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magazine

THE REALMS OF GOD

also in this issue:

Dealing With Opposition
The History and Teachings of Islam
New Writer's Guide

plus a pull-out pamphlet and poster:

The Equality of Women and Men

Islam a brief introduction

by Dr. Duane K. Troxel

As Twin
the Mani-
Bahá'í festa-

Faith contin-
ues to emerge from
obscurity Bahá'ís are

going to find themselves
defending Islam to Westerners who are

steeped in prejudice against it.

We have decried the persecution
of our fellow-believers in Iran at
the hands of fanatic Shí'ih
Muslims. Now, how do we explain
that we accept the religion professed
by our persecutors as divinely-
ordained?

And beyond the defense of Islam,
can we enrich the understanding of our
Faith by its study? The Guardian, Shoghi
Effendi, said that for, 'a proper and sound
understanding of the Cause', its study was,
'absolutely indispensable.'

On another occasion the Guardian wrote:

"The mission of the American Bahá'ís is, no
doubt to eventually establish the truth of Islam
in the West."¹

Historically the Bahá'í Faith arose within an Islamic
environment. The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá were
born in Persia (Iran), a Muslim country. For about fifty years
(1844-1894) most converts to the Bábí and Bahá'í religions
were Muslims. Many of the arguments and proofs used by the
Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the sacred writings
derive from the Qur'án and the teachings and traditions of
Shí'ih Islam.

The concept of progressive revelation, the teaching that
each of the world's major religions comes from the same God
to progressively educate mankind socially and spiritually
makes the study of Islam especially important to Bahá'ís.
Islam is the dispensation which immediately precedes the

tions of the
Báb and Bahá'u'lláh
and is therefore a fuller
revelation than Christianity.

"From the standpoint of institu-

tionalism Islam far surpasses

true Christianity as we know it

in the Gospels. There are infi-

nitely more laws and institutions

in the Qur'án than in the Gospel.

While the latter's emphasis is

mainly, not to say wholly, on indi-

vidual and personal conduct, the

Qur'án stresses the importance of

society. This social emphasis acquires

added importance and significance in

the Bahá'í revelation. When carefully

and impartially compared, the Qur'án

marks a definite advancement on the

Gospel, from the standpoint of spiritual and

humanitarian progress."²

Caution Against Teaching Middle Eastern Muslims

After receiving the information in this brief presentation,
it may be tempting to want to try out your new-found knowl-
edge of Islam on Muslims of your acquaintance. Before con-
sidering such a move, please observe the following warning
issued by the Universal House of Justice in a letter to the
N.S.A. of the United States in 1983.

"Bahá'ís in the West are not to initiate any attempt to
teach the Faith to Muslims from Middle Eastern countries.
This includes Muslims from Iran, North Africa and Arab coun-
tries. Muslims from these countries who have become citizens
of the United States or have acquired permanent residence sta-
tus and who show a genuine interest in learning about the

1) *Lights of Guidance*, New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2nd rev. and enlarged edition, 1988, #1903. 2) *Lights*, #1665, p. 496. 3) *Lights*, #1664, p. 495.

Faith, may be taught the Faith, but it is they who must take the initiative."⁴

It should be clear that we being told not to teach *Middle-Eastern* Muslims. We can teach other Muslims. Indeed, the Guardian himself advised that if one seeks to teach Muslims s/he should have acquired a, "knowledge of the Qur'an, so that" they can be given "proofs from their own texts." He suggested using Bahá'ís are from an Islamic background to conduct deepenings on the subject.⁵

Prejudice Towards Islam

An unbiased study of Islam requires us to take notice of our individual responses to words such as "Muhammad," "Qur'an" and "Islam." If we find ourselves reacting negatively to these terms it should come as no surprise. Shoghi Effendi said that:

*"Western historians have for many centuries distorted the facts [of Islam] to suit their religious and ancestral prejudices. The Bahá'ís should try to study history anew and to base all their investigations first and foremost on the written Scriptures of Islam and Christianity."*⁶

As an example; for nearly a century Sir William Muir's (1819-1905) four volume biography, *The Life of Muhammad*, was held up as the principal authority on the life of the Arabian Prophet. Muir said, *"The sword of Mahomet and the Coran [Qur'an] are the most fatal enemies of civilization, liberty and truth which the world has yet known."*⁷

Dante⁸ is another case in point. He placed Muhammad and 'Alí (Muhammad's successor) in the ninth hell of the Inferno in his epic poem, *The Divine Comedy*.

Philip Hitti explains that the very earliest Western sketch of Muhammad by a ninth-century Greek writer portrayed Him,

*"as a false prophet and imposter"; He "was later embellished with the bright colors of oversexuality, dissoluteness, blood-thirstiness, and brigandage. In clerical circles Muhammad became the antichrist."*⁹

One of the most influential translations of the Qur'an was done in Latin by Father Lewis Marraci, a one-time confessor to Pope Innocent XI. Marraci wrote an introductory volume to the work which he titled a "Refutation of the Qur'an." One of the first English translations of the Qur'an was done by George Sale in 1734 using Maracci's Latin work. It was Sale's translation that Edward Gibbon used for his classic work: *The*

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, in which he says that Muhammad was an, *"eloquent fanatic,"* who "assumed a false commission to inculcate a salutary doctrine" in his countrymen. J.M. Rodwell, in the preface to his translation of the Koran [1861], calls Muhammad a, *"great though imperfect character, an earnest though mistaken teacher,"* "who was subject to, *"morbid and fantastic hallucinations..."*¹⁰

All the blame cannot be laid at the door of Western writers and translators. When the Umayyads usurped the Caliphate (661-750 A.D.) they perpetrated many unspeakable crimes that severely damaged the reputation of Islam.

