. In the 13th century a traveler to Medina asked if any descendants of the Helpers remained; one old man and one old woman were pointed out. (Cf. Dozy, 60ff.). During the period of 'Umayyad domination, the holy city was given over to packs of dogs and wild beasts. The 'Umayyads ruled for a hundred years with sword and poison, until a man called the Blood Pourer destroyed them.

The term Shi'ah began to be adopted after Mu'aviyyih seized power; it refers to the adherents, or party, or family, of 'Ali. The Imam of the Shi'ah is sacred, immaculate (ma'sum), divinely-appointed, divinely guided. He is a spiritual leader. The caliph of the Sunnis is a temporal ruler, chosen by the peoples' leaders and acclaimed by the people. 'Ali was the expounder of the Faith; he had the inward knowledge and the inward light; his assassination changed the history of Islam.

All the Imams were put to death except perhaps the last, who died as a child, in 260, and was succeeded for sixty-nine years by four successive "Gates" (abvab-i-arba'ih), who were known as his intermediaries. Then there was utter silence in Islam till the rise of the Bab in 1260 (the surih of Adoration

states: "From the Heaven to the Earth He governeth all things: hereafter shall they come up to Him on a day whose length shall be a thousand of such years as ye reckon." (32:4). Hence the importance of the "Year Sixty.") The Muslims (Shi'ahs) claim the Twelfth Imam did not die, but disappeared into an underground passage at Surra-man-Ra'a, and now lives in one of the mysterious cities of Jabulqa or Jabulsa, to come forth at the time of the end and inaugurate the millennium. When I was in Persia I heard them chanting from the minarets, "O Lord of the Age (Sahibu'z-Zaman), hasten Thy coming; the world hath fallen away -- set Thy foot in the stirrup!" They even struck silver coins in His name.

Dying, 'Ali appointed his son Hasan as Imam, and he was poisoned. Then Husayn, the third Imam, with a little band of followers, including women and children, was betrayed by the men of Kufa, who had sworn allegiance to him and asked him to come to them and be their ruler. He and his party were surrounded in the sand and cut off from the river so that they would die of thirst; singly and in bands, his men were butchered. Husayn's horse was felled. Weak from thirst, Husayn sat on the ground; soldiers came up to kill him, but none dared; his little son was crying, so he took it in his arms: an arrow killed it. He laid it on the earth, saying, "We are from God and to Him do we return." Then he rose, and went toward the Euphrates, and bent down to drink; an arrow struck him in the lips and the blood streamed out. The soldiers surrounded him and slowly shot him down, till from many wounds he fell and died. They rode their horses over his body and severed his head and put it up on a lance. As the enemy general reported to the caliph, "Their bodies were dishonored and naked, their clothes mixed with the sand, their faces stained with the earth, and the winds blew upon them..." When the head of Husayn, grandson of Muhammad, was brought in to Kufa, the <p34> governor there struck the mouth with his cane; there was an old Muslim present and he wept, and cried out," Alas, on these lips have I seen the lips of the Prophet of God."

Gibbon comments on this crime that stirred up the conscience of the Muslim world to such a point that the Persians still, two months out of the year, wear mourning clothes for Husayn -- "In a distant age and climate, the tragic scenes of the death of Husayn will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader."

Baha'u'llah teaches us in the Iqan (129): "Should We wish to impart unto thee a glimmer of the mysteries of Husayn's martyrdom, and reveal unto thee the fruits thereof, these pages could never suffice, nor exhaust their meaning." And again He says: "My persecutors decapitated Me, and, carrying aloft My head from land to land paraded it before the gaze of the unbelieving multitude, and deposited it on the seats of the perverse and faithless." (Gleanings, 89).

CHRONOLOGY
ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION
MARZIEH GAIL

(From Wells' "Outline of History")

570 A. D.....Birth of Muhammad

590 A. D.....Plague in Rome. Gregory The Great Greg. I ("Angles") Chosroes II reigns in Persia

610 A. D.....Heraclius begins his reign

619 A. D.....Chosroes II holds Egypt, Jerusalem, Damascus, and had armies on the Hellespont. Tang Dynasty begins in China

623 A. D.....Battle of Badr

627 A. D.....Persian defeat by Heraclius, Nineveh. Meccan confederates besiege Medina

628 A. D.....Muhammad addresses (all) the rulers of the earth.

629 A. D.....Muhammad enters Mecca

632 A. D.....Ascension of Muhammad. Abu Bakr elected Caliph.

634 A. D.....Yarmuk. Muslims take Syria. 'Umar Caliph

638 A. D.....'Umar takes Jerusalem

643 A. D.....'Uthman elected third Caliph.

656 A. D. .....'Uthman murdered

661 A. D. .....'Ali martyred

662 A. D.....Mu'aviyyih eLected Caliph

732 A. D.....Charles Martel - Tours

<pii>

Six Lessons On Islam
By Marzieh Gail

(Approved by Baha'i Reviewing Committee)

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