*"The [Umayyad] dynasty became notorious for running the Empire for its own benefit...and it was the worldly and tyrannical nature of the Umayyads, more characteristic of the pagan age than of Islam, which led to their downfall."*¹¹

'Abdu'l-Bahá explained that the Umayyad dynasty was the "beast" spoken of in The Revelation of St. John the Divine, which destroyed the, *"spiritual life,"* of Islam, leaving it, *"a lifeless body without spirit."*¹²

What can we, as Bahá'ís do to overcome these biases



Albrecht Dürer's 16th century depiction of the multi-headed dragon of the apocalypse. (Revelations 13)

4) *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities: Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies*, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1989, p. 7.44. 5) *Lights*, #2030, p. 599. 6) *Lights*, #1664, p. 496. 7) Vol. IV, 1861, p. 322. It is to Muir's credit that he later revised considerably some of his views about Muhammad. He was eventually able to say, *"What was Mahomet himself but an instrument in the hands of the great Worker [God]?"* Quoted on page 113 of *Muslim-Christian Encounters*, 1991, by Watt. 8) Ironically, there is strong, though controversial, evidence that Dante may have borrowed material for *The Divine Comedy* from Islamic sources. See *Islam and the Divine Comedy* by Miguel Asín Palacios, translated by Harold Sutherland, London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1968. 9) Philip Hitti, *Islam: A Way of Life*, pp. 22-23. 10) Lippman, *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World*, p. 36. 11) *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, Edited by Cyril Glassé, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989, p. 408. 12) *Some Answered Questions*, p. 50.

inherent in our civilization? Shoghi Effendi says Bahá'ís, "must strive to obtain, from sources that are authoritative and unbiased, a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam - the source and background of their Faith - and approach [it] reverently and with a mind purged from preconceived ideas..."¹³

Islam

Islam (pronounced ess-lahm)¹⁴ is one of the world's great religions, boasting approximately one billion followers.¹⁵ Roughly one-sixth of the world's population is Muslim.

Most of the Middle-Eastern countries and Africa north of and including the Sahara are predominantly Muslim. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population of all with 160 million believers comprising about 90 percent of the population. Pakistan has over 100 million Muslims and Bangladesh has 90 million.¹⁶

Christianity has between one and one and one-half billion adherents, or somewhere between one-fourth and one-third of the world's population.

A reprint of the 1988 *Britannica Book of the Year* states,



**Arabia:
The Spiritual Heart of Islam**

"Our standard for appraising Muhammad is the Bahá'í Teachings. Much of the material about Muhammad is written either by Muslims who have repeated unfounded traditions about Him,²¹ or by hostile Occidentals. We are still victims of centuries of propaganda against Him."²²

Muhammad (mo-ham-mad), the Prophet-Founder of Islam, was born at Mecca around 570 A.D. Mecca is located about midway up the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula and about 50 miles inland from the Red Sea.

Generally-speaking, Arabia is a desert region. There was little agriculture. Most people were either desert nomads or traders. In Muhammad's time, Mecca was a commercial cen-

13) Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, p. 49. 14) All phonetic pronunciations given in this article are Persian and were taken from Marzieh Gail's *Bahá'í Glossary*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969. 15) *Understanding Islam and the Muslims*, prepared by the Islamic Affairs Dept. of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C., 1989. According to the 1990 *World Almanac* (p. 611) there are over 6,000,000 Muslims in the USA. 16) Thomas W. Lippman, *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World*, Rev. Ed., Mentor Books, 1990, p. x. 17) *"The Bahá'í Faith: World Religions Statistics"*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, p. 11. 18) *Ibid.* 1987 Table contained within the document. Recent (1991) estimates put the number of Bahá'ís, world-wide, near 6 millions. 19) The 1990 *World Almanac* puts the number of Bahá'í groups in the US as 1,700 and reports the number of Bahá'ís in that country as 110,000 (page 610). 20) *Lights*, #1670, p. 497. 21) Some of these traditions are ludicrous. H.M. Balyuzi, in his book, *Muhammad and The Course of Islam*, (p. 2) gives an instance of just such a case in connection with the space program. "The Arabian Prophet is not so much the Founder of a Theophany, a new Dispensation but a leader of men in the mould of a successful chieftain, courageous and bold and generous, but also full of human foibles. Some borrow from the writings of those Muslim apologists from the East, whose outlook was primitive, who related stories of angels assuming human form to take part in bloody combats, of jinn (genii) holding converse with the Prophet, and who expatiated on how Muhammad literally cleft the moon in twain. At the time of the Apollo 15 exploration of the moon, an organization in London, which called itself the Moslem Educational Bureau, was reported to have issued a statement asserting the literal fact of the cleavage of the moon and expressing its certainty that the astronauts of the Apollo 15 would find in the Hadley Rille (a crack on the surface of the moon) the positive proof of the performance of that miracle. An enterprising British journalist in one of the national dailies (known as a quality newspaper), blew up this incredible statement into a sensational story, which occupied a prominent place in a centre page under the heading: 'Mohammed's Moonshot'. It would have been laughable, were it not insulting to one of the major Faiths of mankind. Those Eastern chroniclers and theologians, who gave currency in the past to such stories, bear a heavy burden of responsibility for lowering the Arabian Prophet in the eyes of the West." 22) *Six Lessons in Islam*, p. 1.

ter at the hub of the great trade routes between Europe, Asia, and Africa; and was a city of religious shrines.

Muhammad was a descendent of Abraham through his Egyptian wife Hagar and their son, Ishmael (spelled *Ismá'íl* in Arabic and pronounced ess-maw-eel). The authorities agree that Ishmael²³ is the "father" of the Arabian peoples and Isaac is the "father" of the Semitic peoples. (Bahá'u'lláh is believed to be a descendent of Abraham through Abraham's third wife, Keturah.)

It is interesting to note that the Prophet-Founders of five world religions were descendants of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths. God promised Abraham: "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3)

Muhammad, (Whose name means "highly praised") was born into the Háshim (haw-shem) clan of the Quraysh²⁴ tribe. His father, 'Abdu'lláh, died shortly before His birth and His mother, Áminah) passed away when He was just six. He was sent to live with His grandfather ('Abdu'l-Muṭṭalib) who also died just two years later. Finally He was sent to live with His paternal uncle, Abú Tálib (aboo taleeb), who reared Him to manhood.

Around 595 A.D., when Muhammad was twenty-five, He married a wealthy widow named Khadíjih (cad-ee-jeh) who was then forty. The four sons born of this union died in infancy. Four daughters lived to be adults. The most important of these was Fátimih (faw-teh-meh).²⁵

Fátimih married 'Alí²⁶ (a-lee) who later became the fourth

Caliph (ca-leef) and the first Imám (eh-mom) of Islam. From their union came Ḥasan (hass-san) and Ḥusayn (ho-sane), the second and third Imáms of Shí'ih (she-ah) Islam about whom we will say more a little later on.

It was Muhammad's habit to pray and meditate in a cave on Mount Hira (or "Hirrá") outside Mecca. Around 610 A.D. Muhammad heard a voice commanding Him to recite. Shoghi Effendi affirms that Muhammad received His revelation in that cave when He heard "the voice of Gabriel bade Him 'cry in the name of Thy Lord'."²⁷

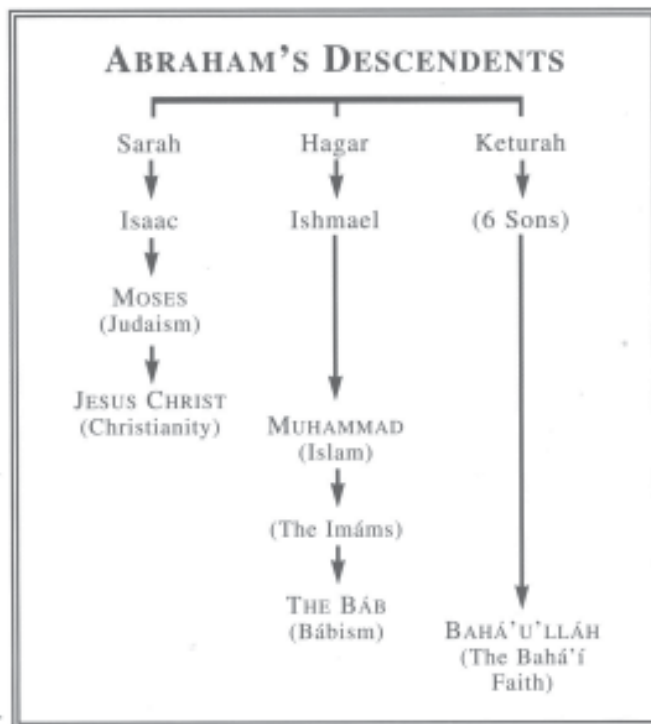
After receiving the revelation Muhammad returned home and told His wife Khadíjih, who accepted it and became the first to believe in the prophethood of Muhammad.

The Qur'án

The Qur'án (coor-on) is the Holy Book of all Muslims. Muslims have no disagreement about the accuracy and authenticity of their Holy Book, the Qur'án. They believe it is the literal Word of God and they show extreme reverence for the Word. For example, a devout Muslim will never put the Holy Qur'án on the floor.

Qur'án (lit. "reading" or "recitation") is composed entirely of verses recited by Muhammad when revelation came upon Him. Because He was illiterate, the Qur'án's revelation was considered even more miraculous. Many of His early followers were assigned to commit these verses to memory.²⁸

The Holy Qur'án was revealed in Arabic by Muhammad²⁹ over a period of 23 years, from 610 to 632 A.D. Because Arabic was the language of Muhammad's revelation, many Muslims believe that Arabic is the language spoken by the



23) King James Bible "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: 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." Genesis 17:20. The "twelve princes" is a reference to the Imáms of Shí'ih Islam. (See the chart on p. 25.) 24) Note that the Quraysh tribe had two main branches, the Umayyad and the Hashím. The Umayyad branch eventually seized control of the Caliphate and brought great shame to the name of Islam. See 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discussion in chapter 11 of *Some Answered Questions*. 25) Fátimih is the supreme woman of the Islamic Dispensation. Followers of Shí'ih Islam believe that a special book was revealed to Fátimih to console her following her Father's death. It is called the "Book of Fátimih." Its contents were unknown until 1858 when Bahá'u'lláh re-revealed it in Baghdad (bag-dad). He later changed its name to the *Hidden Words*. See page 15, lines 25 to 29 of *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. See also Marzieh Gail's "Book of Fátimih" note on p. 185 of the *Epistle*. See also *Lights*, #1631 and #1632. 26) His full name is 'Alí-ibn-i-Abí-Tálib. See *The Dawn-Breakers, Nabil's Narrative of the Bahá'í Revelation* by Nabil-i-A'zam, p. iii. 27) *God Passes By*, p. 93. 28) The Qur'án is the most widely read and memorized book in the world. 29) 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that these utterances were written, "upon the bladebones of sheep, or on palm leaves." *Some Answered Questions*, p. 27.

angels in heaven. It is also widely believed that the Holy Qur'án can never be faithfully translated into any other language.³⁰

Comprised of 114 súrihs (soo-rehs) or chapters. The Qur'án is comprised of 114 súrihs (sue-rehs) or chapters that are arranged mechanically, from longest to shortest, and comprise about 80,000 English words in translation. Except for the Bahá'í Writings, the Holy Qur'án is the only other "absolutely authenticated" Holy Book.³¹

The Báb emphatically declared that the Qur'án was, "free from error..."³² Shoghi Effendi further explained that, "The Bible is not wholly authentic, and in this respect is not to be compared with the Qur'án..."³³

It is of special note that the renowned Bahá'í scholar, Mírzá 'Abu'l-Faql (mere-zaw ab-ol-fazz-l), stated categorically that "one-third of the Koran consists of prophecies concerning the approach of the Day of God's coming, and the signs foreshadowing the near arrival of the Cause of God."³⁴

Muhammad's tribe—the Quraysh—had guardianship over Mecca's most sacred shrine: the Ka'bih³⁵ (ca-beh). The Ka'bih is a large stone building which housed some 360 idols, one for each day on the ancient calendar.³⁶

Set into the southeast corner on the outside of the Ka'bih is the famous Black Stone, which is probably a meteorite. This stone symbolized the worship of the One God.

According to the Holy Qur'án: "Abraham, with Ishmael, raised the foundations of the House [the Ka'bih]." (2:121-122)³⁷ The Qur'án goes on to say that the Ka'bih was "The first temple that was founded for mankind" (3:90)

Annual pilgrimages to Mecca were being made long before Muhammad declared His Mission. Over time these pilgrimages had degenerated into idol worship. Muhammad denounced the worship of these idols in His public teaching.

"Shun ye, therefore, the pollutions of idols;..." (22:31)

His attack on idol worship brought Him into conflict with His own tribe and with the Meccan merchants who stood to lose business if people stopped coming to worship idols at the Ka'bih.

Muhammad became the object of the scorn and derision of most Meccans. It is said that thorns were strewn in His path as He walked the streets of that town.

The oppression against Muhammad and His followers was increased by a boycott imposed against Him. His uncle's leadership in the clan protected Him from being murdered outright.

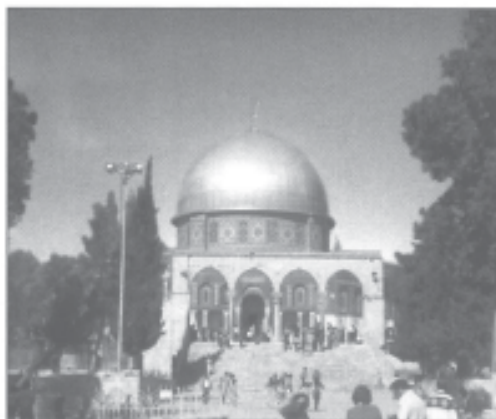
Muhammad suffered a number of personal reverses in 619 and 620. In 619 Khadíjah, His beloved wife of 25 years, died. Shortly thereafter His uncle and clan protector, Abú Tálib, also died. Muhammad then made an unsuccessful attempt to establish His Faith at Ta'if, a town southwest of Mecca.

In 620 A.D., in the midst of these difficulties, Muhammad experienced the famous "Night Journey" (Mi'raj, me-rawj). According to some traditions,³⁸ as Muhammad lay asleep one night, His spirit traveled to Jerusalem and the site of Solomon's Temple and from there He ascended into heaven.

Today the Dome of the Rock mosque marks the spot of Muhammad's alleged point of departure. It is the third holiest site in all Islam (after Mecca and Medina) and the oldest surviving specimen of Islamic architecture.

Originally Muslims faced Jerusalem in prayer. In 624 A.D. Muhammad changed the Qiblih (keb-leh) from Jerusalem to Mecca. The Qiblih, or 'Point of Adoration,' is the direction one faces in prayer.

By 622 A.D. Muhammad's enemies in Mecca were becoming more aggressive and hostile each day. A number of pilgrims from the city of Yathrib (yass-reb) to the north came



Popularly known as the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem's Mosque of Omar is the third holiest place in Islam. It contains the rock upon which Abraham is said to have built his altar (Genesis 22:9) and which was visited by Muhammad during his night vision.

30) Prior to 1931 Shoghi Effendi used George Sale's English translation of the Qur'án for his translation of Qur'anic quotations found in the Bahá'í sacred Writings. After 1931 he used James Rodwell's translation. James Heggie, *Bahá'í References to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1986, p. 247. 31) Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 49. 32) *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 46. 33) *Lights of Guidance*, #1688, p. 501. See also *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 89 and 'Abdu'l-Bahá by Hasan Balyuzi, p. 145. 34) *The Bahá'í Proofs* (Hujaja'l-Bahá'iyih), translated by 'Alí-Kulí Khan, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983, pp. 134-5. 35) Ka'bih is also spelled Kaaba, Ka'ba, Ka'bah, and Kaabah. 36) Marzieh Gail, *Six Lessons in Islam*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1953, p. 3. 37) All quotations from the Holy Qur'án used in this article were taken from Rev. James M. Rodwell's 1861 translation of *The Koran*, published by Everyman's Library in 1909. The numbering of the súrihs in this guide follows the conventional numbering scheme of the majority of English translations of the Qur'án. 38) Most Muslims believe Muhammad performed the Night Journey in the flesh. Shaykh Ahmad (and later, Siyyid Kázim) taught that Muhammad performed the Night Journey in His "subtle body," or spirit.

to Mecca. They were attracted to Muhammad's message and embraced Islam. It was these new believers who offered Muhammad sanctuary in Yathrib. The name of Yathrib was later changed to Medina, which means "the city" (of the Prophet).

In 622 A.D. Muhammad and seventy of His loyal companions emigrated to Yathrib. This emigration³⁹ is called the "hij'rih"⁴⁰ (hedge-ra) and it marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar,⁴¹ being the year 1 A.H.,* which corresponds to the Christian date 622 A.D.

'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that even at Medina the Meccans "did not cease to oppress [Muhammad]; they united to exterminate him and all his followers."⁴² Muhammad had no choice but to safeguard the lives and property of His community. "If this oppression had fallen only upon himself he would have forgiven them..."⁴³ But since the bloodthirsty Meccans sought to exterminate the entire Muslim community Muhammad had to resist them.

All of Muhammad's military engagements were of a defensive nature.⁴⁴ He did not spread Islam by the sword as many of His critics assert. It is true that after Muhammad's death some of the Caliphs did expand the Islamic Empire by military means, but this was not

Muhammad's way. The Holy Qur'an declares: "Let there be no compulsion in Religion." (2:257)

In 630 A.D. Muhammad encamped outside of Mecca with ten thousand men. The Meccans had flagrantly violated the terms of the ten-year truce Muhammad had made with them and now the Meccans negotiated the terms of their surrender with Muhammad.

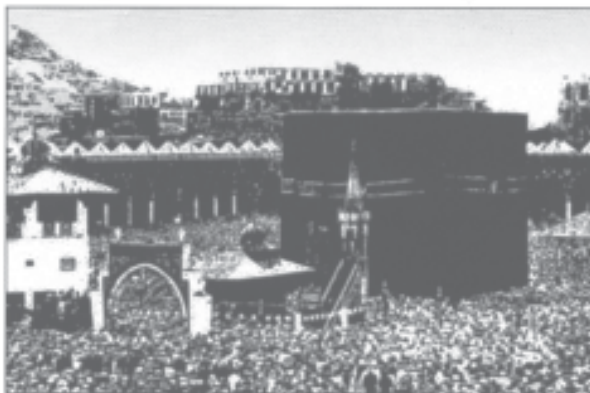
Now victorious, Muhammad ordered the purification of the Ka'bah. All the idols of Mecca were destroyed by His command.

Muhammad died in 632 A.D. He left no will⁴⁵ and was unable to designate an uncontested successor. As stated in the

words of Bahá'u'lláh, He did say, "Verily, I leave amongst you My twin weighty testimonies: The Book of God and My Family."⁴⁶

Who would now lead Islam? According to a Shi'ih tradition, while Muhammad was enroute back from Mecca to Medina after His "farewell pilgrimage", He stopped at a watering place and called 'Alí to Him. "Then it was that he took Ali's hands and raised them," saying, "Whoever has me as his master has Ali as his master.

Be a friend to his friends, O Lord, and be an enemy to his enemies. Help those who assist him and frustrate those who oppose him."⁴⁷



The Kaaba; located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, it is the holiest site in the Muslim world and the focal point of the háj.

39) See 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement cited in *Lights*, #1934, for the implications of a Messenger's exile and banishment. 40) For centuries the word "hegira" has been wrongly translated to mean "flight". See Philip Hitti, *Islam: A Way of Life*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1970, p. 14. 41) Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944, 110, 227. * = Literally, "anno hegira," or year of the hij'rih —Ed. 42) *Some Answered Questions*, Chapter 7. A number of pitched battles took place between the Muslims and the Meccans. At the Battle of Badr (in 624 A.D.) the Muslims, though outnumbered three to one, carried the day. Next came Uhud which took place about three miles from Medina. "At first the Battle of Uhud went well for the Medinans and the Meccans were on the point of defeat when a portion of the Medinan army broke ranks in search of booty and this exposed their flank. The flow of the battle was reversed and the Medinans were forced to retreat although the victors themselves had been so badly mauled that they were unable to press home their advantage and withdrew." Momen, Introduction to Shi'i Islam, p. 6. Next came the Battle of the Trench (627 A.D.) in which Muhammad supervised the digging of trenches around Medina which effectively thwarted the Meccan cavalry. "After the Battle of the Trench and the elimination of Jewish opposition, events moved swiftly, as Muhammad felt himself strong enough to challenge the Meccans. Rather than undertake direct military confrontation, he devised a political stratagem. He and a large band of the faithful, said to number more than a thousand, set out for Mecca not as an army but as pilgrims desirous of visiting the sacred shrine. As the Muslims approached the city, the Meccans sent out a delegation to negotiate with Muhammad. The outcome was a pact known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya. Muhammad and his followers agreed to put off their pilgrimage until the following year and the Meccans acknowledged their right to make it. The Quraysh accepted Muhammad's right to preach and in effect acknowledged his legitimacy. This diplomatic compromise upset some of Muhammad's more zealous followers, but it demonstrated once again that Muhammad was a flexible pragmatic leader, not a fanatic. He was willing to see blood shed when necessary, as at Badr, but he was also willing to negotiate and compromise to minimize violence, as he did when he agreed to the Treaty of Hudaibiya, which served his objectives to establish Islam." Hitti, *Islam: A Way of Life*, p. 51. 43) *Some Answered Questions*, p. 25. 44) *Some Answered Questions*, p. 22. 45) According to some traditional accounts Muhammad called for writing materials to record His will and testament. 'Umar, who was to become Islam's third Caliph, refused. (*The Life of Mahomet* by Emile Dermenghem, translated by Arabella Yorke, New York: The Dial Press, MCMXXX, 337.) 46) *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 201. 47) *The Shi'ite Religion* by Dwight M. Donaldson, London: Luzac

From Muhammad's many public and private remarks and numerous traditions it is clear that Muhammad intended that his son-in-law 'Alí should succeed Him as head of the Faith. This did not happen.

After Muhammad's death, the various clans disputed over who would lead Islam. The choice narrowed to two: 'Umar and Abú 'Ubaydah, both of whom refused the nomination. Finally Abú-Bakr⁴⁸ stepped forward and offered to pledge his loyalty to either candidate. It was then the two nominees pledged fealty to Abú-Bakr who became the first Caliph (successor) of Islam.^{49,50}

'Alí, the legitimate successor⁵¹ to Muhammad kept silent. Following the two year reign of Abú-Bakr (632-4) 'Umar I (634-44) was elected, and then 'Uthman (644-56).

Finally 'Alí (656-661) was chosen as the fourth Caliph of Islam. These four are called "The Orthodox Caliphs" because at that time all Muslims outwardly accepted these four. The division of Islam into two major sects did not come out into the open until after 'Alí's death in 661 A.D.

Sometime after the death of 'Alí, Islam broke into two rival factions. Those who believed that Islam's leader could be

elected by the faithful were called Sunnis (sonn-nees). Sunnī⁵² comes from "Sunna", which means "the way." What Sunnis mean by this is that they are guided, first, by the Holy Qur'án, and then by "hadīth"⁵³ (had- eess), which are the reported actions and sayings of Muhammad and a few of His close associates.

Shī'ihis (she-ehs) comprised the second and smallest faction. "Shī'ih" means the "partisan" or "supporter" (of 'Alí). Shī'ihis believe that spiritual authority cannot be determined by human election, but is genetic and divinely ordained, and passes

from Muhammad to 'Alí and through, "the descendants of 'Alí and the Prophet's daughter Fatima."^{54,55}

The Umayyad Dynasty, which seized the Caliphate after the death of 'Alí, damaged the reputation of Islam. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained

that the seven-headed, ten-horned, red dragon spoken of in the Book of Revelation is, "an allusion to the dynasty of the Umayyads..."⁵⁶

From those early days down to the present, the Sunnis have constituted the largest group of Muslims., comprising some eighty-five percent. The smaller faction—the Shī'ih⁵⁷—comprise only about fifteen percent of all Muslims.



A nineteenth century depiction of the holy city of Medina

& Company, 1933, p. 5. 48) Abú-Bakr was the father-in-law of Muhammad by the Prophet's marriage to his daughter 'Á'isha (613-678). He was a member of the Quraysh tribe. 49) H.M. Balyuzi, *Muhammad and The Course of Islam*, Oxford: George Ronald, p. 167. Shoghi Effendi tells us that by this act the, "lawful successors," of Muhammad were, "usurped," of their authority. (*World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 178.) 50) Shortly before His death Muhammad found that He was too ill to lead the now traditional Friday congregational prayer in the mosque. A widely respected tradition states that Muhammad deputized Abu-Bakr to lead the prayers on His behalf. If true, this did much to strengthen Abu-Bakr's claim to be Muhammad's successor. Another incident recounted by H.M. Balyuzi has Abu-Bakr' making the public announcement of Muhammad's death, saying: "Whoever worshipped the person of Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad hath died; and whoever worshipped God, let him know that God doth not die." (*Muhammad and The Course of Islam*, p. 165.) 51) Shoghi Effendi said, "Alí's appointment was clear to the Khalifs [Caliphs], who actually disregarded the Prophets [sic] oral statements." "The usurpation occurred immediately after the Prophets [sic] death." "Alí did not feel unqualified, but wished to avoid schism, which, unfortunately could not be prevented." (*Lights*, #1665.) 52) "By far the largest sect of Islam, this includes the four so-called orthodox sects: Hanbalites, Hanafites, Malikites, Shafites.... Sunnites regard the first Caliphs as legitimate successors of Muhammad and accept the "six authentic" books of tradition. They believe the Caliph must be elected and must be a member of the Quraysh—the Prophet's tribe." (From Marzieh Gail's *Bahá'í Glossary*, p. 49). 53) A notable presentation of this subject is Alfred Guillaume's *The Traditions of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924. See *Lights*, #1435 for Bahá'í treatment of traditional information (i.e., "pilgrim's notes"). 54) *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World*, p. 138. 55) Shī'ihis also accept the Holy Qur'án and many of the hadiths revered by the Sunni. In addition, the Shī'ihis add the sayings and doings of the Imáms to the hadiths of their faith. 56) "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." These signs are an allusion to the dynasty of the Umayyads who dominated the Muhammadan religion. Seven heads and seven crowns mean seven countries and dominions over which the Ummayyads had power." (*Some Answered Questions*, p. 68). Also see *Revelations*, Chapter 12. 57) Islam became the dominant religion of Iran around 650 A.D. Today the Islamic Republic of Iran is the only government in which Shī'ih Islam is the state religion. 58) The Imáms, "were not a group of contemporaries, like the Twelve Apostles

The *Shi'is* recognize certain descendants of Muhammad as spiritual leaders they call "Imáms" (eh-moms).⁵⁹

The majority of *Shi'is* accept all twelve Imáms.⁶⁰ *Shi'is* who accept all twelve are called "Twelvers." There are smaller factions within *Shi'ih* Islam that accept various subsets of these twelve; some accept only the first four, others accept the first six, etc.⁶¹

'Alí, the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad, was the first Imám of *Shi'ih* Islam. *Shi'is*, do not recognize the first three Caliphs of Islam as legitimate and refer to them as "usurpers." They believe that it was not until 'Alí was made Caliph that Islam had a legitimate Caliph, or Imám.

In addition to 'Alí (the first Imám) and Muhammad ibn Hasan (the twelfth Imám), there are two other Imám's who should be mentioned here. 'Alí had two sons who succeeded him as Imáms, Hasan and Husayn. These two grandchildren of Muhammad were the second and third Imáms. Both were opposed by the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh tribe.

After 'Alí's death in 661 A.D., Mu'áwiyah seized the Caliphate. (Hasan, the second Imám, is said to have been poisoned, allegedly on Mu'áwiyah's order.) Mu'áwiyah's son, Yazid I, succeeded his father as Caliph and ordered an attack on Husayn, the third Imám of *Shi'ih* Islam.

Yazid's attack on Husayn took place at Karbilá (kar-bell-aw) at midday on Friday, the tenth of Muharram (moh-haram). The tragic circumstances of Husayn's martyrdom has become the most passionately commemorated event in all of *Shi'ah* Islam. Throughout Irán the martyrdom of the Imám Husayn has been commemorated for hundreds of years with a reenactment of that tragedy on the anniversary of its event.^{62 *}

For Bahá'is too, the martyrdom of Husayn has special significance.

The Dawn-Breakers records the Báb's vision of the Imám Husayn, experienced in the year before His Declaration.⁶³ This was the Báb's first intimation of His impending Manifestation.⁶⁴

The line of Imáms lasted only 228 years, (656-874 A.D.). According to *Shi'ih* doctrine, there was also a twelfth Imám, Abu'l-Qásim Muhammad ibn Hasan,† who is said to have disappeared (in A.H. 260/874 A.D.) and was never seen again. The legend states that he didn't die, but

went into 'occultation,' a mystical state in which he continued to guide the faithful until his promised 'return'. Another description of this state is that of the "Hidden Imám."

In addition to the first, third, and twelfth Imáms, the last Imám who should be singled out for special mention is the sixth Imám. The sixth Imám, Ja'far-i-Sádiq⁶⁵ (jaa-far-ess-saw-

THE TWELVE IMÁMS OF SHI'IH ISLAM

- 1) 'Alí-ibn-i-Abí-Tálib, the cousin and first disciple of the Prophet (d. A.D. 661).
- 2) Hasan, son of 'Alí and Fátimih, (d. A.D. 670).
- 3) Husayn, son of 'Alí and Fátimih, (d. A.D. 680).
- 4) 'Alí, son of Husayn (d. A.D. 712)
- 5) Muhammad-Báqir, grandson of Hasan (d. A.D. 734)
- 6) Ja'far-i-Sádiq, son of Muhammad-Báqir (d. A.D. 765)
- 7) Músá'l-Kázim, son of Ja'far-i-Sádiq (d. A.D. 799)
- 8) 'Alí-ibn-i-Músá'r-Ridá, (d. A.D. 818)
- 9) Muhammad-Taquí, son of Imam Ridá (d. A.D. 835)
- 10) 'Alí-Naqí, son of Muhammad-Taquí (d. A.D. 868)
- 11) Hasan-i-'Askarí, son of 'Alí-Naqí (d. A.D. 873)
- 12) Muhammad, son of Hasan-i-'Askarí (d. A.D. 873)†

of Jesus, but Muhammad designated the first one ['Alí], and after that each one designated his successor." This cycle of an Imám designating a successor lasted 228 years (656-874 A.D.). Donaldson, Op. Cit., p. xxiv. 59) Some other references to the Imáms in the Bahá'í Writings: *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 108; *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 102; *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 90, and *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 35. 60) For a more detailed examination of these splits see Moojan Momen's chapter, "Schools Within Twelver *Shi'ism*," in his book, *An Introduction to Shi'ih Islam*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 220-232. 61) Bahá'u'lláh frequently refers to this event in His Writings. For example, see pp. 126; 128-9; 167-8; 225-226 of *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*. For a detailed narrative account of the Imám Husayn's martyrdom read *The Prince of Martyrs* by Abu'l-Qásim Faizí, Oxford: George Ronald, 1977. 62) The recital of Husayn's sufferings is called "Rawḍih-khánf" (rose-eh-con-ee). The reciters are called "Rawḍih-khánf" (rose-eh-cons). Rawḍih-khánf has become a profession. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'ih Islam*, p. 119. * = As this date was later to coincide with the birthday of the Báb, the Bábí heroine Táhírah's decision to abandon the traditional mourning garb resulted in her being placed under house arrest by the governor of Karbilá. —Ed. 63) "In My vision I saw the head of the Imám Husayn, the Siyyidu'gh-Shuhadá' [Prince of Martyrs], which was hanging upon a tree. Drops of blood dripped profusely from His lacerated throat. With feelings of unsurpassed delight, I approached that tree and, stretching forth My hands, gathered a few drops of that sacred blood, and drank them devoutly. When I awoke, I felt that the Spirit of God had permeated and taken possession of My soul. My heart was thrilled with the joy of His Divine presence, and the mysteries of His Revelation were unfolded before My eyes in all their glory." *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 257. 64) Shoghi Effendi said "The Báb's descent from the Imám Husayn is no doubt a proof of the validity of the Imámate," *Lights*, #1665. † = According to Ja'far, the brother of Hasan-i-'Askarí (the eleventh Imám), the Imám died without heir; a view which is supported by the Bahá'í scholar and Hand of the Cause H.M. Balyuzi. (See Balyuzi, *Muhammad and the Course of Islam*, pp. 254-257.) It should be noted that the name given to the eleventh Imám (i-'Askarí) means "the seedless".—Ed. 65) *The Kitáb-i-Iqán* makes mention of the 6th Imám on these pages: 79, 131-132, 241, 247, 248, 253-254 and 255. 66) *The Dawn-Breakers*, French footnote #3 on the

deck), made a striking prophecy relating to the Manifestation of the Báb:

"He will appear in the year sixty and his name will be glorified."⁶⁶ To Bahá'ís this is seen as a prophetic reference to the year 1260 (1844 A.D.) which is precisely the year of the Manifestation of the Báb."

The Shí'ihis expect two promised 'returns': the Qá'im (caw-'em) and the Imám Husayn. The Qá'im means, "He Who ariseth." As Bahá'í, we recognize that Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad (the Báb) is the promised Qá'im and Mírzá Husayn 'Alí (Bahá'u'lláh) is the "return of the Imám Husayn."^{67, 68}

It is accurate to say that the Bahá'í Faith has its roots in Shí'ih Islam.⁶⁹ The Ithná-'Ashariyyih sect of Shí'ih Islam, was the historical setting out of which sprang—first the Bábí—and eventually the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'ís also recognize the legitimacy of the Imámate,⁷⁰ but this recognition does not in any way constitute an acceptance or validation of some of the fantastic theories, traditions, superstitions, and downright inventions of the various sects and leaders of Shí'ih Islam.

Some Basic Teachings of Islam

Every major religion has some basic articles of Faith and imposes on its followers certain obligations. "Five Pillars" or supports of faith are taught in Islam:

- Shahádah
- Salat
- Sawm

- Hajj
- Zakat

Shahádih

The *shahádih* is the spoken confession of faith, which makes clear to all who listen the role of God's Messenger: "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

Šalát

The obligation of prayer, or *Šalát* is performed five times a day: at dawn, at noon, in the late afternoon, at sunset, and at night. These ritual prayers include speech and bodily movements and, by the inclusion of the *shahádih*, make clear to all who listen the role of God's Messenger.

All prayers are offered facing the direction of the Qiblih (keb-leh) or "Point of Adoration," which is Mecca. Bahá'ís choose from among three obligatory prayers to recite daily and they face the Most Holy Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí, "Qiblih of the Bahá'í world."⁷¹

Sawm

Sawm is the annual fast which Muslims observe during the month of Ramađán, the ninth month on the Islamic lunar calendar.⁷² This is a dawn-to-dusk fast which lasts from twenty-eight to thirty days, depending on the appearance of the new moon.

During the daylight hours Muslims must refrain from bodily appetites. The Muslim fast of Ramadan can be compared with the Bahá'í fast which takes place during the nineteenth and last month, 'Alá ("Loftiness"), on the Badi'⁷³ solar calendar. It is a sunrise to sunset fast lasting from March second to



A specimen of Arabic calligraphy, the craftsmanship of which indicates the intensity of the Muslims' devotion to God.

bottom of page 250. The Holy Qur'án anticipated the reappearance of the Imámate with the Báb in this verse: "Hereafter shall they come up to Him on a day whose length shall be a thousand of such years as ye reckon." (Rodwell 32:4) One thousand lunar years, added to the date of the death of the 11th Imám gives the date 1260 AH, (1,000 + 60 AH = 1,260). 1260 AH is equal to 1844 A.D. 67) See Shoghi Effendi's introduction to *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. xxxi. 68) *God Passes By*, p. 94. 69) As cited in the *Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'u'lláh identifies Himself with the Imám Husayn and confers on Him an, "exceptionally exalted station," *Lights*, #1567. 70) Shoghi Effendi wrote, on page xii in his Foreword to *God Passes By*: "I shall seek to represent and correlate, in however cursory a manner, those momentous happenings which have insensibly, relentlessly, and under the very eyes of successive generations, perverse, indifferent or hostile, transformed a heterodox and seemingly negligible offshoot of the *Shaykhí* school of the Ithná-'Ashariyyih sect of Shí'ih Islam into a world religion whose unnumbered followers are organically and indissolubly united;..." (Emphasis added.) 71) Shoghi Effendi said that recognition of the, "legitimacy of the institution of the Imámate," was an, "essential," prerequisite of one's, "admittance into the Bahá'í fold". (*The Promised Day is Come*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, p. 110.) 72) Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944, 110. 73) One year on the Muslim calendar, "consists of twelve lunar months, some of twenty-nine, and some of thirty days; their lengths vary because of the need to round out a year otherwise only 354 days, 8 hours, and 48 minutes long." *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* by Cyril Glassé, San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989, p. 82. W. Montgomery Watt says that each Christian century equals, "about 103 Islamic years". *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 91. 74) See *Bahá'í World*, Vol. 18 (1979-1983), p. 600. The Badi' calendar was developed by the Báb and begins with the year 1260 AH, which is 1844 A.D. The term "badi'" (baa-dee) means unique or wonderful. 75) The Bayt-i- A'zam (bait-ch-a-zam), Bahá'u'lláh's Most Great

the twenty-first. Bahá'ís too abstain from food and drink during the daylight hours of the fast.

Hajj

Each male Muslim is to make a pilgrimage, or *Hajj*, once during his lifetime. There are a number of important sites in Medina and Mecca that the pilgrims visit and perform certain rituals. After successfully performing all these duties one may add the title *Háj* or *Hájí* (haw-gee) to one's name. Bahá'ís currently visit holy places in Haifa and 'Akká in Israel. In the future—when one may travel in perfect freedom—Bahá'í pilgrims may choose to visit Bahá'u'lláh's Most Great House⁷⁵ in Baghdad or the House of the Báb in Shíráz.⁷⁶ Bahá'í pilgrims do not earn a special title like *Hájí*.

Zakát

The specified payment, or *Zakát*, is like a tax on one's

possessions. "It may be paid directly to the poor as alms, or to travelers, or to the state."⁷⁷ *Zakát** very closely resembles the Bahá'í institution of *Huqúqu'lláh* (ho-coo-ko-law), the literal meaning of which is, "The Right of God". The law of *Huqúqu'lláh* is now binding on the Bahá'ís of the West.

Jihád ("struggle") is sometimes referred to as a sixth pillar. The concept of *Jihad* has also been interpreted in terms of "holy war." Although not obligatory, holy war was permitted up until the time of Bahá'u'lláh. It was not, as commonly supposed, the way Islam was spread. As mentioned earlier, in the Holy Qur'án Muhammad revealed: "Let there be no compulsion in Religion." (2:257) Bahá'u'lláh forbade holy war in His Dispensation. "We have abolished the law to wage holy war against each other."⁷⁸

✦

House in Baghdad, is, "regarded as a center of pilgrimage second to none except the city of 'Akká...." —*God Passes By*, p. 110. 76) See Notes #54 (p.191) and #154 (pp. 230-231) and Question #29 (p. 116) in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, 1992. 77) *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 430. * = As seen in paragraph 146 of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh also made provisions for *zakát* —Ed. 78) *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 25

The Tablet of All Food

(Continued from page 17)

fully Azal's, and thereby prevented further divisions among the Bábís.

Third, it provided contextual insights into why Bahá'u'lláh chose to remove Himself from Baghdad and withdraw to the mountains of Kurdistan.²⁹

Also, Bahá'u'lláh's denunciation in this Tablet of extremist Bábís who were seeking "liberation" from divine law points to growing factionalism among the Bábís in early 1850s.

Furthermore, this work provides valuable insights into Bahá'u'lláh's state of mind in the turbulent decade of the 1850s. For instance, in one place, Bahá'u'lláh expresses his longing for Quddús,⁸ his companionship, and the comfort his presence would have given Him had he been alive. His anguish was perhaps due to the intense pressure resulting from the martyrdom of the Báb and His heroes and heroines; the rise of factionalism among the Bábís, Azal's failure to unify the faithful and accusations leveled against Him; and a life of exile in a foreign land. Lastly, though no authoritative translation of this Tablet is yet available, it must be classified among the richest theological works of Bahá'u'lláh and will no doubt be an invaluable resource to future Bahá'í scholars who will help define a clear Bahá'í theology. ✦

* The greatest member of the initial band of eighteen followers, each of whom, unaided, sought out and recognized the Báb before His public declaration and who, along with the Báb, constitute the nineteen *Letters of the Living*. —Ed.

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A Matter of Fact

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá undertook His historic journey to Europe and America in 1911, His passage from Italy to England was aboard the steamship *S.S. Cedric*. Many of His fellow passengers opted to change ships upon their arrival in England and booked their transatlantic crossing on the highly publicized maiden voyage of what was the most luxurious oceanliner of the time.

The American believers sent Him funds so that He could take a berth on the same ship, but the Master graciously thanked the American friends, returned the money and remained aboard the *Cedric*.

And what was the name of the ship not taken? The *S.S. Titanic*.

(See *'Abdu'l-Bahá* by H.M. Balyuzi, p. 79)

RECOMMENDED READING: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Probably the most useful single Bahá'í resource for understanding various points about Islam is *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, compiled by Helen Hornby and published by the Bahá'í Publishing Trust in New Delhi. The brief index to Islamic topics which follows was derived from the second revised and enlarged edition of *Lights*, which was published in 1988.

Of course the principal doctrinal work of the Bahá'í Dispensation is Bahá'u'lláh's *Kitáb-i-Iqán*, revealed in Baghdad about 1862. It is this work, more than any other, which holds the key to unlock the doors of meaning, leading to an understanding of the secrets hidden within Divine Revelation. The *Iqán* says that 'all the Scriptures and the mysteries thereof are condensed into this brief account. So much so, that were a person to ponder a while in his heart, he would discover from all that hath been said the mysteries of the Words of God, and would apprehend the meaning of whatever hath been manifested by that ideal King.' 1

The *Kitáb-i-Iqán* is a treasury of information about Islam, Muhammad, the Holy Qur'án, and the Imams. Some examples: Islamic traditions (hadiths) 237-48; *Mi'ráj* (Night Journey) 185; *Qá'im* 243-247; *Qiblih* 49-52; Qur'án 200-201; 6th Imam 79, 131-132, 241, 243, 247, 248, 253-254, 255. 2

COMPARATIVE RELIGION

F.E. Peters, *Children of Abraham*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982. Paperback, 225 pages. Compares similarities and differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Chapters on Community and Hierarchy, the Law, Scripture and Tradition, The Liturgy, Asceticism and Mysticism, and Theology.

William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions*, London: Routledge, 1991. Paperback, 164 pages.

Text of the Qur'án quoted to draw conclusions about perceptions of Jews, Christians and Muslims. Past, present and future encounters between Christianity and Islam discussed and projected.

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

Caesar E. Farah, *Islam*, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 4th edition, 1987. Paperback, 351 pages. Good reference work. Includes chapters on Islam's beliefs and obligations as well as the various shades of belief that divide the sects of Islam. Contains a glossary and a useful recommended reading list.

Marzieh Gail, *Six Lessons on Islam*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1953. 34 pages. Sadly, this brief but superb introduction to Islam has been out of print since 1969. Count yourself lucky if you can obtain a copy. Ms. Gail is the translator of a number of important Bahá'í books such as *The Seven Valleys* and *The Four Valleys* (with her father, 'Ali Kuli Khan), *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, *Memorials of the Faithful*, and *My Memories of Bahá'u'lláh*. She is also the author of many scholarly works.

Marzieh Gail, *Bahá'í Glossary*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969. Paper, 56 pages. Another important work out of print. This is more than a glossary and pronunciation guide. Contains a wealth of scholarship and numerous references that correlate the Bahá'í Faith to its Islamic background.

Philip Hitti, *The Arabs: A Short History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943. Second revised paperback edition, 1970, 278 pages. Possibly the most popular history of the Arabs ever written in English. Places Islam within the context of its times and traces its evolution to modern times. Very readable.

Thomas W. Lippman, *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World*, New York Mentor Books, revised edition, 1990. Paperback, 194 pages. Lippman was Cairo bureau chief for the Washington Post. He writes clearly and insightfully. Covers Islam up to the present, including the Khomenini regime and the Salman Rushdie affair.

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Allama Sir Abdullah Al-Manun Al-Suhrawardy, *The Sayings of Muhammad*, London: John Murray, 1938, 128 pages. 439 sayings of Muhammad, arranged topically (e.g., abstinence, backbiting, learning, reason, sin, etc.) and written simply and clearly.

Alfred Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924. A classic work long out of print. You may be able to find a copy in a university library.

LIFE OF MUHAMMAD

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1964, chapter 7. Very brief biography of Muhammad’s career. Explains Bible prophecies relating to Islam in general and Muhammad and ‘Ali in particular.

H.M. Balyuzi, *Muhammad and The Course of Islam*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1976, Part I, Chapters 1-18. Excellent examination of Muhammad’s Life. Correlates the authentic Shi’ah traditions to events in early Islam.

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A.J. Arberry, The Koran Interpreted, New York: Collier Books, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1955. Two volumes printed between the covers of one paperback. H.M. Balyuzi, the distinguished biographer of the Lives of Muhammad, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, used this translation for Qur'anic quotations in his narratives.

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SHI'AH ISLAM

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Abu'l-Qásim Faizi, *The Prince of Martyrs [Imam Husayn]*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1977. A moving account of the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn.

Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1985. Paperback, 397 pages. An invaluable reference work. This exhaustively researched book yields a closely written examination of many aspects of Shi'ah Islam, covering the period from its inception to the present. Contains many useful charts and tables, a glossary, illustrations, and a valuable select bibliography of sources.

[End]